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## Land Regularisation Scheme: Applicants in Telangana continue to be charged abnormally high fee

Narayanpet: A few Land Regularisation Scheme (LRS) applicants continue to get shockers of abnormal regularisation fee in different areas in the State. The State government is extending 25 per cent rebate for LRS applicants, who pay the regularisation fee before March 31. However, several applicants are getting notices of abnormal regularisation fee payments. A government employee from Bogaram under Gundamal mandal in Narayanpet district applied for regularisation of his 336-yard open plot under the LRS scheme. To his shock, he was asked to pay Rs 104 crore for regularisation fee. The employee checked the LRS application status at a private internet centre in Kosgi.

## Telangana is at forefront of enhancing business environment: CS



Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): A senior delegation from the Union government, led by Ms. Sukriti Likhi, along with officials from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), convened a meeting with the Telangana government at the Secretariat here on Friday. The discussion centered on minimizing compliance requirements and deregulation. During the meeting, Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari highlighted that Telangana is at the forefront of implementing measures to enhance the ease of doing business. She noted that the state is on the verge of overcoming additional obstacles to foster an environment conducive to accelerated growth and development. The Chief Secretary mentioned that significant reforms have already been introduced to improve business conditions, and the current emphasis is on enhancing the quality of the business environment and addressing associated costs. "New systems like Build Now for expediting building plan approvals and Bhu Bharathi for land efficient administration are put in place. There is a good appreciation for the policies of the government from the industry and business sector," she said. The Chief Secretary further stated that the policies are backed by strict monitoring and the government's initiatives are evident in transforming Hyderabad into a major economic power house. Santhi Kumari raised the issue of the cumbersome and time taking procedures for forest clearance which is a stumbling block for taking up development activities. She observed that while protection of forest and wildlife is also a priority, restrictive policies result in time over runs. Ms. Sukriti Likhi complimented the Telangana government for the major reforms and initiatives which led to the state being a top notch state in the country in the implementation of ease of doing business. She noted that Telangana is considered best in several sectors such as having a GIS database for industrial land availability, doing away with floor area ratio for industrial and commercial plots, empanelment of 3rd parties in buildings approvals and joint inspections, Occupancy Certification for buildings, electricity and water connections, approval and renewal of factory trade licences etc. Sukriti Likhi, however, advised that there is a room for further improvement and hoped that the state would endeavour to build a business friendly environment. Special Chief Secretaries Iyengar Ranjan, Ravi Gupta, PCCF Dobriyal, Principal Secretary MAUD Danakishore, DG Fire Services Nagi Reddy, Principal Secretary Labour Sanjay Kumar, CDMA T K Sridevi, and other senior officials attended the meeting. (NSS)

## We will continue to corner govt on public issues: BRS MLC Kavitha

Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): Claiming that the Congress party came to power in the State by telling lies, BRS party MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha today suggested that it should at least tell the truth now. She said it would be polite if the Congress party admitted that what they had been saying for years was a lie.

A press conference of BRS party MLCs was held in the Legislative Council today. MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha spoke at the and said mistakes of the Congress leaders on debts had been exposed now. Kavitha criticized that the Central government had declared the total debt of the State in Parliament as Rs 4.42 lakh crore, but CM Revanth Reddy was spreading the lie that there was a debt of only Rs 8 lakh crore on Telangana.

She said the Congress party, which came to power by telling lies, should tell the truth now. She suggested that it would be polite if the Congress party admitted that it was lying. She also said there was no truth in the Kaleswaram barrages' collapsing incidents and added that the Irrigation Minister himself had said this in the Council of Ministers. She said the BRS party's silver jubilee meeting would be held at Elkathurthi on April 27. She said the meeting would be organized on the lines of the Mahakumbh Mela. Kavitha called upon the people to participate in the 25th anniversary celebrations of the BRS party in large numbers. She noted that the government had come down due to their fight against fee reimbursement and the Chief Minister had announced by making the Council as a witness that fee reimbursement funds would be released from time to time. Kavitha said they will continue to question until the CM releases the fee reimbursement funds as announced. She noted that these council meetings would go down in the history of the State as it approved the BC reservation bills and the SC classification bill. She also said the Chief Minister spoke in an indecent language by targeting women and added that those comments would remain a stain in his history. (NSS)

## CM Revanth emerges as formidable political force on Indian Express Power List

Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): In a significant testament to his growing political influence and administrative acumen, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has secured a prominent position in the prestigious annual Indian Express Power List 2025, marking a 11-ranks rise in his ranking from previous years, improving his standing from 39 last year to 28 this year. The annual Power List, which ranks India's most influential figures across politics, business, sports, and entertainment, has recognised Revanth Reddy's transformative leadership and strategic political maneuvers that have strengthened both Telangana's governance and the broader India Alliance coalition. The list has Prime Minister Narendra Modi, union Home Minister Amit Shah and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi in the top 10. Chief Minister



Revanth Reddy's impressive climb in this year's rankings reflects his meteoric rise in Indian politics. From being primarily known as a regional leader, he has established himself as one of the most powerful and dynamic Chief Ministers in India today. His improved ranking underscores the national recognition of his political weight and administrative capabilities. "This recognition by the Indian Express Power List 2025 validates our CM's unwavering commitment to transparent gov-

ernance and inclusive development," said Mahesh Goud, TPCC president. "Every recognition comes with greater responsibility toward the people of Telangana and India," he said. The Power List has notably positioned Revanth Reddy alongside other influential Chief Ministers from the India Alliance, confirming his status as a key architect and strategist within the coalition. His ability to bridge regional aspirations with national priorities has made him an indispensable voice

in shaping the alliance's agenda and strategies. Revanth Reddy's inclusion among the top-ranked Chief Ministers represents a significant shift in the power dynamics of Indian politics, with regional leaders increasingly influencing national discourse and policy decisions. His standing across the nation has risen after being able to implement a broad basket of first-of-its-kind schemes like Rs 21,000 crore farmer loan waiver (of up to Rs 200,000 loans), Rs 500 paddy bonus, entrepreneurship initiatives for women groups wherein they now operate solar power plants, petrol bunks and premier retail stores, a peerless world-class Skills University, Sui generic scheme to appoint transenders as traffic police staffers, among others. His recent strong views at the Chennai conclave on delimitation also made a huge mark. (NSS)

## Hyderabad becomes miserable city under Congress rule: KTR



Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): BRS party working president KTR today said Hyderabad, which was a prosperous city during the ten years of KCR rule, had now

become a miserable city during the 15 months of incompetent Congress party's rule. He criticized the decrease in house purchases in the city due to moves like the demolitions of illegal houses in the name of Hydra and Musi river cleansing. He said realtors were worried due to lack of sales in the State capital. He also said not only the breadwinners, but also innocent real estate traders were committing suicides. He urged the Congress rulers to learn to build and not demolish and to develop and not lie.

He said House sales in Hyderabad had decreased by 49% in the last quarter and added that the office leasing had also plunged in the State capital and recorded 41% decrease between January-March 2025. "The reason for this decline is the Congress government's short-sighted and inefficient policies. Learn to build, not to demolish. Learn to develop, not to lie," KTR tweeted. (NSS)

## Myanmar-Thailand earthquake: Three dead, 90 injured as under-construction Bangkok high-rise collapses

GNS News Agency, March 28

A 7.7 magnitude earthquake rocked Thailand and neighbouring Myanmar midday on Friday (March 28, 2025), causing the collapse of a high-rise building under construction in Bangkok and forcing hundreds of thousands to evacuate from their homes and workplaces. Thailand's defence minister says 90 people are missing and three are confirmed dead at the site where a high-rise building under construction collapsed when a powerful earthquake hit the capital. Defence Minister Phumtham Wechayachai offered no more details about the ongoing rescue efforts, but first responders said that seven people had been rescued so far from outside the collapsed building. Myanmar's shadow Foreign Minister told Reuters on Friday (March 28, 2025) that the earthquake has killed at least 12 people and urgent international assistance is needed. Zin Mar Aung, the top diplomat of the parallel National Unity Government, said troops from the anti-junta militias, known as the People's Defence Forces, would be providing humanitarian help.

"It's very serious, we need humanitarian and technical assistance from the international community," Zin Mar Aung said in a phone interview, adding communications was a major challenge, including internet restrictions imposed by the junta in a hard-hit area. "Myanmar declared a state of emergency in six regions, including Sagaing, Mandalay, and the capital, Naypyitaw, and is seeking to conduct rescue operations as soon as possible," state media reported. "The Government has initiated prompt investigations into the damage and plans to conduct rescue operations as soon as possible. Authorities will push for access to disaster relief and humanitarian aid," the military-controlled Global New Light of Myanmar said. A dramatic video circulated on social media showed the multi-story building with a crane on top collapsing into a cloud of dust while onlookers screamed and ran. People in Bangkok evacuated from their buildings were cautioned to stay outside in case there were more aftershocks. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed concern over the devastating earthquake and said India stands ready to offer all possible assistance to the two countries. Bangkok is the venue for next week's summit of BIMSTEC regional grouping that is scheduled to be attended by Mr. Modi among other leaders. "Concerned by the situation in the wake of the Earthquake in Myanmar and Thailand. Praying for the safety and wellbeing of everyone," Mr. Modi said on 'X'. "India stands ready to offer all possible assistance. In this regard, asked our authorities to be on standby. Also asked the MEA to remain in touch with the



Governments of Myanmar and Thailand," he said. The U.S. Geological Survey and Germany's GFZ center for geosciences said the earthquake was a shallow 10 kilometers (6.2 miles), with an epicenter in Myanmar, according to preliminary reports. "All of a sudden the whole building began to move.

## Centre sends back proposal of Palamuru Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme

Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): The Union government has returned the proposal for the Palamuru Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme, which is classified as a national project. The Jal Shakti department has clarified that the ongoing conflict between the two states regarding the utilisation of Krishna river waters is currently under review by the Supreme Court. It also noted that an investigation is being conducted by the Krishna Tribunal 2 on this issue. In light of the court case, the Central Jal Shakti department has stated that it cannot take the techno-economic report of the project into consideration. Consequently, the Centre has notified the Lok Sabha that the proposals have been sent back to the State of Telangana. Bhuvanagiri MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy raised a question in the Lok Sabha concerning the Palamuru Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme as a national project. Minister of State for Jal Shakti Raj Bhushan Chowdhury provided a written response to this inquiry. (NSS)

## ICFAI Law School hosts two-day international conference

Hyderabad: The Centre of Excellence for Environment and Forest Laws, ICFAI Law School, organised a two-day international conference on 'Navigating the Future of Environmental Governance: Innovations in Law, Policy and Finance', here on Friday. Addressing the event, TGCHE Chairman Prof V Balakista Reddy highlighted the critical role of legal frameworks, policy innovation, and sustainable finance in shaping a resilient environmental future.

Prof Reddy stressed the importance of global cooperation, grassroots engagement, and the integration of environmental considerations into economic decision-making.

## Expedite construction process of Indiramma Houses: Ponguleti



Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): Minister for Revenue, Housing and In-charge Minister of Warangal district Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy has directed the Collectors to accelerate the foundation process of Indiramma Houses and to promptly issue payments for those with finished basements. On Friday, a review meeting for the combined Warangal district took place at the Secretariat. The discussion covered various topics, including the Warangal Smart City initiatives, the Super Specialty Hospital, water supply, and the Indiramma housing project, among others. Endowments Minister Konda Surekha, Panchayat Raj Minister Seethakka, Chief Minister's Advisor Vem Narendar Reddy, legislators from the combined Warangal district, Collectors and other senior officials participated in the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Ponguleti emphasised that the construction of Indiramma Houses is a key priority for the government and urged the Collectors to keep this focus in their work. He explained that the government will disburse payments to beneficiaries of Indiramma Houses in four installments. The first payment will be one lakh rupees for houses with the basement level completed, and these funds will be released promptly once the Housing department receives the details of such houses. The Minister also mentioned that the 2 BHK houses that remain unallocated should be given to eligible beneficiaries who lack house plots according to the Indiramma Housing Survey. He stated that the government will offer the necessary financial support to beneficiaries to finish the construction of houses with solid walls in cases where the contractor fails to do so. Steps should be taken to ensure that no village or city faces drinking water problems during the summer season. District collectors should give top priority to this issue and, in coordination with district officials, officials should visit villages three days a week. The next three months are very crucial. Officials should work to prevent problems with drinking water and should avoid criticism that there is no water supply," Ponguleti said. The Minister also directed the officials that the construction works of Warangal Super Specialty Hospital building should be completed in two months and after that, the necessary equipment for medical services should be installed in the next few months, making it available to the people by the end of June. The officials have also been advised to show a temporary solution to the Madikonda dumping yard problem within a week and then take action for permanent solution. The Minister said the desilting work of the Bhadrakali tank in Warangal should be completed before the onset of the rainy season under any circumstances. He advised the officials to proceed with the Warangal Smart City works in a planned manner. MLAs Kadiyam Srihari, Nayani Rajender, Yashawini Reddy, Donthi Madhav Reddy, Nagaraju, Murali Nayak, Ramachandra Nayak, Revuri Prakash Reddy, Gandra Satyanarayana, MLC Basavaraju Saraiah, Warangal Mayor Gundu Sudharani, Municipal department Principal Secretary Dana Kishore, R&B Secretary Harichandana, Family Welfare department Commissioner Karnan and others participated in the meeting. (NSS)

## Rs. 3.30 crore ex gratia released for families of deceased Gulf workers



Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): At the directive of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, the State government made a deposit of Rs 3.30 crore, providing an ex gratia payment of Rs 5 lakh each to the families of 66 workers who died in the Gulf, transferring the funds directly to their bank accounts on Friday. In a statement, former MLA and Chairman of the Telangana Mineral Development Corporation, Anil Eravathri, mentioned that he had collaborated with Special Chief Secretary (Finance and Planning) K. Ramakrishna Rao to facilitate the disbursement of the funds as instructed by the Chief Minister. He detailed that the payment was made to 28 families in Nizamabad district, 19 in Jagtiala, 9 in Kamareddy, 7 in Nirmal, along with 66 families each in Medak, Ranga Reddy, and Sangareddy districts. Anil Eravathri further noted that in a previous round of funding, Rs 5.15 crore was distributed to 103 families, bringing the total disbursed for the financial year 2024-25 to Rs 8.45 crore for 169 beneficiaries. (NSS)



# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Suicidal course

A final-year student of IIT-Ropar died a week after his poor grades — apparently linked to his inadequate language skills — drove him to take poison. In his suicide note, Marymesi Arun apologised to his parents for failing to meet their expectations. This is another tragic case of a young life snuffed out by distress and unbearable pressure. It seems that there is no respite for students even after they enter the portals of India's premier educational institutions. They have to compete ruthlessly and prove themselves all the time. Sadly, their academic journey has been reduced to a Darwinian struggle for survival. And those who are not among the fittest and the strongest simply drop out of the race, or even worse, choose to end their lives. The Supreme Court rightly observed earlier this week that relentless pressure to perform in a score-based education system and the extreme competition for limited seats in leading institutions were putting a 'terrifying burden' on students. It has set up a National Task Force to address their mental health concerns and prevent suicides. The initiative is laudable, but its success will depend largely on whether the key stakeholders — universities, colleges, coaching centres, parents — are willing to introspect and do course correction. It is their obsession with results and achievements that is pushing young people deeper into the mire. The lack of institutional and parental accountability has created a deplorable situation — both sides keep blaming each other for youngsters' woes. It's undoubtedly a collective failure and there is no room for passing the buck. The focus has to be on detecting early signs of stress and taking timely remedial action. The wellbeing of students must take precedence over everything else. A nation that aspires to become Viksit (developed) by 2047 must set itself an immediate goal: safeguarding the welfare and lives of every student. After all, at stake is India's future.

## Bridge India invites KTR for 'India Week 2025' in London



Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): BRS party Working President K. Taraka Rama Rao has received an invitation to attend another prestigious conference. Bridge India has specially invited KTR to attend the 'Ideas for India' conference to be held in Britain. Bridge India founder Pratik Dattani has sent an invitation letter to KTR as the keynote speaker for the conference to be held at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in London on May 30, 2025.

Prateek said that KTR, who participated as the keynote speaker at the same event in 2023, impressed everyone. He said that this time too, the London business community, important figures in the Indo-UK corridor, and the Telugu diaspora were showing great interest in meeting KTR and listening to his speech. Prateek Dattani specifically mentioned in the letter that despite the change of government in Telangana, KTR is being specially invited to this prestigious conference. Prateek expressed hope that attending this event would provide an opportunity to further improve relations between India and England, and that the English business community has a special connection with Telangana. He said that he would be very happy if he could spare some time in his busy schedule to attend this event. (NSS)

## SC's key verdict in Kalyan Nagar Co-operative Housing Society case



Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): The Supreme Court has ruled in favour of the state government in the Kalyan Nagar Co-operative Housing Society case. The Kalyan Nagar Co-operative Housing Society had purchased 38 acres of land in Survey No. 128/1, 128/10 in Yusufguda Village in 1964 and the land had been encroached upon since 1972. In 1988, the housing society filed a case against 502 people, including J.T. Goud, in the Land Disputes Court, and the verdict was in favor of the society.

The members of the Kalyan Nagar Co-operative Society filed a writ petition in the High Court in 1997 and the State Government was directed to pay compensation to the Society under the Land Acquisition Act, 2013. The GHMC appealed to the Supreme Court challenging the High Court order. Senior advocates Aishwarya Bati and Menaka Guruswamy argued the case on behalf of the State Government and GHMC.

They said that if the High Court orders had been implemented, the State exchequer would have been burdened with an additional burden of Rs. 2,000 crores. When the facts were presented in the Supreme Court with their arguments, the Supreme Court, which agreed with their arguments, ruled in favor of the state Government. It ordered that the compensation amount be recovered from the land encroachers and paid to the Society. (NSS)

## MG Astor, India's First Car with AI Personal Assistant is now 'The Blockbuster SUV'



Hyderabad: JSW MG Motor India, has announced a bold new stance for the MG Astor as 'The Blockbuster SUV' with its MY2025 Edition. This marks a paradigm shift highlighting the brand's commitment to bringing an auto-tech masterpiece for its customers — blending exciting performance, sophistication, innovation and technology all into one package. The Astor 'Blockbuster SUV' caters to discerning customers and early adopters with its MY2025 edition. The MG Astor is now the only SUV in its segment to offer a panoramic sunroof under INR 12.5 lakh (ex-showroom) with its new Shine variant. Further, the Select variant comes in with six airbags and premium Ivory Leatherette seats, for enhanced safety and comfort. SUV enthusiasts can visit their nearest JSW MG Motor India dealerships to enquire and book 'The Blockbuster SUV' at a starting price of INR 9.99 lakh (ex-showroom). The 2025 MG Astor is available with 1.5L MT & CVT and 1.3 Turbo AT powertrains.

Commenting on the development, Rakesh Sen, Director Sales and Operations, JSW MG Motor India, said,

## Cafe Niloufer Launches "Niloufer Supreme Tea Powder," Promoting Customization in Every Cup

Hyderabad: Cafe Niloufer, the oldest and most esteemed tea cafe in Hyderabad, has introduced its latest offering, "Niloufer Supreme Tea Powder," at its flagship location in Hitech City—the largest tea cafe in India on 28 March, 2025. The launch event featured Mr. Anumula Babu Rao, Founder and Chairman, alongside Mr. Anumula Shashank, Managing Director. "Our mission has always been centered around crafting the ideal cup of tea for everyone," stated Mr. Babu Rao. "With the introduction of Niloufer Supreme Tea Powder, alongside our signature blends, Platinum and Double Delight, we aim to cater to the diverse preferences of our customers. I personally oversee the blending process, utilizing only the finest hand-picked leaves from premium Assam tea gardens, and we adhere to rigorous quality testing at every stage." Reiterating this commitment to consumer choice, Mr. Shashank added, "We recognize that every household has its own distinct taste and preferences. Niloufer Supreme Tea is designed for versatility, accommodating all Telugu households, whether they prefer high fat, medium fat, or low fat milk. Our tea powder allows for individual customization, empowering each person to brew their own perfect cup." Mr. Shashank expressed optimism for future growth: "With a robust salesforce and a growing distribution network across Andhra and Telangana, we are

"Taking on a bold new stance, the MG Astor is the perfect car for early adopters looking for a perfect SUV. For those who seek more than practicality — the desire for elevated driving experience & sophistication. We understand that they are on the lookout for a car that reflects their rise, balances their aspiration with pragmatism, and turns every commute into a journey. The MG Astor delivers precisely that - a Blockbuster in motion." "The Blockbuster SUV" comes with over 50 Safety features, with the premium interiors and panoramic sunroof elevating the memorable driving experience to a new level of comfort. With a host of features paired with a pleasurable driving experience, MG Astor is also the first SUV in India to get a personal AI assistant and a host of 14 Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) features.

MG Astor also offers a series of advanced tech features — Ventilated Seats in the front row, Wireless Charger, Wireless Android Auto & Apple Car Play, and Auto-dimming IRVM for additional security and convenience, along with an updated i-SMART 2.0 with Advanced User Interface for a holistic driving experience and 80+ connected features for a seamless and convenient driving experience. Among its standout features is the JIO Voice Recognition system, enabling advanced voice commands for Weather, Cricket updates, Calculator, Clock, Date/Day information, Horoscope, Dictionary, News and knowledge. The Anti-Theft feature, coupled with Digital Key functionality, ensures security even without a network connection. Video Link: <https://mgftp.co.in/?ShareToken=09FD1DDA7C16595185FA2DB07DA7E5555AF61164>



now making significant inroads into the FMCG sector in both states." He revealed that, in collaboration with TSIC, 6 acres of land in Chandanvalli has been allocated for tea and biscuit production. This new initiative will feature a 2.4 lakh sq. ft. facility dedicated to tea production, complemented by a biscuit manufacturing plant, generating over 600 jobs and fostering local economic growth. Operations for the Tea Factory are set to begin in April, with the biscuit plant expected to launch by June or July 2025.

## Historic distribution of free fine rice to begin in Telangana on Ugadi: Uttam



Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Friday announced that the Congress government will launch a historic and revolutionary scheme to distribute free 'sanna biyyam' (fine rice) to the poor across the Telangana state, starting from the Ugadi festival. The Chief Minister will formally launch the scheme at a public meeting in Huzurnagar on March 30. From April 1, free 6 kg of fine rice for all ration card holders will be distributed across the state through the Public Distribution System (PDS). Speaking at a press conference along with Principal Secretary and Civil Supplies Commissioner DS Chauhan and other senior officials, the Minister said this is the largest food security initiative in the country's history, aiming to benefit nearly 3.10 crore people — which is about 85 percent of Telangana's population. Each eligible individual will receive 6 kilograms of fine rice per month.

The Minister said no welfare scheme in independent India has ever reached such a large share of the population. In his entire political career, he said, he has not seen a programme of this scale, and called it a model for social justice. Uttam Kumar Reddy explained that the earlier distribution of coarse rice under PDS had failed as most beneficiaries did not consume the rice due to its poor quality. As a result, around 80 to 90 percent of the rice was diverted and illegally sold, creating a thriving black market racket. Rice worth Rs 7,000 to 8,000 crore was being misused annually. He said the decision to replace the coarse grain with fine rice was aimed at preventing pilferage, increasing consumption, and providing real benefit to the poor. He called this transition a game-changer in India's food security landscape. According to official data, Telangana had 89.73 lakh ration cards at the time of its formation. During the ten-year rule of the BRS government, only 49,479 new cards were issued, despite changes in population and eligibility. The process of adding new members to existing ration cards was completely neglected throughout that period. In contrast, after the Congress government came to power, it not only reopened the process for adding eligible members but also initiated the large-scale issuance of new ration cards to ensure no deserving household is left out. The Minister also revealed that Telangana currently has around 90 lakh ration cards, covering about 2.85 crore people. However, with the verification and approval of pending applications, nearly 30 lakh new ration cards are expected to be issued soon. This will raise the total number of cards to 1 crore and increase the total number of beneficiaries to 3.10 crore. He said the government is committed to

ensuring that no eligible person is left out, and that ration cards will be issued or updated up to the saturation level.

The newly issued ration cards will be physical cards embedded with QR codes, although they will not contain chips. The government is yet to take a final decision on whether the Prime Minister's photo will be printed on the cards. Importantly, the cards will be colour-coded: Tricolour cards will be issued to families Below Poverty Line (BPL), while Green cards will be for Above Poverty Line (APL) households. Even those who don't yet have physical cards but are listed in the official beneficiary database will be entitled to receive fine rice from April 1, he added. Earlier in the day, Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy inspected the arrangements at the venue along with IG Sathyanarayana, District Collector Tejas Nandlal Pawar, SP Narasimha and other officials. He also held a meeting with local Congress leaders and party workers to finalise preparations. He said the meeting would go down as a historic occasion in Telangana's welfare history and urged citizens from all parts of the state to attend and show their support. Calling it a moment of pride for Huzurnagar, the minister said that launching this transformative scheme from his constituency was a matter of great honour. He urged every citizen to participate in the event and make the programme a grand success. "This is not just about rice — it's about dignity, justice, and care for the poor. Telangana is showing the way," he said. (NSS)

## Adilabad district extension & media officer in ACB net

Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): Today Macherla Poshetty Ravi Shankar, District Extension & Media Officer in the office of DM & HO Adilabad was caught red handed on the premises of DM & HO office Adilabad when he demanded and accepted Rs 30,000/- as bribe from the complainant for showing official favour i.e. "for not sending a report against the complainant in an enquiry being conducted by him in respect of a Minor girl's abortion which ended in Foetus death." The tainted bribe amount of Rs 30,000/- was recovered from the possession of the accused. The accused performed his duties improperly and dishonestly to obtain undue advantage. The accused was arrested and produced before the Special Judge for SPE & ACB cases, Karimnagar. (NSS)



## New office-bearers for FLO & YFLO



Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO) and Young FICCI Ladies Organisation (YFLO) have announced their new leadership for the year 2025-26. Prathibha Kunda takes over as Chairperson of FLO Hyderabad, while Pallavi Jain assumes leadership of YFLO Hyderabad. Prathibha Kunda, who takes over the mantle from Priya Gazdar, is the great granddaughter of Amarajeevi Potti Sriramulu, the freedom fighter known for his pivotal role in the creation of Andhra State. She is the Managing Director of Surendrapuri, India's first mythological theme park. She is the founder of Siara Retreat and Pradhan Conventions. Pallavi Jain, who succeeds Ridhi Jain, is a Director at Pokarna Fabrics. She has 10 years of retail experience from KORA and Raymond. She holds a Doctorate in Molecular Medicine. A mother of two, she blends her scientific background with her retail career and entrepreneurial ventures. The newly appointed office-bearers for FLO Hyderabad include Seetha Reddy (Senior Vice President), Gunjan Sindhi (Vice President), Rashmi Agarwal (Executive Secretary), and Shilpa Raju (Treasurer). For YFLO Hyderabad, the leadership team includes Khushboo Daga (Vice President), Akanksha Agarwal (Secretary), and Rupal A Bansal (Treasurer). FLO's Vision for 2025-26 is Empowerment Through Pancha Tatva, Prathibha Kunda informed. YFLO Hyderabad's Vision for the year is 'Knowledge is Power'. (NSS)

## Cambridge hosts South Asia schools conference to navigate the future of learning



Hyderabad: The International Education group at Cambridge University Press & Assessment (Cambridge) hosted its second annual South Asia Cambridge Schools Conference, bringing together 400 educators, school and thought leaders from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and the Maldives. As demand for Cambridge qualifications grows across the region, the conference reinforced Cambridge's commitment to supporting schools, teachers and learners in navigating the rapidly evolving education landscape.

The conference is set against the backdrop of a global demand for 44 million new teachers by 2030. In recognition of this need, Cambridge highlighted its commitment to empowering the region's educators through new professional development programmes and qualifications, upskilling courses, pre-service teacher training, and short-term e-learning modules to grow the region's teaching capacity.

In his opening address, Rod Smith, Group Managing Director of International Education at Cambridge, praised school leaders across the region for working with Cambridge to shape curricula and resources, and introduce new innovative programmes that prepare learners to be ready for the world. He said: "At Cambridge, we are committed to preparing learners for a fast-changing world. To achieve this, we support teachers with professional development, we're introducing digital exams to advance assessment, and we're integrating AI to enhance learning. South Asia is becoming a hub of educational excellence, and we're proud to collaborate with schools to build new programmes such as Cambridge Early Years and Climate Quest that will shape the future of education in this region and beyond." Vinay Sharma, Senior Vice President, International Education, South Asia, said: "Our commitment to making international education accessible while maintaining the highest standards of quality is unwavering. We empower our schools to build a strong foundation around learning, teaching and assessment. Through this conference, our aim is to explore new ways in which we can work together to equip learners—not just to adapt but to excel in an era marked by rapid technological, societal, and economic shifts."

## Muslims offer prayers on Ramzan's last Friday

Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): Muslims from the State capital today offered special prayers at the historic Mecca Masjid in Hyderabad on the occasion of the last Friday of the ongoing holy month of Ramadan. The Mecca Masjid and Charminar areas were packed with the Muslims.

Thousands of Muslims visited the Mecca Masjid to offer prayers. On the occasion, prayers ended peacefully in the Mecca Masjid and surrounding areas. AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi participated in the Mecca Masjid Ramadan prayers. As it is the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan, tight security has been arranged at Charminar and Mecca Masjid areas. The focus of the authorities was on to prevent any untoward incident. Special security has been arranged from Charminar Bhagalakshmi Temple to Mecca Masjid. On the other hand, there were traffic restrictions in the areas around Charminar, Madina and Shalibanda areas until the Friday evening. (NSS)





## Medical Centre inaugurated at RTC Colony, Trimulgherry



environmentally conscious cremation ground, offering solace and dignity to bereaved families. Swarg Vatika is marking a milestone in its journey towards sustainability and community welfare, by unveiling several new eco-friendly facilities, today. National Covid Warrior Padma Shri Jitender Singh Shunty, inaugurated the Medical Centre; N. Sri Ganesh, MLA Cantonment; dedicated the Rooftop Solar Plants and the new LPG-based crematorium and Madhuka Naik, CEO, Cantonment Board, unveiled the Automatic Gow Cast Manufacturing Facility. Founder Trustee & President Surender Pal Singh spoke about the facilities at Swarg Vatika. The new Medical Centre offers diagnostic, dental, physiotherapy, ENT services, and generic medicines at nearly 30% lower than prevailing market rates, benefiting middle-class and underprivileged families. The two Rooftop Solar Power Plants, fulfill the 100% green energy needs of the crematorium. The Gow Cast manufacturing facility promotes sustainable cremation alternatives. The dedicated online platform launched today will provide real-time updates, facilitate digital memorials, and offer seamless access to funeral services. The new LPG based crematorium will enable environmentally friendly cremation. (NSS)

Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): Swarg Vatika, a pioneering initiative by Swarg Vatika Trust along with the Telangana Government, continues to redefine the concept of final resting places with its commitment to eco-friendly and compassionate funeral services. Strategically located in RTC Colony, Trimulgherry, Swarg Vatika has transformed a former garbage bin and drainage lake into a serene and

## Jobless youth jailed for life for raping minor girl



Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): In a sexual assault case occurred in December 2015 on a minor girl of Gulshan Iqbal Colony, Chandrayangutta, today T. Anitha, XII Addl. Session Judge, Hyderabad convicted accused Arshad Hussain of the victim's colony to undergo rigorous imprisonment for life and to pay a fine of Rs 10,000/- for the offence 5(n) r/w 6 of the POCSO Act, in default of payment of fine, the accused is directed to undergo simple imprisonment for six months and also sentenced to undergo RI for two years and pay a fine of Rs 5000/- for the offence u/sec 323 of IPC, in default, the accused directed to undergo simple imprisonment for another three months and also sentenced to undergo RI for two years and pay a fine of Rs 5000/- for the offence u/sec 506 of IPC in default of payment of the fine, the accused has to undergo SI of three months. On November 26, 2021, the victim's mother reported to the police that the accused Arshad Hussain had committed rape on her elder daughter, who was a minor girl and threatened her not to inform to their family members about the incident. In this regard, a case was registered vide Cr.No. 657/2021, U/s 376 (2)(f), 323, 506 IPC & Sec. 3 R/w 4 of POCSO Act 2012. Accused Arshad Hussain of Gulshan Iqbal Colony, Chandrayangutta was arrested and produced before the court for judicial remand K. N. Prasad Verma, SHO, Chandrayangutta, filed charge-sheet before XII ASJ Court, Hyderabad. Due to bifurcation of PS jurisdiction, the case was transferred to PS Santoshnagar. During the trial, the Santoshnagar police produced all the witnesses before the court and ensured successful trial. On March 28, 2025, the XII Addl. Session Judge, Hyderabad pronounced judgment. (NSS)

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## Graduation ceremony held at Air Traffic Control Officers' Training Establishment



Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): On successful completion of No-150 Air Traffic Surveillance Services (ATSS) course and No-113 Air Traffic Management & Air Laws [ATM A & L (B)] course, a graduation ceremony was held at Air Traffic Control Officers' Training Establishment (ATCOTE) today. Air Marshal S Shrinivas, Commandant, Air Force Academy (AFA), graced the occasion as Reviewing Officer. ATCOTE is a premier training establishment of the Indian Air Force (IAF) located at AFA, Hyderabad. The six months long ATM & AL (B) course comprised Officers from the Indian Air Force, Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and an Officer from Sri Lanka, while the three month long mid-level ATSS course had officers from the Indian Air Force, Indian Navy and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). In his address, the RO congratulated the graduating officers and extended his best wishes for their future endeavours. He acknowledged the vital role played by ATCOTE in training military air traffic controllers and highlighted the importance of the 150th ATSS course as a significant milestone for the establishment. He stressed the need for them to be good professionals, as safe and efficient air space management rests on effective decisions made by ATC officers. He reiterated that there are additional responsibilities on military air traffic controllers as more number of military aerodromes have now been opened for civilian use and a large number of civil aircraft operate in the restricted airspace controlled by the IAF, due to successful assimilation of flexible use of airspace policy. He also highlighted the need to learn lessons from previous incidents and to be proactive for ensuring safety of operations. (NSS)

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## State govt should fight for funds due from Centre: CPI



Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): CPI State secretary and party MLA Koonamneni Sambasiva Rao today said the State government should fight for funds due to it from the Central government. He alleged that the Central government, which is giving 15% share to Uttar Pradesh State, was not releasing funds that are due to Telangana State. Speaking to mediapersons at the CPI State office Maqdhoom Bhavan on Friday along with recently elected party MLC Nellikanti Satyam, Telangana State Rythu Sangham State president Bagam Hemanth and general secretary Pashya Padma.

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Speaking on the occasion, he said the Centre would have to give the State its due share and if the Centre does not give it, they would fight together.

Koonamneni Sambasiva Rao congratulated the government for conducting the assembly session very well this time. He said even though he was not present in the last assembly session, many people's representatives had told him about it. "I have heard that they were not allowed to speak at all and if anyone criticized anything, the marshals would throw them out," he said. He said the Centre owes Rs. 25,000 crore of the dues and more would go in the form of GDP and the discussion was on who ate how much instead of discussing these issues. Koonamneni Sambasiva Rao said if the State government ruled well without committing mistakes like the previous government, it would get a good name. "We have to focus on what the Congress government is doing. 2025-26 annual budget is not a pro-

poor budget and no government is doing justice to the common man. Debts are high and guarantees are also high. There is no budget money, but the promises have been made excessively and they are trying to fulfill them," he said. It was suggested that a prepared system should be set up to fulfill the promises by him. He said the farm loan waiver had turned out to be a mess and added that many people had not been given the loan waiver due to the technical reasons while claiming that in some areas of the districts, very few people have been given loan waiver. Stating that a farmer's loan waiver was not done to a family in Raghunath village of Jangaon district due to technical reasons, he urged the government to resolve the technical issues and complete the loan waiver scheme. (NSS)

## Kalvakuntla family exploited Telangana: Congress MLC

Hyderabad, March 28 (NSS): Congress MLC Balmoor Venkat Narsing Rao has made pointed accusations against BRS MLC Kavitha, asserting that the Kalvakuntla family has exploited Telangana through their actions. He claimed that over the past decade of BRS governance, Kavitha has misappropriated more of the state's resources than her brother, KT Rama Rao. During a press briefing at Gandhi Bhavan on Friday, Balmoor Venkat Narsing Rao, accompanied by fellow Congress MLC Aamir Ali Khan, criticised BRS leader Kavitha for what he described as blatant falsehoods regarding the state budget, accusing her of misleading the people with inaccurate figures. "MLC Kavitha, who is voicing concerns about the state budget, appears to have overlooked the actual statistics. She seems to be struggling with both the liquor revenue figures and the budget data," he remarked. The Congress MLC also mentioned that former Chief Minister and Opposition Leader K Chandrashekar Rao is residing in a farmhouse while receiving a salary, whereas Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is diligently working around the clock for the advancement of Telangana State. "There is a significant contrast between KCR and Revanth Reddy. MLC Kavitha should consider the facts and be honest when addressing the people," he stated. (NSS)

## 5 years on, Covid-19 death count in Pune district stands at 17,108



GNS News Agency, March 28

On March 30 (Sunday), it will be five years since the first death due to Covid-19 was reported in the Pune district. With the last Covid-19 death reported in the district in 2024, the toll stands at 17,108. As many as 14.17 lakh people in the district have gotten infected with the contagion since 2020. Overall, in Maharashtra, the toll stands at close to 1.5 lakh, with over 81 lakh people infected. An analysis by the Pune district health department shows that of the 17,108 deaths, a majority were from the city. At least 8,111 people who lost their lives were from Pune city, while 4,228 were from Pimpri Chinchwad and 4,769 from Pune rural areas. The second wave in 2021 saw nearly 60 per cent of the total deaths. According to the analysis, a total of 6,711 people died in 2020, while 9,866 died in 2021. "Doctors, healthcare workers and primary care givers were among the first ones to be affected by Covid-19 as they faced significant workloads and potential exposure," Dr Sanjay Patil, National Secretary, Hospital Board of India, recalled.

As per the Indian Medical Association (IMA) data,

close to 1,600 doctors had died of the infection across the country. IMA now observes January 30 as Covid Martyrs' Day in memory of the doctors who died during the pandemic. According to the former national president of IMA, Dr R V Asokan, doctors on the frontline had to face several challenges as it was a disease that was evolving. Dr Amit Dravid, an infectious diseases specialist who hails from Dhule but has been based in Pune for several years now, said he lost a dear friend who was also a well-known physician during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. "While treating several Covid-19 patients, the physician contracted the infection but with increasing complications was brought to Pune," Dr Dravid recalled. From dialysis to ventilation, doctors tried every mode of treatment, but the 50-year-old physician who had comorbid conditions (diabetes and blood pressure) succumbed to the virus. "IMA also created a martyrs' fund, and we were able to support at least 35 families, and Rs 10 lakh per family was given," Dr Asokan said, adding that their appeal to the government to recognise and also award compensation to the deserving families has been pending. "These doctors also deserve to be acknowledged by the nation," he stressed. Dr Pradeep Awate, former Maharashtra state surveillance officer, said the Covid-19 pandemic affected every aspect of life. "Its socio-economic, psychological impacts are worse than the huge mortality it has caused. Many studies showed an increase in mental illness in the post-Covid period. This pandemic clearly emphasised the importance of public health and how it must be the rallying point of all our development efforts. Unfortunately, even after five years of this tragic pandemic, we are still not getting the appropriate attention to our health system development. Meagre provisions for health in the Union and state budgets prove that we have not learned our Covid-19 lessons yet," he said.

## Resolving Public Issues is the Goal: Quthbullapur BRS Leader Shambipur Krishna

Quthbullapur, March 28 "Leaders, activists, and colony members from the Quthbullapur constituency met BRS leader Shambipur Krishna at his office in Shambipur, Dundigal Municipality. During the meeting, residents appealed for the resolution of various local issues. Responding positively, Krishna assured them that addressing public concerns remains his primary objective. "He further stated that the issues would be brought to the attention of Medchal district BRS party president and MLC Shambipur Raju, as well as MLA K.P. Vivekanand. With their support and cooperation, efforts would be made to resolve these problems." Additionally, senior BRS leader from Gagillapur Thanda, Korra Ravindra Naik, was honored with a shawl and congratulated on his birthday.



## Narsa Reddy Bhupathi Reddy Participates in Quthbullapur Constituency and Nizampet Municipal Corporation Preparatory Meeting under the Jai Babu Jai Bheem Jai Samvidhan Program



Quthbullapur, March 28 "As per the directions of AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, the Jai Babu Jai Bheem Jai Samvidhan program is being conducted to protect democracy and spread the ideologies of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar among the people. "As part of this initiative, a preparatory meeting for the Quthbullapur constituency and Nizampet Municipal Corporation was held under the leadership of constituency in-charge Kolan Hanumanth Reddy. "TPCC State General Secretary and Quthbullapur Congress Leader Narsa Reddy Bhupathi Reddy participated in the meeting, along with Nizampet Municipal Corporation President Kolan Rajasekhara Reddy. Several senior leaders from the Nizampet Municipal Corporation and affiliated organizations also attended the event in large numbers.

## Devotees Gather for Lakshmi Ganapati Temple Puja and Annadanam in Vaishnavi Nagar, Suraram

Quthbullapur, March 28 "The Colony Welfare Association of Vaishnavi Nagar, located in the 129th Division of Suraram, organized a special puja and Annadanam (mass food donation) program at the newly constructed Lakshmi Ganapati Temple. "On this occasion, BRS Party Division President Puppala Bhaskar attended the event as a chief guest. Colony President Yadi Reddy, along with Nagabhushanam, Chandrasekhar Reddy, Apparavu, Thati Ravi Kumar, and other committee members, also participated in the ceremony.



## Baling Sathaiah Goud Memorial Foundation Badminton Competitions. "Congress Senior Leaders Baling Gautam Goud"



Surilingampalli March 28 "Badminton competitions were organized under the auspices of Baling Sathaiah Goud Memorial Foundation at Praja City Welfare Association under Hafiz Pet Division. In this program, Congress Senior

Leaders Baling Gautam Goud started the badminton competitions along with the residents of the colony. "Praja City Welfare Association President Naidu, Cable Ravi, Venkatesh Goud Srinivas Goud Mallesh participated in this



## Delhi High Court allows MP Engineer Rashid to attend Parliament



GNS News Agency, March 28

Engineer Rashid, an Independent Lok Sabha MP from Baramulla, has been in judicial custody since 2019 in connection with a terror funding case being investigated by the National Investigation Agency. The Delhi High Court allowed Jammu and Kashmir MP Abdul Rashid Sheikh alias Engineer Rashid to attend Lok Sabha proceedings from March 26 to April 4, while in judicial custody, saying he "owes to the people of his constituency the duty and responsibility to represent them in Parliament".

Rashid, an Independent Lok Sabha MP from Baramulla, has been in judicial custody since 2019 in connection with a terror funding case being investigated by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). In an order dated March 25 and made public on Wednesday, a division bench of Justices Chandra Dhari Singh and Anup Bhamhani reasoned that notwithstanding the serious charges Rashid is facing, "As a Member of Parliament, the appellant (Rashid) owes to the people of his constituency the duty and responsibility to represent them in Parliament." "This court is confident, that subject to the conditions that the court proposes to impose by this order, the State machinery would be able to ensure the integrity of the appellant's custody, so that he remains available to face trial," the bench recorded in its order.

As per the court conditions, the director general (pris-

ons) has been directed to send Rashid "in-custody" under police escort from prison to Parliament on each of the dates on which the Lok Sabha is in session between March 26 and April 4, during the hours that the Lok Sabha is in session. On each day, Rashid will be brought back to jail even if it is beyond the official hours of jail entry. At Parliament House, Rashid shall be handed over to the custody of Parliament security/marshals, who shall allow him to attend the proceedings of the Lok Sabha and to avail other facilities and amenities within Parliament House during the hours that the Lok Sabha is in session; and shall thereafter hand-back custody of the appellant to the prison escort, who will bring him back to prison straight from the Parliament House, on the same day, without any delay. Rashid shall not be entitled to use any communication device or have access to internet by any mode, and is neither permitted to interact with any person at any time while he is outside the jail, except for within the Lok Sabha premises and only in relation to performance of his role as a Member of Parliament as per the requisite discipline permitted by the Lok Sabha Rules. He is also not allowed to interact with media inside or outside Parliament premises. The court, in its order, further requested the secretary-general of the Lok Sabha to ensure compliance with the court-imposed conditions by taking requisite steps as may be required, as per Parliament rules, to ensure that Rashid's judicial custody is not compromised. On Tuesday, the Delhi High Court had reserved its order in Rashid's plea seeking that he be allowed to attend Parliament while in the court's custody. His request comes after a trial court rejected his bail plea last week. In February, the Delhi High Court had allowed Rashid to attend Parliament for two days during the budget session. The NIA had arrested Rashid under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. According to the agency, he used various public platforms to "propagate the ideology of separatism and secessionism", was closely associated with various terrorist organisations, and wanted to "legitimise" the United Jihad Council, a platform of anti-India militant groups in Jammu and Kashmir.

## Karni Sena storms Samajwadi Party leader Ramji Lal Suman's house in Agra over remarks on Rajput ruler

GNS News Agency, March 28

Dozens of Karni Sena activists allegedly caused a ruckus outside the house of Samajwadi Party Rajya Sabha MP Ramji Lal Suman in Agra around Wednesday noon in protest of his remark on Rajput ruler Rana Sanga. Some activists allegedly arrived on a bulldozer, raised slogans of "Jai Shri Ram," and pelted stones, injuring several police personnel in the process. They also allegedly ransacked furniture outside his house and smashed at least ten cars parked nearby. The police used a mild lathi charge to disperse the crowd. While some arrests were made, the exact number has not been confirmed. Karni Sena activists began gathering at Etmadpur crossing at 10 am and then marched to the MP's house in the Hariparwat locality. They allegedly attempted to storm the house's main gate, but the police resisted their efforts. Three policemen were injured in the attack. "We have successfully dispersed the crowd. An additional police force has been deployed nearby to ensure peace. A few arrests have been made, but they will be released soon," said Alok Kumar, Station House Officer (SHO) of Hariparwat police station.

"We are reviewing CCTV footage from the area. An FIR will be registered, and strict action will be taken against those involved," said Assistant Superintendent of Police Aditya. Justifying the attack, Okendra Rana, the youth wing chief of the Karni Sena, said, "We will write the name of our revered warrior Rana Sanga on every brick in Suman's house. He has used humiliating words against the icons of Hindu society. While anyone can hurl insults at our leaders, this time, we will not forgive him," said Okendra Rana, the youth wing chief of the Karni Sena. Suman has faced significant backlash from right-wing Hindu groups such as the Vishva Hindu Parishad and Karni Sena following his controversial statement in the Rajya Sabha, where he referred to Rajput ruler Rana Sanga as a "traitor."



Sanga, a member of the Sisodia clan of Suryavanshi Rajputs, ruled Mewar from 1508 to 1528. He led a Rajput alliance against Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire in the Indian subcontinent, but was defeated at the Battle of Khanwa. This defeat was a decisive moment that solidified Mughal control over the region. On March 21, Suman said in Rajya Sabha, "Indian Muslims do not consider Babur their idol; they follow Muhammad and the Sufi tradition. However, I want to ask, who brought Babur here? It was Rana Sanga who invited Babur to defeat Ibrahim Lodhi. So, if that's the case, then Hindus must be descendants of traitor Sanga. We criticize Babur, but why do we not criticize Rana Sanga?" Attacking Suman, Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat of the BJP remarked that only someone with a "trivial intellect" and a "small heart" could have made such comments. After the violent demonstration at Suman's house, he spoke to the local media and said, "Rana Sanga was the ruler of Mewar from 1505 to 1528. Everyone now wants to turn the pages of history." He added that the BJP leaders only want to discuss Aurangzeb to create a communal divide, and that others cannot remain silent on this issue.

## Maharashtra to withdraw proposed 6% tax on EVs priced over 30 lakh: CM Devendra Fadnavis



GNS News Agency, March 28

The Maharashtra government has decided against a budget proposal to impose a 6 per cent tax on electric vehicles (EVs) priced above Rs 30 lakh. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced this decision in the Legislative Council Wednesday. The government, in Budget 2025-26, planned to levy a tax on EVs priced above Rs 30 lakh, categorising them as luxury vehicles. However, after reconsideration, it was determined that there is currently little demand for EVs in this price range.

Fadnavis said, "We thought it would not make sense to impose a tax that could discourage the adoption of electric vehicles. Therefore, we have decided not to levy this tax. Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar will officially make this announcement." Shiv Sena (UBT) MLC Anil Parab raised the tax issue in the Legislative Council. In the budget, the government proposed to increase the tax rate by 1 per cent on individually owned four-wheelers (non-transport) operating on compressed natural gas (CNG) and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). This tax increase was subsequently passed in both Houses of the state legislature despite criticism from Opposition leaders. The government had also announced a 7 per cent tax on light goods vehicles (LGVs) carrying goods up to 7,500 kg in the state. The increase in tax on CNG/LPG vehicles was expected to generate an additional revenue of Rs 150 crore, while that on GV Rs 625 crore. The proposed increase in tax on EVs was ex-

pected to generate a revenue of Rs 180 crore. After the budget was tabled, Fadnavis had said, "The majority of the population using four-wheelers get covered in the bracket below Rs 30 lakh. In that sense, the tax hike is unlikely to have an adverse impact on people at large."

## RBI Governor sees AI as key tool to combat money laundering

Mumbai: Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Wednesday said that considering the evolving landscape of money laundering, regulators will need to continuously augment artificial intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) risk assessment framework to make appropriate system enhancements.

Addressing the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Private Sector Collaborative Forum 2025 event here, the RBI Governor pointed out that technology has enabled greater ease of doing business, but at the same time, it has also facilitated and fostered new and very sophisticated means of money laundering and illicit financing. This makes it imperative to refine and improve risk assessment models. He also urged the central banks to understand the latest trends and developments in the financial world that can be exploited by criminal elements. By understanding this, he said, central banks should develop rules and frameworks which detect suspicious transactions early, and take pre-emptive action. At the same time he also had a word of caution for policymakers. "While we continue to make our financial systems safe and secure against money laundering and terrorist financing, we as policymakers need to be mindful that our measures are not overzealous and do not stifle legitimate activities and investments," Malhotra observed. "Therefore, we need to have laws and regulations, which with surgical precision, target only the illegitimate and the illicit, rather than use very broad and blunt tools, which unintentionally hurt even the honest," he said.

## Dharavi blaze sparks concerns over illegal parking: BMC plans to streamline process through online booking



GNS News Agency, March 28

After an explosion of gas cylinders at illegally parked vehicles triggered a massive fire in Dharavi Monday, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is looking to provide authorised parking spaces and streamline the parking process for the vehicles providing basic supplies at Dharavi through online slot booking for regularised parking.

On Monday night, a massive fire broke out near Dharavi's PNP colony, after the cylinders inside two illegally parked vehicles exploded. The blaze, which left nearly 18 vehicles charred in its wake, was controlled after midnight. Following the mishap, the Mumbai police registered an FIR against eight people, including three drivers, a gas agency, a ration shop owner and two others who allegedly ran an illegal parking area at the spot. As per the FIR, two trucks containing gas cylinders from HP Gas agency were double-parked near the spot of the fire, while another truck

containing rice from a ration shop was also illegally parked nearby. While no injuries were reported in the massive fire, the incident has raised alarm bells over the illegal parking of vehicles such as trucks with highly combustible objects in the area. Taking to social media, Jyoti Gaikwad, Dharavi MLA, also pointed to the unauthorised parking in the area and wrote, "Why are trucks carrying highly combustible cylinders allowed to park illegally in such a congested locality? Is the safety of citizens not paramount? Why are buses and trucks from outside being allowed to park here unchecked?" A day after the accident, senior civic officials from the G/North ward, as well as officials from the police, including the deputy commissioner of police and traffic department, convened a meeting to discuss the rising menace of hawking and unauthorised parking in the area. During the meeting, the authorities agreed on the necessity of authorised parking spaces and are exploring the possibility of regularising this through an online booking system. Speaking to The Indian Express, a BMC official said, "We are exploring the possibility of allocating authorised parking space for the vehicles of the area. In a bid to streamline the process, we will be providing a facility for online booking of parking spots through which the vehicles can avail slots. The process will regularise parking in the area, and those availing the facility will be charged." The official added that the facility could be availed by the external large vehicles supplying basic amenities like gas cylinders akin to the ones which were found illegally parked following the mishap. The officials from BMC, police, and traffic departments are slated to convene another meeting on April 2 to discuss further plans to implement the process and tackle the ongoing hawking problem.

## Fadnavis announces rental houses for 12 years for ineligible tenants under Dharavi redevelopment project

GNS News Agency, March 28

The Dharavi redevelopment project is a joint venture between the Maharashtra government and the Adani group. The Dharavi redevelopment project, covering over 100 million sq ft, is estimated to cost over Rs 2 lakh crore. While dismissing apprehensions about unsettling residents following the Dharavi redevelopment project, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has said that ineligible tenants will be provided rental houses for twelve years, after which the tenements will be transferred to their names.

"The state government is committed to its promise of housing for all. Those ineligible for housing will be provided rental houses for 12 years. After the completion of 12 years, it will be transferred to their names in accordance with norms and procedures," Fadnavis said in the Assembly on Tuesday. Fadnavis dismissed the apprehensions voiced by the Opposition regarding the adverse impact of the redevelopment project on people living in Dharavi, Asia's largest slum colony. Occupants of all slums that existed before 2001 will be eligible for free houses, while those who do not



qualify under the cut-off date—people who lived in slums from 2001 to 2011—will be given houses at their construction cost. However, post-2011 tenants will be given houses on rent for 12 years. The Dharavi redevelopment project, covering over 100 million sq ft, is estimated to cost over Rs 2 lakh crore. According to rough estimates, approximately 1.25 lakh tenements—both residential and commercial units—will be accommodated in the project.

## In Chennai, a one-hour chain-snatching spree, eight victims, and a police encounter

GNS News Agency, March 28

A spate of chain-snatching incidents in Chennai, executed within an hour on Tuesday morning, culminated in the fatal police shooting of one of the suspects near Taramani railway station early Wednesday. Police said the men, part of a notorious gang, targeted elderly women and morning walkers in neighbourhoods along East Coast Road, Adyar and Besant Nagar. Two suspects, Jaffer Gulam Hussain, 28, and Suraj alias Marsingh Amjat, both from Uttar Pradesh, were intercepted at Chennai International Airport as they attempted to board a flight to New Delhi, police said. A third accomplice, who had fled with some of the stolen jewellery, was arrested aboard the Vijayawada-bound Pinakini Express at Nellore railway station in Andhra Pradesh.

Investigators pieced together the sequence of events using footage from more than 300 CCTV cameras across the city. In the early hours of Tuesday, the suspects, riding a motorcycle, snatched gold chains from at least eight victims, making off with 16 sovereigns of jewellery worth approximately Rs 10 lakh. After receiving multiple complaints, special teams from the Greater Chennai Police launched a coordinated search. Surveillance footage showed the suspects heading toward Chennai Airport. Officers tracked their vehicle in a nearby parking lot and monitored all departing passengers between 8 am and noon. Based on their attire, Jaffer and Suraj were identified and apprehended while queuing for boarding passes. Police said that during questioning, the men initially feigned innocence, claiming that they were



travelling to meet their families. But during the interrogation, they confessed and revealed that a third suspect had boarded a train with the stolen valuables. The Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel at Nellore were informed, and they intercepted the suspect and recovered eight sovereigns of gold from the train. The remaining stolen items, police said, were yet to be traced. Hours after their arrest, police took Hussain to a secluded spot near the Taramani railway station, where they claimed he and his associates had stashed the stolen jewellery. Police claimed that he attacked an inspector and attempted to escape, prompting officers to open fire. He was shot and killed on the spot. Police said Hussain had been wanted by the Maharashtra police since 2020 for his involvement in at least 50 chain-snatching cases across multiple states.

## In Maharashtra's agricultural sector, an 'economic emergency' that is not talked about

GNS News Agency, March 28

Rohan Shelar is at a loss to understand why everything he puts his hope on has turned out to be a fiasco. This 25-year-old farmer from Dharashiv district of Maharashtra was in despair when he had to sell his soyabean at the throwaway price of Rs 3,500 as against the government-declared minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 4,986 per quintal. "Now I have harvested my rabi chana, prices are much below its MSP—even milk, which was earlier the cash cow, has now become a loss-making privilege. It seems like there is no end to the spiralling losses—yet no one wants to talk about this," he sighed. Other than the temperature, what seems to be soaring is the losses of farmers like Shelar. If soyabean, tur and cotton—the main kharif crops—are selling below their MSP, chana, the major rabi crop of the region, is selling far below its MSP, that too before the actual offloading at farmers' end has started. Even milk, which acts as a shock absorber for many farmers, has turned unprofitable, with dairies not paying more than the stipulated price of Rs 35 per litre. "What is most painful is that no one is talking about this," said Deepak Chavan, a farmer from Sultanpur village in the Khultabad taluka of the

neighbouring Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district. Chavan's village is around 12 km from the grave of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, which is in the middle of a political slugfest in the state. Calls for demolition of the grave have come from many quarters, including from minister Nitesh Rane. But Chavan asked, "Would that help stem the losses faced by farmers? Due to increased prices in inputs like pesticides and fertilisers, our production cost has gone up, but the returns are not commensurate with that. Most farmers are in losses with little scope of making profit from their traditional crops." Farmer leader Vijay Jawandhiya said the farm sector is in the middle of an economic emergency. "If one takes the cost of soyabean, the cumulative loss reported by farmers is over Rs 5,000 crore. But we do not see any discussion about this anywhere," he said. Jawandhiya said that given the cumulative losses faced by farmers, the chances of them moving away from the oilseed crop are high. "The processors have already sounded the alarm bell about this," he said. In the case of pulses like tur and chana, easy imports have seen prices being pushed down in the local markets. "On one hand, the central government talks about self-sufficiency in pulses but allows easy import, which pushes prices down."



## AC offices, shorter meetings, Japanese philosophy: Administrative Reforms Commission submits report to Gujarat CM to increase govt productivity



GNS News Agency, March 28

The Gujarat Administrative Reforms Commission (GARC), in its first report submitted to Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel Wednesday, has recommended installing air conditioners in government offices to increase productivity, holding meetings offline only when "stakeholders' inputs are necessary", and concluding them in "under an hour". Headed by Dr Hasmukh Adhia, a former Union Finance Secretary and Principal Advisor to the CM, the first GARC report was prepared a month after the commission was appointed. It recommends replacing a 1989 Government Resolution (GR), "when air conditioning was considered an elite facility" that entitled only government officials in pay level 13 (typically joint secretary and above) to air conditioned offices, with a GR that allows all officials above Class 2 (pay level 8 and above) to have ACs. Inspired by the Japanese administrative philosophy Kaizen, which focuses on "continuous improvement through small acts of organisation that create harmonious workplaces", the GARC report recommends taking government employees' perspectives into account as they interact with citizens frequently and have a "practical view of processes". The commission advised installing QR codes and suggestion boxes "in strategic locations within government departments and

office facilities throughout the state" so people can give feedback anonymously by writing or voice recordings.

The report states that the mean temperature in Gujarat in the last 33 years (1986 to 2019) increased by 2.9 degrees Celsius and how by the end of the 21st century, temperatures in Gujarat "could rise by 1.5°C to 5°C, depending on various climate change scenarios". It suggested that priority should be given to large office complexes like the Sachivalaya and offices of heads of department and collectors where "centralised systems" can be installed. In the second phase, the remaining government offices that witness a "high footfall" will be air-conditioned. The commission has also recommended that these be run on solar power. "The government shall take steps to install rooftop solar at each government office wherever feasible as per the existing government scheme so that by 2026, government offices may have reached the zero energy bill, resulting in considerable savings for the exchequer," the report states. Referring to the Vedic era when "sabhas" were crucial for governance, the report stresses on effective management of meetings, which should be scheduled at least "three days" in advance unless about urgent matters. The commission suggests all meetings involving outstation participants be held virtually "unless in-person presence is mandatory". It suggested upgrading the e-Sarkar meeting scheduler and added that "all recurring meetings start with an 'action taken' report reviewed by the chairperson". The report also encourages "active dialogue from all participants" and says young professionals and junior officials should share insights with seniors. It suggests that minutes of the meetings be prepared and circulated within 24 hours. The GARC was announced last month during this year's budget session to introduce key reforms in the state's administrative framework. Apart from chairperson Dr Adhia, the GARC includes Chief Secretary Pankaj Joshi, Additional Chief Secretary Kamal Dayani, Principal Secretaries Mona Khandhar and Dr T Natarajan, and Member Secretary Hareet Shukla.

## First-ever drug census, expansion of health insurance; no new taxes, no announcements for women



GNS News Agency, March 28

Punjab Budget 2025-26 Highlights: Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema Wednesday presented the Punjab Budget 2025-26 with an outlay of Rs 2,36,080 crore, without imposing any new taxes or making announcements aimed at women voters. Despite the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) pre-election promise of Rs 1,000 per month for women, the cash-strapped government could not implement the scheme in its fourth budget presented in the Legislative Assembly. Cheema described the budget proposal as the 'Badal Punjab' roadmap, stating that this budget will be remembered in history for its potential to transform lives in both villages and cities. He said the revenue deficit is Rs 23,957 crore and the debt by the end of next fiscal will be Rs 4.17 lakh crore by the end of next fiscal. He stated that the effective revenue deficit and fiscal deficit are anticipated to be 2.51 per cent and 3.84 per cent, respectively. He mentioned that these parameters were better than before, indicating that the state has taken steps toward fiscal consolidation. As part of its Yuddh Nashayan Virudh campaign, the state will establish a second line of defence at the border by deploying 5,000 home guards in conjunction with the Border Security Force (BSF). These home guards will be selected from among the most determined youth in Punjab and will serve as vigilant protectors of the province's future. Additionally, the government will implement the most advanced and effective anti-drone systems available. Cheema has allocated Rs 110 crore for these initiatives.

The government announced a drug census for the state in the next fiscal year. This census will cover every household in Punjab and aims to collect data to understand better the prevalence of drug use in the state, as well as the socioeconomic status of families. The goal is to develop scientific and effective strategies to combat the drug problem. An allocation of Rs 150 crore has been set aside for this census. Additionally, the budget includes provisions to enhance police preparedness in responding quickly to any tip-offs and apprehending suspects promptly. This includes the procurement of a fleet of Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs) that will respond to calls made to 112. The budget allocates Rs 125 crore for purchasing new ERVs and Rs 53 crore for constructing a new dial 112 headquarters. As part of the Yuddh Nashayan Virudh campaign, the budget focuses on engaging youth in sports. Cheema said, "I am announcing a historic allocation of Rs 979 crore to the sports department, which is the highest allocation in Punjab's history. This amount exceeds what the Akali-BJP and Congress governments collectively spent on sports over 10 years from 2012 to 2022." Under the initiative 'Khed-da Punjab, Badal Punjab,' sports will be promoted at the grassroots level, with playgrounds and indoor gyms provided in every village across Punjab. An allocation of Rs 17,975 crore has been designated for education, representing 12 per cent of the total outlay. The government plans to include all 65 lakh families in Punjab in the state health insurance scheme. Currently, 45 lakh families are enrolled in various government health insurance programmes, with 16 lakh families covered under the Punjab government's Much Mantri Sarbat Sehat Bima Yojana. Each family receives an insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh under this scheme.

The government intends to expand the programme to cover all families and increase the insurance coverage to Rs 10 lakh. Finance Minister Cheema announced an allocation of Rs 778 crore for this initiative. Additionally, the Farishtey scheme has been allocated Rs 10 crore to provide treatment for accident victims and incentivize Good Samaritans. A total budget of Rs 5,598 crore has been ear-

marked for the health sector. Next year, the government plans to repair and construct all link roads in the state. A total of 18,944 km of link roads will be built or upgraded, with an investment of Rs 2,873 crore. To enhance rural infrastructure, an additional Rs 3,500 crore will be allocated for this purpose. For local development in each district, including the construction of roads, bridges, streetlights, clinics, hospitals, schools, and improvements in water and sanitation, an amount of Rs 5 crore will be allocated to each assembly segment, totalling Rs 585 crore. This fund will be administered by the deputy commissioners and will be disbursed based on the recommendations of MLAs.

To develop world-class roads and streets in the city, 50 km of high-quality roads will be constructed in Ludhiana, Amritsar, Jalandhar, and SAS Nagar. An allocation of Rs 140 crore has been made for this project. Cheema stated that after 78 years of Independence, there are still some villages without streetlights. Under the new Mukh Mantri Street Light Yojna, the government plans to install streetlights in front of residents' houses to reduce expenses on poles, allocating Rs 115 crore for this initiative. Also, Rs 7,614 crore has been set aside to provide free electricity to households of up to 300 units. Additionally, Rs 225 crore has been designated for improving city cleanliness and water supply. An allocation of Rs 250 crore has been set aside to provide incentives to the industry. The state will also construct a Unity Mall in Amritsar, featuring stalls representing all states and Union Territories, as well as Punjab's 23 districts, with a budget of Rs 80 crore. Additionally, Rs 120 crore has been earmarked for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). A total of Rs 3,426 crore has been allocated for the industrial sector, which includes subsidised power. Furthermore, Rs 10 crore has been designated for the Research and Development Centre and the Institute of Auto Parts and Hand Tools Technology in Ludhiana.

An allocation of Rs 9,340 crore has been made to help uplift citizens at every stage of life. An amount of Rs 6,175 has been kept aside for providing financial support to the elderly, widows, destitute women, orphans and persons with disabilities. The government has proposed a loan waiver for defaulters of the Punjab Scheduled Castes Land Development and Finance Corporation (PSCFC). All loans taken through the corporation up until March 31, 2020, will be waived. As many as 4,650 people will benefit from this waiver. Free travel for women will cost the state Rs 450 crore in the next fiscal. An allocation has been made to this effect. A total of 21,000 hectares will be converted from paddy to Kharif maize to promote ethanol production, in line with the Indian government's target of achieving 20 per cent ethanol blending by 2025. Farmers who switch to Kharif maize cultivation will receive a subsidy of Rs 17,500 per hectare, and it is expected that around 30,000 farmers will benefit from this initiative. The government has allocated Rs 115 crore for this purpose. To effectively utilise 30 lakh tonnes of paddy stubble each year, Cheema announced that the government has allocated Rs 60 crore in capital subsidies to assist industries in transitioning to boilers that use paddy stubble. Additionally, Rs 500 crore has been set aside to support farmers, cooperatives, and gram panchayats in promoting sustainable crop residue management. An allocation of Rs 9,992 crore for free electricity to the agricultural sector has been set aside.

A budgetary allocation of Rs 137 crore has been made to promote natural farming practices in the state. This new initiative covers the districts of Amritsar, Nawanshahr, Ropar, Mohali, and Hoshiarpur. An allocation of Rs 100 crore has been set aside for canal irrigation. To ensure that sugarcane prices remain the highest in the country, the minister proposed an additional Rs 250 crore to continue this support. Additionally, a 3500 TCS, 14 MWcCo-generation plant at Batala Cooperative Sugar Mill, which was constructed at a cost of Rs 296 crore, is now operational to promote green energy. An allocation of Rs 100 crore has been made for providing financial assistance to the milk producers. The projected revenue receipts are estimated to be Rs 1,11,740 crore. This amount includes Rs 63250 crore from the state's own tax revenue, Rs 25,703 crore as the state's share from central taxes, and Rs 10,576 crore as grant-in-aid from the Centre. Additionally, it is expected that Rs 27,650 crore will come from GST collections and Rs 7,000 crore from stamp duty and registration.

## Give Haryana landowners extra compensation for land acquired between 1997 and 2015, HC tells NHA

GNS News Agency, March 28

In a significant decision, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has ruled in favour of landowners in Haryana's Hisar district whose lands were acquired by the National Highways Authority of India (NHA) between 1997 and 2015, declaring them entitled to solatium and interest as per the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894. The court also struck down sections 3G and 3J of the National Highways Act, 1956, calling them unconstitutional and discriminatory.

The ruling by a division bench of Justices Sureshwar Thakur and Vikas Suri on March 20 came in response to two petitions filed by Sohan Lal and others, and Dhurender and others against the Union of India and NHA. The petitioners had challenged the compensation awarded for their lands, which had been acquired for widening and maintaining National Highway No 10 in Hisar district. Their primary grievance was that the compensation did not include solatium at 30 per cent and interest at 9 per cent and 15 per cent, as provided under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894. Solatium is an additional amount awarded to landowners as compensation for the compulsory nature of land acquisition. It acknowledges the involuntary nature of the process and the hardship caused to landowners, ensuring that they receive more than just the bare market value of their property. Under Section 23(2) of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, solatium is set at 30 per cent of the market value of the acquired land. However, the National Highways Act, 1956, did not provide for solatium, leading to disparities in compensation between landowners whose properties were acquired under different laws. The case revolved around the compulsory acquisition of 955 kanals and 16 marlas of land in Tehsil Hansi, Hisar district, Haryana. The land was acquired through a notification issued on November 27, 2009, under Section 3-A(1) of the NHA Act. The final award for compensation was passed on April 30, 2012. The petitioners had first pursued arbitration under the NHA Act, but their claims for enhanced compensation were rejected. Dissatisfied, they moved the high court in 2023, arguing that their constitutional right to equality had been violated by the exclusion of solatium and interest from their compensation. They also contended that the arbitration provisions under the NHA Act were unjust and inherently biased in favour of the government. In a ruling expected to impact thousands of landowners, the high court relied heavily on the Supreme Court's ruling in Tarsem Singh v. Union of India, which had

held that excluding solatium and interest for lands acquired under the NHA Act was unconstitutional. The court reiterated that denying these benefits created an artificial distinction between landowners whose land was acquired before and after 2015, despite the lack of any reasonable justification for such differentiation. "The broader purpose behind Tarsem Singh was to resolve and put quietus to the disparity created by Section 3J of the NHA Act," the court stated, adding that the continued denial of solatium and interest to landowners affected before 2015 was "a violation of the fundamental principle of equality enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution." The judgment further criticised the arbitration mechanism under the NHA Act, calling it "an idly created and dysfunctional remedy which lacks legal foundation". The court ruled that arbitration in land acquisition cases should be based on mutual consent, as required under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996. However, the NHA Act imposed arbitration unilaterally, depriving landowners of the right to challenge compensation before a judicial authority. "The statutory remedy of arbitration under the NHA Act is a force majeure provision imposed upon landowners, denying them the right to a fair judicial review," the court noted. The court observed that under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, and the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, landowners had access to judicial remedies, including the right to challenge compensation before the district court. However, under the NHA Act, landowners were forced into an arbitration process where the government-appointed arbitrator had excessive discretion. "When a provision is declared unconstitutional, any continued disparity strikes at the core of Article 14 and must be rectified," the court remarked, adding that the denial of fair compensation to one set of landowners while granting it to another violated the principle of equality. The court ruled that landowners whose land was acquired between 1997 and 2015 must be granted solatium and interest. It directed the authorities to reassess compensation and issue supplementary awards in accordance with the judgment. The court also declared sections 3G and 3J of the NHA Act unconstitutional, holding that they failed to meet the standards of fairness and equity. "The provisions of Sections 23(1A) and (2) and the interest payable in terms of Section 28 of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, shall be applicable to all acquisitions under the National Highways Act, 1956,"

## No barricades, smashed EVMs: why poll official moved Delhi HC seeking adequate security for Shahdara Bar election

GNS News Agency, March 28

While the elections were conducted relatively smoothly in five court complexes, two polls – in Saket and Karkardooma court complexes – were postponed due to alleged mismanagement. (Express Photo) While the elections were conducted relatively smoothly in five court complexes, two polls – in Saket and Karkardooma court complexes – were postponed due to alleged mismanagement. Citing the absence of police barricading, crowding of court premises by law college students and smashed down proximity card scanners and EVMs, an election commissioner in Karkardooma court on Tuesday moved the Delhi High Court seeking that a repolling date be fixed for the Shahdara Bar Association election held last week. In his application moved under Section 151 of the Code of Civil Procedure (inherent powers of court), Pramod Nagar, the court election commissioner, also sought directions to the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Shahdara, to provide adequate security for the polls.

The bar association elections, in which lawyers across the city chose their representatives to the executive committees, were held in line with last month's Delhi High Court order, which directed that it should be conducted on March 21, almost three months after it was originally scheduled. While the elections were conducted relatively smoothly in five court complexes, two polls – in Saket and Karkardooma court complexes – were postponed due to alleged mismanagement. The Shahdara Bar Association election was held at the Karkardooma court premises. In his petition, Nagar, who was represented by advocate K C Mittal, alleged that when he reached the court complex on the day of polling, he saw a large crowd of 5,000 people, including law college students, getting in through the entry gate. Nagar also stated in his petition that eight proximity card scanners fixed at a distance of about ten feet from the gate were smashed and there was no barricading by the



local police. Proximity cards are given for secure entry during the voting process. "...a total mess was observed by the Applicant (Nagar) and it was learnt that a large number of students from the local college including law colleges have assembled over there and crowded the entire court premises in large number...some anti-social elements were also there inside the premises creating a total mess," he alleged. As per the petition, the 85-inch LED fixed for the display of the election process had also been damaged, along with Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and polling booths. He added that many eligible voters didn't get proximity cards. In his prayer, he sought that the "complete details of the proximity card issued by the Registrar General, Delhi High Court may be furnished so that the same can be examined at the time of casting the vote..." "A video of the court complex during election day was also submitted in court. "...the complete video recording has been preserved and the complete situation in the entire compound including the voting area can be ascertained from the video recording..." said Nagar.

## Gujarat police book IIT Delhi professor for PhD scholar's death during excavation near Lothal Harappan site

GNS News Agency, March 28

The Ahmedabad Rural police have booked Professor Yama Dixit of the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi on allegations of causing the death of PhD scholar Surabhi Verma, almost four months after an excavation pit collapsed on both of them outside the Lothal Harappan valley civilisation site. They had been conducting palaeoclimatology research when the incident occurred on November 27, 2024.

The FIR was filed on March 23 based on a complaint by Surabhi's father, 58-year-old Ram Khelawan Verma, a government teacher in Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh. He had, over the last four months, given four to five applications to the police, asking them to "properly investigate" his daughter's death. Dixit was booked under BNS sections 106(1) (causing death by negligence) and 125(a) (endangering life or personal safety of others). Police officials said she would be sent a notice to appear for questioning at Koth police station.

The FIR states, "On November 27, 2024, Surabhi Verma and Yama Dixit, along with professor V N Prabhakar and Shikha Rai of IIT Gandhinagar, had gone for research purposes. There, Dixit chose an area next to the road passing next to the Lothal site. There, using a 'Hitachi', they dug a hole 13 feet in length, 4 feet in width, and 10 feet in depth." The Hitachi is an excavator machine that was being used for road construction at the time and was allegedly repurposed by the researchers to dig an impromptu pit for their research.

While Verma was a PhD scholar, Dixit is an Assistant Professor, both at the Centre for Atmospheric Sciences (CAS) at IIT Delhi. The other two members of the team, Associate Professor Prabhakar and Rai, a Senior Research Fellow, are from the Archeological Sciences Centre at IIT Gandhinagar. The FIR states, "Dixit and Verma went into



PhD scholar Surabhi Verma died when an excavation pit collapsed on her on November 27, 2024; the professor who has been booked was injured in the incident.

this pit to take samples. At this time, the wall of the pit collapsed on top of Surabhi. She was buried and died due to asphyxiation. The wall also fell on Dixit, who suffered head injuries and was under treatment." Verma's postmortem was conducted on November 27, and her last rites were conducted in her hometown of Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh the day after. The Indian Express had reported in November 2024 that the researchers approached the driver of an excavator working nearby and asked him to dig a trench for their study. The dig site is located about 50 metres from the Lothal Harappan valley civilisation site, and according to the Archeological Survey of India (ASI), any area up to the limit of 100 metres from the monument or site is a "prohibited area", while any area up to a distance of 200 metres is a "regulated area".



## At bail hearing, actress Ranya Rao's counsel questions physical search consent obtained by DRI



GNS News Agency, March 28

The counsel for actress Ranya Rao has called into question the presence of two versions of a consent for search given by her to the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) after she was allegedly intercepted with 14.2 kg of gold on her body at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru on March 3. Senior counsel Kiran Javali, who appeared for Rao during the bail hearing in a sessions court, argued on Tuesday that the DRI had provided a modified version of a consent for search of her person in the course of filing objections to her latest bail plea. Javali questioned a detailed version of the consent for search by claiming that it was different from the copy of the original consent that was provided to a magistrate after the arrest.

Appearing on behalf of the advocate on record, B S Girish, Javali also raised questions over the procedure of the physical search of Rao adopted by the DRI under Section 102 of the Customs Act. Earlier, a magistrate's court had rejected Rao's advocates' argument that the DRI did not comply with Section 102 of the Customs Act and did not obtain the written consent of the actress before conducting a physical search to find the gold concealed on her body. The argument cannot be accepted because "there is written consent of accused No. 1 on record to show the compliance of the said section. The said consent at this juncture is sufficient to gather triable case against the accused No. 1," the special magistrate's court had ruled in its March 14 order. Under Section 102 of the Customs Act, "when any officer of customs is about to search any person under the provisions of section 100 or section 101, the officer of cus-

toms shall, if such person so requires, take him without unnecessary delay to the nearest Gazetted Officer of customs or magistrate". The DRI has argued that Rao gave her consent to be presented before a gazetted Customs officer of the rank of deputy director, who was present at the airport at the time of the interception, to obtain clearance for a physical search. The senior counsel for the DRI, Madhu N Rao, argued on Tuesday that the DRI was in full compliance with the arrest procedure mandated by the law in the course of Rao's arrest. "It is not just substantial compliance but full compliance," the DRI counsel argued. The counsel further argued that Rao was served with an arrest memo outlining the reasons for her arrest as mandated by Supreme Court rulings.

The DRI counsel said that Rao was the source of the funds with which gold was purchased in Dubai for smuggling to India by her associate, Telugu actor Tarun Konduru Raju, 36, alias Virat Konduru. The DRI probe is of a sensitive nature, and the agency is verifying the source of gold in Dubai and its subsequent purchase in India, the DRI counsel argued. The DRI stated that the gold in Dubai was purchased with funds transferred through hawala routes by Rao and that the tickets for travel to Dubai by the actress and Konduru were booked using funds provided by her. Releasing Rao on bail would be detrimental to the investigation, the DRI counsel argued. The sessions court posted the bail plea of the actress for orders on March 27. Konduru's bail plea is also due for a hearing on the same day. Earlier, a special magistrate's court for economic offences cited Rao's frequent travel to Dubai - including 27 visits since January 2025 - the possession of a Dubai Resident Identity Card, and a threat to national security for denial of bail to the actress. Rao was arrested at the Bengaluru international airport on March 3 when she arrived from Dubai with 14.2 kg of gold worth ₹ 12.56 crore wrapped on her body. She is alleged to have attempted to evade ₹ 4.83 crore in Customs duty through her act. The actress was intercepted by DRI officials when she did not declare the gold consignment on her person but instead walked through a green channel at the airport with the escort of a Bengaluru police protocol official. Rao is the stepdaughter of senior Karnataka DGP-rank IPS officer K Ramachandra Rao. She misused the police protocol service available at the airport to the DGP for gold smuggling, the DRI has claimed.

## Delhi High Court seeks response from Atishi in plea challenging her win from Kalkaji in Assembly polls

GNS News Agency, March 28

The Delhi High Court Wednesday sought a response from former Delhi chief minister Atishi, the Election Commission of India and others in a plea challenging her election from the Kalkaji constituency in the Assembly elections. The election petition, filed by two voters in the Kalkaji constituency - Kamaljit Singh Duggal and Ayush Rana - has accused Atishi and her election agents of "indulging in corrupt practices" and is seeking to set aside her electoral win. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader polled 52,154 votes and won by a margin of 3,521 votes against the BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri.

Justice Jyoti Singh heard the case and issued notices to the respondents, including Atishi; the ECI; Shailendra Kumar Singh, the returning officer for the constituency; and the Delhi Police. While the ECI and the returning officer informed the court that established law dictates that neither party can be included in an election petition, the court stated that it remains open for both the ECI and the returning officer to present this objection in their responses. The plea, filed by advocate Tanoodbhav Singhdev, claimed that close associates of Atishi were caught with Rs 5 lakh in cash in the constituency on February 3, just a day before the election on February 4. The two associates were allegedly acting on her instructions to "buy votes in her favour." The petitioners argued that this constitutes the corrupt practice of bribery as outlined in the Representation of the People Act.



The plea alleged that AAP workers, with Atishi's consent, published fake videos containing false statements that accused men of engaging in hooliganism on the orders of Bidhuri in order to undermine his prospects. The petitioners alleged that Atishi misused her position to exploit public resources by using a Public Works Department (PWD) vehicle, which was allegedly spotted outside the AAP office in the Kalkaji area, carrying banners and flags of the AAP. They also claimed that Atishi obtained assistance from people in government service to further her electoral prospects and misused her official position to subsidise her campaign efforts. The petitioners further alleged that Atishi failed to disclose a pending criminal case, filed on January 11 at Govind Puri police station, in her affidavit and thus, she ought to be penalised for the same under provisions of RPA.

## Bengaluru racket supplying marksheet in name of non-existent education board busted, 3 held

GNS News Agency, March 28

The accused, identified as Prashanth Gundumi, 41, from Dharwad; Monish K J, 36, from Bengaluru; and Rajashekhar H, 41, from Gadag. The accused, identified as Prashanth Gundumi, 41, from Dharwad; Monish K J, 36, from Bengaluru; and Rajashekhar H, 41, from Gadag. The Bengaluru police on Tuesday announced the arrest of three individuals allegedly involved in a large-scale racket involved in making fake Class 10 and Class 12 marksheets.

The accused, identified as Prashanth Gundumi, 41, from Dharwad; Monish K J, 36, from Bengaluru; and Rajashekhar H, 41, from Gadag, were found issuing fraudulent academic certificates for costs ranging between Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000, said the police. Investigations have revealed that over 350 fake mark cards were distributed, some of which were used to secure government jobs and even in passport applications, Police Commissioner B Dayananda stated in a press conference. The case came to light when a complainant alleged that his elder brother's son had received a Class 12 marks



card just days after enrolling at Mercury Academy Distance Education, a Bengaluru-based institution owned by Monish. Suspicious of the quick turnaround, the complainant reported the matter, leading to a probe by Bengaluru's Central Crime Branch (CCB). The investigation, led by Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Akshay M Hakay, uncovered that the mark cards were printed in Bengaluru and Dharwad using computers. The documents falsely bore the name 'Karnataka State Council of Intermediate and Higher Education', a non-existent authority. Following this revelation, an FIR was registered on December 2, 2024,

and the CCB swiftly moved in to arrest Monish the same day. During questioning, Monish revealed that he had procured over 25 fake SSLC and pre-university mark cards from his associates, including Prashanth and Darshan alias Gopal Shedbalkar, the latter currently absconding. Further investigations led to the arrest of Prashanth from Dharwad. He was operating Sunrise Career Academy in the Srinagar area of Bengaluru, which was being used as a front for a fake certificate racket. When the police seized his phone, they discovered over 300 digital copies of fraudulent mark cards. Authorities also found that several government

agencies, including the transport department, had requested verification of these mark cards. The suspects falsely confirmed their authenticity, thereby further legitimising the fake documents. During a raid at Prashanth's learning center, police recovered more than 50 physical fake documents.

The third accused, Rajashekhar, was arrested for his involvement in the scheme. He worked under Prashanth on a commission basis, earning Rs 250 for each fake mark card he processed. Authorities found 50 additional fake certificates on his phone, highlighting his significant involvement in the operation.

## How Punjab can save 7.89 billion cubic meters of water, finds PANJ report on groundwater crisis



GNS News Agency, March 28

If Punjab farmers with holdings above 2 hectares shift merely 10 per cent of their net irrigated area under paddy cultivation to some less water-intensive crops, the state can save at least 7.89 Billion Cubic Meters (BCM) of water annually, suggests the latest report of the Policy Advisory and Network for Joint Progress (PANJ) Foundation, an independent research think-tank based out of Punjab. The report suggests the electricity subsidy framework for Punjab farmers should also be revised. While small and marginal farmers should continue getting a 100% subsidy, it should be scaled down for large landholders - the major contributors to groundwater extraction. This revision will save Punjab at least Rs 1,200 crore which can further be invested for the development of agriculture, including crop diversification, it says. With the groundwater in Punjab under severe stress, primarily due to water-guzzling rice cultivation, and the state heading towards desertification in the coming two decades, the PANJ Foundation's report "Empowering Small Farmers Through Water Conservation - A Policy Roadmap for Punjab and Haryana" suggests four feasible remedial measures to save agrarian states from the looming water crisis.

The four remedies suggested by the PANJ to pull Punjab out of the groundwater crisis are: (1) restricting paddy procurement at the Minimum Support Price (MSP) to only farmers with 2 hectares and under crop diversification for large farmers; (2) adopting a tiered approach for electricity subsidy to farmers, with the margin of subsidy reducing depending on the farm size to help encourage efficient water use by large farmers, who are one of the major contributors to water over-extraction; (3) restoring village waterbodies and implementing rainwater harvesting systems; and (4) promotion of agroforestry through poplar tree boundary plantations.

The report also suggests the formalisation of groundwater markets under panchayat oversight to ensure better access to groundwater for smaller farmers. Citing the PANJ report, suspended Abohar MLA Sandeep Jakhar said in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha on Tuesday, "There is a need for an immediate and in-depth discussion on Punjab's water crisis and to find solutions to it before it's too late." He said the matter could not be dillydallied any further. Sehaj Singh, co-founder of PANJ Foundation, said: "We have tried to provide some feasible solutions to Punjab's water crisis. We have also reached out to several MLAs and provided them with a copy of this paper with the hope that a meaningful discussion on it will be conducted in the ongoing Punjab Assembly session." "This policy ensures small and marginal farmers, who constitute a significant portion of the agricultural population (33 per cent in Punjab and 69 per cent in Haryana) receive fair prices for their produce, thereby safeguarding their livelihoods. Additionally, this restriction discourages large landholders from over-cultivating paddy, a highly water-intensive crop, thereby incentivising crop diversification. Small farmers will remain secure under the MSP framework," says the report. The report says, "In Punjab and Haryana, there is an inverse relationship between landholding size and irrigation efficiency, suggesting that farmers with smaller landholdings utilise groundwater more efficiently for irrigation compared to their larger counterparts. Shifting 10 per cent of the paddy area cultivated

by large farmers to less water-intensive crops can result in significant water savings." "According to the Agriculture Census 2015-16, the 10 per cent paddy area owned by large farmers corresponds to 3,50,000 hectares in Punjab and 2,60,000 hectares in Haryana... In Punjab, 10 per cent of the total rice-cultivated area by large farmers stands at 3,50,000 hectares, with an average yield of 4,210 kg/ha (based on data from 2019-2021). Producing 1 kilogram of rice requires approximately 5,337 litres of water. By shifting this 10 per cent area to alternative crops, Punjab could conserve around 7.89 BCM of water annually. Similarly, in Haryana, transitioning 10 per cent to alternative crops could save 3.56 BCM of water annually. This policy not only reduces pressure on groundwater resources but also promotes sustainable farming practices, ensuring a balance between agricultural productivity and environmental conservation," according to the report. Under this proposal, marginal and small farmers will continue to receive a 100 per cent subsidy on electricity to support irrigation. This translates to an average subsidy of approximately Rs 30,000 per tubewell per hectare in Punjab and Rs 60,000 per tube-well per hectare in Haryana. However, subsidies for larger landholders—semi-medium, medium, and large farmers—will be gradually scaled down to 60 per cent, 50 per cent, and 40 per cent, respectively. "This tiered approach aligns subsidy levels with farm size, reducing the fiscal burden on state utilities while encouraging efficient water use among larger farmers, who are major contributors to groundwater over-extraction. By restructuring subsidies in this way, state governments could substantially cut agricultural energy subsidy expenditures by Rs 1,200 crore in Punjab and over Rs 150 crore in Haryana, which can be further reinvested in agricultural development," suggests the report. A local and sustainable solution to address water scarcity, particularly for small and marginal farmers, can be the restoration of village-level ponds, says the report, adding that the MNREGA can play a crucial role in its implementation. "Each village pond system will store 32,000 cubic meters of water, providing irrigation for 26.7 to 17.8 hectares through micro-irrigation techniques... The implementation should be phase-wise, prioritising the most over-exploited villages first, followed by moderately affected regions. By integrating these efforts... small farmers can benefit from stable incomes and reduced financial uncertainty," says the PANJ report, suggesting the government's immediate restoration of village-level water bodies.

As a long-term solution, the report also suggests farmers in Punjab should be encouraged to adopt agroforestry via poplar tree plantation. "It would present a transformative opportunity for small and marginal farmers. Planting 200 poplar trees per hectare along field boundaries can yield an additional Rs 2,40,000 per hectare, with each tree valued conservatively at Rs 1,200. This approach not only enhances farm profitability but also aligns with global environmental goals," says the report, citing data on how poplar trees can sequester carbon dioxide. "In Punjab, adopting agroforestry can generate an additional average income of Rs 79,000 per hectare, while in Haryana, farmers can earn an additional Rs 87,000 per hectare... This initiative not only diversifies income streams but also mitigates climate risks and contributes to sustainable agricultural practices," says the report.

Panchayat oversight can ensure equitable irrigation access for small farmers, particularly those without tubewells or with fragmented landholdings. "At an average cost of Rs 66 and Rs 105 per hour for hired irrigation in Punjab and Haryana, respectively, this system can make water affordable and accessible. Lowering or managing prices at Rs 50 per hour can help farmers save between Rs 500 and Rs 2,200 per hectare of wheat cultivation. Panchayats can regulate such markets by prioritising less water-intensive crops, setting extraction limits based on groundwater depth, and monitoring pricing to prevent exploitation. This can ensure fair access to groundwater resources while curbing over-extraction," reads the paper.

## Suspecting an affair with his wife, Haryana man 'buries tenant alive in 7-foot pit'



GNS News Agency, March 28

Suspecting that his wife was having an affair with their tenant, a Haryana resident buried the man alive in a seven-foot-deep pit in an agricultural field around 60 km from Rohtak in December last year, police investigation has revealed. The body of the victim, who was a physiotherapist, was recovered from the pit on Monday - exactly three months after his murder - following the arrest of two accused in the case. The police said victim Jagdeep, 45, a resident of Rohtak, worked at Baba Mastnath University and stayed at a rented accommodation belonging to one Kamala in Janata Colony for the past three years.

The arrested accused have been identified as Paintawas residents Hardeep, 36, a farmer, and Dharampal, 58, a labourer. According to officers, Rajkaran, 40, a farmer who was married to Kamala's daughter Deepa, was suspicious of his wife's alleged friendship with Jagdeep. Investigators said he dug the pit near a pond with the help of two men in his native village Paintawas in Charkhi Dadri district on December 24 last year. "They reached Jagdeep's house in Rohtak, thrashed him and brought him to Paintawas in a vehicle where they buried him alive," an officer added. Y V R Sashi Shekhar, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Rohtak, said a sub-inspector had received information about the murder of a Rohtak resident in Charkhi Dadri. The police began a probe and collected data on missing persons from Rohtak during which they found that Jagdeep had gone missing from his home in December.

Investigators also learnt that a First Information Report (FIR) was filed on February 3 this year based on a complaint by Jagdeep's uncle who alleged that he was "wrongfully confined". During the probe, the police came to know that he was kidnapped and murdered. Further investigation led to the arrest of the villagers who were allegedly involved in aiding Rajkaran, including digging the pit to bury Jagdeep. Once the victim's body was recovered, a post-mortem was conducted at Rohtak's Post Graduate Insti-

tute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS) on Tuesday. A search is on to nab Rajkaran and one more accomplice in the case, the police said, adding that the accused have been booked under various charges, including murder and kidnapping.

## 15-year-old Delhi boy kidnapped, murdered by 3 friends for Rs 10 lakh ransom: Police

GNS News Agency, March 28

According to the police, the body of the Class 9 boy, who had been missing since March 23, was recovered from a forested area near Bhalswa Lake in the Wazirabad area on Tuesday. (Representational/ File Image) According to the police, the body of the Class 9 boy, who had been missing since March 23, was recovered from a forested area near Bhalswa Lake in the Wazirabad area on Tuesday.

A 15-year-old boy in North Delhi was abducted and murdered allegedly by his three friends for a ransom of Rs 10 lakh, the police said on Wednesday. The three minors have been apprehended and will be produced before the Juvenile Justice Board, the police added. According to the police, the body of the Class 9 boy, who had been missing since March 23, was recovered from a forested area near Bhalswa Lake in the Wazirabad area on Tuesday.

"During investigation, it was found the victim, a resident of Wazirabad, was last seen with three boys on a bike at Jharoda Pushta Road and the same was confirmed with the help of CCTV footage," the police said in a statement. The boy's father, told the police that he received a call on March 24 seeking a ransom of Rs 10 lakh to release his son. Based on his complaint, the police at Wazirabad station registered a case of kidnapping and subsequently nabbed the three boys. During interrogation, the accused allegedly disclosed that they had conspired to kidnap and kill the boy for a ransom of 10 lakh, the police said. "On March 23, the accused took the boy along with them to hangout on their bike. They took him to a forested area near Bhalswa Lake and attacked and killed him with knives and dumped the victim's body there and fled. The accused stabbed the victim multiple times and also slit his throat," said a police source.

The body was recovered by the police team on the instance of the juveniles on Tuesday night. It will be handed over to relatives after the post-mortem on Wednesday, the police said, adding that further investigation was underway.



## Democrats urge U.S. Justice Department probe of war plans discussion on Signal



GNS News Agency, March 28

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and top Senate Democrats on Wednesday (March 25, 2025) wrote a letter to Republican President Donald Trump and his top officials urging a Justice Department probe into how a journalist was inadvertently included in a secret group discussion of sensitive war plans. Trump administration officials have claimed no classified material was shared in the group chat on Signal, an encrypted commercial messaging app.

Democratic senators voiced skepticism, noting that the journalist, Atlantic Editor-in-Chief Jeffrey Goldberg, reported that Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth posted operational details about pending strikes against Yemen's Iran-

aligned Houthis, "including information about targets, weapons the U.S. would be deploying, and attack sequencing." "We write to you with extreme alarm about the astonishingly poor judgment shown by your Cabinet and national security advisors," the Democratic Senators wrote in Wednesday's letter.

"Moreover, given that willful or negligent disclosure of classified or sensitive national security information may constitute a criminal violation of the Espionage Act or other laws, we expect Attorney General Bondi to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation of the conduct of the government officials involved in improperly sharing or discussing such information," the letter added. Mr. Trump said his administration would look into the use of Signal but voiced support for his national security team when questioned about the incident at a White House event on Tuesday with Michael Waltz, his national security adviser.

Mr. Trump said he did not think Mr. Waltz should apologise, but said he did not think Mr. Waltz and the team would be using Signal again soon. Mr. Waltz, in an interview with 'The Ingraham Angle' on Fox News on Tuesday, said: "I take full responsibility" for the breach, as he had created the Signal group, but he emphasized there was no classified information shared. Mr. Waltz said the situation was "embarrassing" and that the administration would "get to the bottom" of what went wrong. He said Goldberg's number was not saved in his phone and he does not know how the journalist was mistakenly added to the chat group.

## Columbia University's compliance with Trump's demands sets a precedent for other universities facing federal pressure

GNS News Agency, March 28

Days before Indian PhD scholar Ranjani Srinivasan studying at Columbia University chose to self-deport from the U.S. after learning her visa was revoked, three federal immigration agents showed up at the door of her university-affiliated housing. When she did not open, they showed up again the next day. Their visit came just hours before Mahmoud Khalil, a former Columbia student also residing in campus housing, was detained and informed that his green card had been revoked.

Days later, immigration officials announced the arrest of a second individual linked to the pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia and the revocation of another student's visa. Leqaa Kordia, a Palestinian from the West Bank, was taken into custody by immigration officers for overstaying her student visa, according to the Department of Homeland Security. "Ms. Kordia's visa was terminated in January 2022 due to 'lack of attendance,'" the department stated, adding that she had previously been arrested for participating in protests in April 2024.

Columbia also expelled Grant Miner, president of the Student Workers of Columbia-United Auto Workers (SWC-UAW). Mr. Miner was removed just one day before the union was set to begin bargaining negotiations with the university. On the same day, Columbia's University Judicial Board issued disciplinary rulings against students involved in the April 2024 occupation of Hamilton Hall. Columbia University Apartheid Divest, a student-led group, stated on Instagram that 22 students faced expulsions, suspensions, or degree revocations for their participation in pro-Palestinian demonstrations. These measures have not been taken in isolation — they followed an ultimatum issued by the Trump administration to Columbia University laying out nine demands it must commit to by the end of business hours on March 20 "as a precondition" to restore federal funding. It included banning masks, empowering campus cops, and putting the school's department of Middle East, South Asian and African Studies under "academic receivership," which means it would no longer be controlled by the faculty. Columbia has already begun complying with some of the administration's demands. Faculty members and student activists have accused the university of caving to federal pressure rather than standing up for free expression on campus.

The university caved in to most of the demands from the Trump administration, according to a new list of actions published on the Office of the President's website on Friday (March 21). The move comes as the university seeks to restore \$400 million in federal grants that was revoked by the administration, accusing it of failing to protect Jewish students. The university said it will ban some masks on campus, hire 36 "special officers who will have the ability to remove individuals from campus and/or arrest them," and place the Middle East, South Asian, and African studies department and the Centre for Palestine Studies under the purview of a senior vice-provost, who will be appointed by the university and will supervise curriculum and non-tenured faculty hiring.

The administration has insisted that the university must also implement "long-term structural reforms," though it has not specified what those would entail. On Thursday (March 20), President Donald Trump also signed an executive order to dismantle the department of education. In a Friday post on X, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce wrote, "@Columbia FOLDS to the Trump admin's demands to protect Jewish students and faculty. School administrators failed to hold pro-terror mobs accountable for rampant antisemitism." "Now, masks are banned during protests and safety measures are increasing. Republicans and the Trump admin are stopping it," the post reads. Doubling down on protestors The Trump administration's targeting of visa-holding students at Columbia University — already at the centre of a cultural firestorm — has opened a new front in Mr. Trump's push to enforce immigration policies and address campus protests, which critics say is an effort to suppress pro-Palestinian activism.

Earlier this month, Mr. Trump hailed the arrest of Mr. Khalil, calling it "the first of many to come." In a post on social media, he vowed to deport students engaged in what he described as "pro-terrorist, anti-Semitic, anti-American activity." The arrests and attempted detentions of Columbia students have sparked an uproar among Democrats and civil rights groups. Mr. Khalil, a Palestinian activist and former Columbia University graduate student, was detained from his home earlier this month. His lawyers, in an updated lawsuit seeking his immediate release, described the transfer as a "de facto kidnapping," alleging that the agents escorting him never identified themselves. His treatment, they wrote, echoed the fear and uncertainty he experienced when he fled Syria in 2013, after several of his friends forcibly disappeared during a wave of arbitrary detentions. Over the course of the last year, the campus has remained under a lockdown as it found itself as the epicentre of protests



since. The university's Morningside Campus, housed in New York's Upper West Side, which once presented widely opened gates to everyone now resembles a fortress with scores of public safety officials manning every entry, denying access even to alumnus, while allowing only current students in amid ever evolving entry rules that the administration updates on its websites. The restrictions are drawing criticism and even a lawsuit from local residents who have sued the ivy league for denying access for the campus walkway that covers the stretch of 116th street, Broadway. Growing fears among international students

"As a former student on my OPT visa I am not only scared to talk openly about this issue, but I am also even scared to report on it," a former Columbia Journalism School alumni said, requesting anonymity. The Columbia Journalism School faculty in a statement released on March 14 expressed deep concern about the threat to press freedom in the U.S. and the chill being felt at Columbia stating that many international students felt afraid to come to classes or events on campus.

"Freedom of the press — a bedrock principle of American democracy — is under threat in the United States. Here at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism we are witnessing and experiencing an alarming chill... After Homeland Security seized and detained Mahmoud Khalil, a recent graduate of Columbia's School of Public and International Affairs, without charging him with any crime, many of our international students have felt afraid to come to classes and to events on campus," the statement said. "They are right to be worried. Some of our faculty members and students who have covered the protests over the Gaza war have been the object of smear campaigns and targeted on the same sites that were used to bring Khalil to the attention of Homeland Security. President Trump has warned that the effort to deport Khalil is just the first of many," it added. So far, the measures taken by the university over the course of the past year which included setting up an 'anti-Semitism taskforce', calling the NYPD on campus to disperse encampments, and cracking down on students who took part in the protests amid harsh criticism from students and faculty to allowing federal agents inside campus dorms, has largely aligned with the demands of the federal administration including the erstwhile Biden administration, and yet have been targeted. As Columbia navigates these challenges, the outcome could have lasting implications for both student activism and universities nationwide.

## Indian-American scientist Jay Bhattacharya confirmed as Director of National Institutes of Health

New York: Indian-American scientist Jay Bhattacharya has been confirmed by the US Senate as the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the country's top health research and funding institutions. Bhattacharya, a professor of Health Policy at Stanford University, was confirmed by a 53-47 vote on Tuesday, according to the official website of the US Senate. US President Donald Trump, then the President-elect, nominated Bhattacharya as the 18th NIH Director in November last year. "Dr. Bhattacharya will work in cooperation with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to direct the Nation's Medical Research and to make important discoveries that will improve Health, and save lives," Trump had said. During his hearing, Bhattacharya said he understands science and public health have become politicised, and many no longer trust health officials or experts, according to The Hill. The NIH should support science which is "reproducible, replicable, and generalisable," Bhattacharya said. "Unfortunately, much of modern biomedical science fails this basic test," the news portal quoted him as saying. "If confirmed, I will carry out President Trump and (Health and Human Service) Secretary Kennedy's agenda of Making America Healthy Again and committing the NIH to address the dire chronic health needs of the country with gold-standard science and innovation," he said.

## US defence major GE Aerospace starts delivery of F-404 engines for Tejas MK-1A jets



GNS News Agency, March 28

New Delhi: American defence major GE Aerospace on Wednesday said it delivered the first of 99 F-404 aircraft engines to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Tejas light combat jet programme. State-run HAL is procuring the engines to power the Mk-1A variant of the Tejas jets. In February 2021, the Defence Ministry sealed a Rs 48,000-crore deal with HAL for the procurement of 83 Tejas MK-1A jets for the IAF. The deliveries were to begin in March last year.

However, not a single aircraft has been delivered yet. The start of supply of the F404-IN20 engines by the American aircraft defence major is expected to help HAL start delivery of the jets to the IAF. Defence sources indicated that delay in the delivery of the engines by GE Aerospace was one of the reasons for HAL to miss the deadline for supply of Tejas jets to the IAF. It is learnt that the engine has been delivered to HAL by the American company at its manufacturing facility in Lynn near Massachusetts. The engine is expected to reach India by early next month.

GE Aerospace's F404 family is known to be one of the most effective aircraft engines and it powers thousands of combat jets worldwide. "On Tuesday, we were excited to deliver the first of 99 F404-IN20 engines to our valued customer Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft Mk 1A fighter jet," GE Aerospace said in a statement. "It is an important milestone in our 40-year relationship with HAL and in our efforts to ensure a strong future for India's military by developing next-generation fighters while enhancing the country's defence manufacturing capabilities," it said. The F404-IN20 engine is a tailored de-

sign for India's single-engine fighter programme with the highest thrust within the F404 family and a higher-flow fan, unique single-crystal turbine blades, and numerous special components, the company said. GE Aerospace and Tejas teams collaborated closely for several years to customise the engine for the needs of the Indian Air Force. "The F404 demonstrated it was an excellent fit for the Tejas LCA. On its first test flight in 2008, the aircraft climbed to numerous mission altitudes and achieved Mach 1.1 speed," the engine maker said.

GE Aerospace said by 2016, it fulfilled its commitment to HAL and delivered 65 F404-IN20 engines for the Tejas LCA. "With no additional engine orders on the horizon, the production line for F404-IN20 was shut down." "However, when HAL ordered an additional 99 engines in 2021 for the Tejas Mk1A LCA, our team began the complex task of re-starting the F404-IN20 production line, which had been dormant for five years, and re-engaging the engine's global supply chain," it said. Indigenously developed Tejas jets are expected to be the mainstay of the IAF in coming years. In November last year, the Defence Ministry accorded an initial approval to procure an additional batch of 97 Tejas jets for the IAF.

The Tejas aircraft is a potent platform for air combat and offensive air support missions while reconnaissance and anti-ship operations are its secondary roles. GE Aerospace said restarting a jet engine production line is a challenging process. "Restarting the F404-IN20 engine line during the Covid pandemic was even more challenging. With a high focus on safety and quality, and a remarkable commitment from our supply chain teams and our suppliers and partners, we have managed to restart the line," the company said. "Our proprietary lean operating model, flight deck, helped us alleviate bottlenecks and identify solutions to improve manufacturing processes and turnaround time," it said. The company said it is working closely with its suppliers to ramp up production on parts and materials for the F404-IN20. "We will continue to work together with our suppliers to keep the production line efficient, maintain the highest standards of safety and quality, and deliver to our customer," it said. "This week's first engine delivery is a testament to what we have accomplished with HAL over the past 40 years, and a symbol of our combined potential to ensure a strong future for India's military," it added.

## Intel report calls China potential threat to US national security



GNS News Agency, March 28

Washington: China presents the most comprehensive and robust military threat to the national security of the United States, a US intelligence report revealed on Tuesday. The report spotlighted that China poses an active and persistent cyber threat to the US government, private sector, and critical infrastructure networks with Beijing's nuclear weapons and advanced delivery systems — capable of delivering catastrophic damage — posing a direct threat to the US and threatening its military forces at home and abroad.

The Annual Threat Assessment done by the intelligence authority cites that a major portion of China's military modernisation efforts is focused on developing counter-intervention capabilities tailored against all aspects of US and allied military operations in the Pacific. "President Xi Jinping and the People's Republic of China (PRC) want to achieve 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' by 2049. The PRC will seek to increase its power and influence to shape world events to create an environment favorable to PRC interests, obtain greater US deference to China's interests, and fend off challenges to its reputation, legitimacy, and capabilities at home and abroad," the report highlights. It mentions that China has developed a range of ballistic and cruise missiles with conventional payloads that can be delivered from its mainland as well as by air and sea, including by nuclear-powered submarines. "It may also be exploring the development of conventionally-armed intercontinen-

tal range missile systems, which, if developed and fielded, would allow China to threaten conventional strikes against targets in the continental United States," the report states. The annual report of worldwide threats to the national security of the United States reflects the collective insights of the Intelligence Community (IC), which is committed to providing the nuanced, independent, and unvarnished intelligence that policymakers, warfighters, and domestic law enforcement personnel need to protect American lives and America's interests anywhere in the world.

The assessment focuses on the most direct, serious threats to the United States primarily during the next year. All these threats require a robust intelligence response, including those where a near-term focus may help head off greater threats in the future. It warned that China is using complex, whole-of-government campaigns featuring coercive military, economic, and influence operations short of war to assert its positions and strength against others, reserving more destructive tools for full-scale conflict. The report mentions that if Beijing believed that a major conflict with Washington was imminent, it could consider aggressive cyber operations against US critical infrastructure and military assets. Such strikes, it said, would be designed to deter US military action by impeding decision-making, inducing societal panic, and interfering with the deployment of US forces. Emphasising that China almost certainly has a multifaceted, national-level strategy designed to displace the United States as the world's most influential AI power by 2030, the report further stated that China has stolen hundreds of gigabytes of intellectual property from companies in Asia, Europe, and North America. It was done to leapfrog over technological hurdles, with as much as 80 per cent of US economic espionage cases as of 2021 involving Chinese entities, the report reveals. "Beijing is likely to feel emboldened to use malign influence more regularly in the coming years, particularly as it fields AI to improve its capabilities and avoid detection," the report mentions. Cautioning on Chinese expansion of nuclear posture, the report stated that China most likely possesses capabilities relevant to Chemical and Biological Warfare (CBW) that pose a threat to US, allied, and partner forces as well as the civilian population.

## Yet another step towards unearthing the glorious past of Poompuhar, the capital of early Cholas

GNS News Agency, March 28

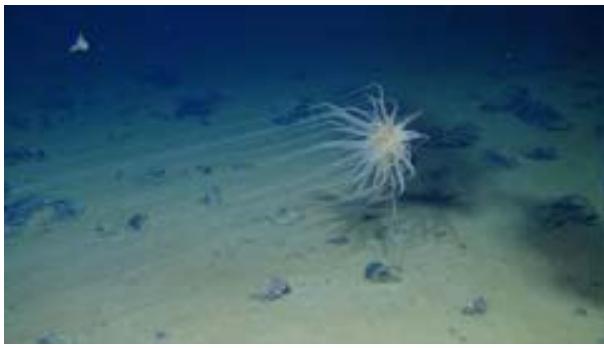
In an attempt to highlight the maritime trade prowess of the ancient Tamils, the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology has chalked out a plan for a series of deep-sea archaeological excavations along the State's coast. To get today's top stories from the State in your inbox, subscribe to our Tamil Nadu Today newsletter. While presenting the Tamil Nadu Budget for 2025-26, Minister for Finance Thangam Thennarasu, who also holds the portfolio of Archaeology, announced archaeological excavations, including the first phase of deep-sea excavations between Poompuhar, also known as Kaveripoompattinam — the ancient port city and capital of early Cholas — and Nagapattinam, another important port city nearly 50 kilometres south of Poompuhar. These deep-sea excavations are expected to unearth treasures and offer valuable insights into the glorious past of Poompuhar, where the Cauvery flows into the Bay of Bengal and which has elaborate mentions in the Sangam literature and Periplus of the Erythraean Sea. (A Periplus is a manuscript that lists the ports and coastal landmarks. In ancient times, it served as a combination of atlas and traveller's handbook). Both Poompuhar and Nagapattinam served as an important gateway for trade and cultural exchanges, particularly with Southeast Asia. It is believed the ancient city of Poompuhar existed around 2,500 years ago and submerged owing to tidal action. This is not the first time deep-sea archaeological excavations have been planned off the Poompuhar coast. The TNSDA, in collaboration with a team of the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) led by renowned archaeologist S.R. Rao, had conducted a series of geophysical surveys of the ocean floor off Poompuhar in the 1980s.

Using side-scan sonar, echo sounders, and magnetometers, these surveys revealed the presence of several structures at a depth of 20-30 metres, offering remarkable clues to Poompuhar's ancient past.

A report published in The Hindu on April 6, 1990, quoting Natana Kasinathan, then Director of the TNSDA, detailed the discovery of a shipwreck 4.5 kilometres offshore, at a depth of 19.5 meters, seaward of Vanagiri near Poompuhar. The vessel, which seems to be made of iron, was found broken into two and was heavily encrusted with marine organisms. While part of the wreck remains visible above the seabed, a major portion lies buried beneath the ocean floor. The report also highlighted another significant discovery — a megalithic structure found at a depth of seven metres, about half-a-kilometre offshore the Fort Museum at Tharangambadi (Tranquebar), which is nearly 20 kilometres south of Poompuhar. Excavations revealed the inner and outer stone circles along with a pebble cairn-like covering, forming a 10-metre-wide megalithic structure. According to another report published in The Hindu, underwater explorations between 1991 and 1993 uncovered several man-made structures and brick formations beneath the sea. Quoting Mr. Kasinathan, the report said these brick structures could be dated to between the Second Century BCE and the Fourth Century CE. Black and red ware ceramics were also discovered near the submerged structures. The report also noted that in 1997, divers found remnants of a structure built with laterite stones during the exploration. In 2004, the hydrographic survey ship INS Darshak, deployed by the Eastern Naval Command off the coast of Poompuhar, discovered a U-shaped structure at a depth of 23 metres.



## Deep-sea mining threatens sea life by dumping debris in midwater zone



This is the midwater zone, a hidden ecosystem that begins 650 feet (200 meters) below the ocean surface and sustains life across our planet. It includes the twilight zone and the midnight zone, where strange and delicate animals thrive in the near absence of sunlight. Whales and commercially valuable fish such as tuna rely on animals in this zone for food. But this unique ecosystem faces an unprecedented threat. As the demand for electric car batteries and smartphones grows, mining companies are turning their attention to the deep sea, where precious metals such as nickel and cobalt can be found in potato-size nodules sitting on the ocean floor.

Deep-sea mining research and experiments over the past 40 years have shown how the removal of nodules can put seafloor creatures at risk by disrupting their habitats. However, the process can also pose a danger to what lives above it, in the midwater ecosystem. If future deep-sea mining operations release sediment plumes into the water column, as proposed, the debris could interfere with animals' feeding, disrupt food webs and alter animals' behaviors. As an oceanographer studying marine life in an area of the Pacific rich in these nodules, I believe that before countries and companies rush to mine, we need to understand the risks. Is humanity willing to risk collapsing parts of an ecosystem we barely understand for resources that are important for our future?

Beneath the Pacific Ocean southeast of Hawaii, a hidden treasure trove of polymetallic nodules can be found scattered across the seafloor. These nodules form as metals in seawater or sediment collect around a nucleus, such as a piece of shell or shark's tooth. They grow at an incredibly slow rate of a few millimeters per million years. The nodules are rich in metals such as nickel, cobalt and manganese — key ingredients for batteries, smartphones, wind turbines and military hardware. As demand for these technologies increases, mining companies are targeting this remote area, known as the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, as well as a few other zones with similar nodules around the world. So far, only test mining has been carried out. However, plans for full-scale commercial mining are rapidly advancing.

Exploratory deep-sea mining began in the 1970s, and the International Seabed Authority was established in 1994 under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to regulate it. But it was not until 2022 that The Metals Company and Nauru Ocean Resources Inc. fully tested the first integrated nodule collection system in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone. The companies are now planning full-scale mining operations in the region and expect to submit their application to the ISA by June 27, 2025. The ISA will convene in July 2025 to discuss critical issues such as mining regulations, guidelines and benefit-sharing mechanisms. The proposed mining process is invasive. Collector vehicles scrape along the ocean floor as they scoop up nodules and stir up sediments. This removes habitats used by marine organisms and threatens biodiversity, potentially causing irreversible damage to seafloor ecosystems. Once collected, the

nodules are brought up with seawater and sediments through a pipe to a ship, where they're separated from the waste. The leftover slurry of water, sediment and crushed nodules is then dumped back into the middle of the water column, creating plumes. While the discharge depth is still under discussion, some mining operators propose releasing the waste at midwater depths, around 4,000 feet (1,200 meters).

However, there is a critical unknown: The ocean is dynamic, constantly shifting with currents, and scientists don't fully understand how these mining plumes will behave once released into the midwater zone. These clouds of debris could disperse over large areas, potentially harming marine life and disrupting ecosystems. Picture a volcanic eruption — not of lava, but of fine, murky sediments expanding throughout the water column, affecting everything in its path. As an oceanographer studying zooplankton in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, I am concerned about the impact of deep-sea mining on this ecologically important midwater zone. This ecosystem is home to zooplankton — tiny animals that drift with ocean currents — and micronekton, which includes small fish, squid and crustaceans that rely on zooplankton for food. Sediment plumes in the water column could harm these animals. Fine sediments could clog respiratory structures in fish and feeding structures of filter feeders. For animals that feed on suspended particles, the plumes could dilute food resources with nutritionally poor material. Additionally, by blocking light, plumes might interfere with visual cues essential for bioluminescent organisms and visual predators. For delicate creatures such as jellyfish and siphonophores — gelatinous animals that can grow over 100 feet long — sediment accumulation can interfere with buoyancy and survival. A recent study found that jellies exposed to sediments increased their mucous production, a common stress response that is energetically expensive, and their expression of genes related to wound repair. Additionally, noise pollution from machinery can interfere with how species communicate and navigate.

Disturbances like these have the potential to disrupt ecosystems, extending far beyond the discharge depth. Declines in zooplankton populations can harm fish and other marine animal populations that rely on them for food. The midwater zone also plays a vital role in regulating Earth's climate. Phytoplankton at the ocean's surface capture atmospheric carbon, which zooplankton consume and transfer through the food chain. When zooplankton and fish respire, excrete waste, or sink after death, they contribute to carbon export to the deep ocean, where it can be sequestered for centuries. The process naturally removes planet-warming carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. More research is needed. Despite growing interest in deep-sea mining, much of the deep ocean, particularly the midwater zone, remains poorly understood. A 2023 study in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone found that 88% to 92% of species in the region are new to science. Current mining regulations focus primarily on the seafloor, overlooking broader ecosystem impacts. The International Seabed Authority is preparing to make key decisions on future seabed mining in July 2025, including rules and guidelines relating to mining waste, discharge depths and environmental protection. These decisions could set the framework for large-scale commercial mining in ecologically important areas such as the Clarion-Clipperton Zone. Yet the consequences for marine life are not clear. Without comprehensive studies on the impact of seafloor mining techniques, the world risks making irreversible choices that could harm these fragile ecosystems. Alexis Cazares-Nuesser is a Ph.D. candidate in biological oceanography at the University of Hawaii Manoa who studies zooplankton ecology in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone. This article is republished from The Conversation.

## Search for universe's first water could reset timeline of life's origins

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Astronomers may be closer to solving one of the most intriguing mysteries in science: how did water originate in the universe? A study published in the journal *Nature Astronomy* on March 3 suggested that the universe's oldest stars became fountains of water as their nuclear fires were extinguished in massive explosions called supernovae. If this finding is borne out in further research, astronomers will have to revise current theories to factor in potentially life-bearing planets being born billions of years earlier than previously thought. Water is the third most abundant molecule in the universe, after hydrogen and carbon monoxide, but its origins have remained obscure. Billions of years ago, all matter and energy existed as an extremely small fleck in the void. This incredibly dense blob exploded some 13.8 billion years ago with a Big Bang to create the known universe. The first stars were born just a few hundred million years after the Big Bang, at a time when all visible matter comprised primordial hydrogen and helium atoms. The nuclear furnaces at the cores of these early stars were powered by hydrogen, and as they shone, they heated up the surrounding intergalactic gas and dust. Hundreds of millions of years later, when the stars ran out of hydrogen to burn, they blew up as supernovae. But by then their heat had ionised the interstellar medium around them, which set the stage for the formation of new stars and triggered a cycle of star births in perpetuity. The third population The longevity of a star depends on its mass. More massive stars die faster as more mass means more heat, and the hotter a star becomes, the faster its nuclear fuel is exhausted. Temperatures of millions of degrees and high densities inside a star force four hydrogen atoms to fuse into a helium atom, releasing enormous amounts of energy. Scientists have calculated that 0.7% of the mass is converted into energy, summed up by Einstein's mass-energy equation.

Based on their age and metallicity (i.e. proportion of any element other than hydrogen and helium), astronomers divide stars into three groups. Population I stars, like the sun, are the youngest and are the most metal-rich, while population II stars are older and are less metallic. The universe's oldest stars form population III: massive stars composed completely of hydrogen and helium. These forerunners, the researchers of the new study have surmised, were the stellar nurseries where water must have first appeared in the cosmos. Astronomer D.H. Whalen of the University of Portsmouth, England, who led the new study, said his team ran 3D simulations of population III supernovae looking for the signatures of water. They found that the conditions required to create water existed at around the same time when those first supernovae lit up the cosmos: sometime between 50 million and 1 billion years after the Big Bang. Gigantic stars, hundreds of times more massive than our sun and with short lifespans, provided these conditions when they exploded, leaving behind hydrogen, oxygen, and other elements as their stellar remnants. According to Whalen, the oxygen produced in these supernovae com-



bined with hydrogen to create water, which is crucial for forming the elements necessary for life (as we know it). The earliest stars couldn't have possibly engendered water in the universe before they became supernovae, however. "The supernovae have to expel oxygen, which only forms during late stages of nuclear burning in massive stars that are destined to explode." Water in an infant universe may be a while before astronomers redraw their theories on the origins of water in the cosmos. "The water formation happens after the supernovae throw out most of the stellar material," K.C. Sarkar, an associate professor of astronomy and astrophysics at the Raman Research Institute in Bengaluru said in an email interview.

"Astronomers already had an idea that the massive, metal-poor stars generated a lot of oxygen and that this oxygen would later combine with hydrogen to produce water in the universe. The current paper shows that the generation of water in early galaxies could be more efficient than [in] today's galaxies." Scientists believed for decades that only traces of water were present in the early cosmos and that it became more common when newer, bigger stars exploded, yielding more of the heavier elements to an evolving universe. But the latest findings indicate that the first supernovae themselves produced enough water to drench the infant universe. This would mean planets, a crucial refuge for water molecules, could have formed even before the first galaxies were born, and that there could have been enough water and other elements in the interstellar molecular clouds to kickstart life. If so, this pushes the timeline for potential life to have arisen in the universe way back. There are concerns that the model used by the University of Portsmouth researchers was based on the use of indirect methods, like numerical experiments, to study population III stars. These stars are so distant that it is nearly impossible to 'see' them even with the most sophisticated telescopes. However, Whalen said this challenge didn't affect the accuracy of the study. "The important thing is to capture how ionising UV radiation from the stars heats and drives away ambient gas over their lifetimes. We have those from stellar atmosphere and evolution models that are well established in the field." The findings validate previous research that has shown that at least some of the earth's water was delivered by comets early in the planet's history.

## The 'Great Abandonment' of Afghanistan



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The showdown in the Oval office between United States President Donald Trump and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last month and the subsequent developments were watched everywhere, but they have echoed the loudest for Afghans around the world, many of whom live in exile. The comparisons to how the U.S. — under Mr. Trump and then former President Joe Biden — lost interest, cut funding, pulled out stakes and left it to be ruled by the Taliban regime, were evident. What may surprise many is how other U.S. actions resemble the present: in September 2017, for example, Mr. Trump shook hands with then-President Ashraf Ghani for a deal that would give U.S. companies access to rare earth mineral deposits in Afghanistan. In July 2018, U.S. officials began talks with the Taliban directly, without bringing the elected Ghani government on board. In February 2020, they announced the Doha Accords — heavily skewed in the Taliban's favour — virtually accepting the narrative that the Taliban were the representatives of Afghanistan, extracting no binding commitments on a political process, shutting terror camps, securing rights of women or minorities. This flawed ceasefire accord was presented as a fait accompli to the Afghan government, which turned tail and fled, easing the path for the Taliban.

The years that followed have shown what the cost of that compromise for a ceasefire was. Even though the regime has not so far been recognised by any country, Taliban 2.0 (2021-present) has a firmer grip on the country, is more brutal to women, and is less tolerant of any opposition. That they are able to ban girls from school, college, all employment, and even from sight, is all the more horrifying as it follows two decades when such official restrictions did not exist, women worked in many spheres, and Afghanistan even had a woman candidate for President. While the past (2001-2021) was by no means utopian, the present is clearly hell-like. The situation led a speaker at a recent conference of exiles in Spain to say that rather than the "Great Game", Afghanistan today was witnessing a "Great Abandonment". The U.S. and Europe have washed their hands of the problem inside Afghanistan, while Russia, China, Pakistan, and the Central and West Asian countries have embraced the regime within it, allowing the Taliban flag to fly at embassies of the erstwhile Republic. India has been teetering on the edge, not allowing a Taliban-appointed Ambassador into the Embassy in New Delhi, but not supporting the Republic's diplomats either. After closing its embassy in Kabul in 2021, India reopened a "technical mission" in 2022, engaging Taliban ministers at the level of a Ministry of External Affairs official. That may be set to change, as a wide range of sources say that India is now negotiating to expand its presence in Kabul, while allowing a Taliban-appointed Ambassador to serve in Delhi. In addition to the humanitarian aid it sends, India also wants to revive its development projects in Afghanistan. Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's meeting with Taliban Acting Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, in Dubai in January 2025, that discussed these possibilities, was the first such meeting announced publicly, as, thus far, it was the Joint Secretary in charge of the region who dealt with Taliban 'Ministers'.

What then is prompting the Narendra Modi government, especially given the Bharatiya Janata Party's political base, to make overtures to the band of radical Islamists that controls Kabul? Several reasons are being proffered

by officials, who mostly pitch this as a matter of pragmatism and realpolitik. The first is that the "Taliban is here to stay", and it makes sense for India to come to terms with it. While some engagement with the Afghan regime is inevitable in this second tenure, there is no reason to believe that the Taliban's grip is eternal. Already, reports indicate the tussle between Haqqani factions and Kandahari clerics over the issue of girls education has grown serious. According to the reports, Sher Abbas Stanekzai and Sirajuddin Haqqani, who are both India's main interlocutors within the Taliban, have had to flee the country for suggesting that the restrictions on females were unfair. The Taliban's mismanagement of the economy, and the drying up of foreign assistance, especially now with the Trump administration's freeze on the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and even the Chabahar port, will squeeze the situation further. A surge in refugees being returned by Pakistan and tensions with Pakistan along the Durand Line will exacerbate these fault-lines.

The second explanation, that India can help common Afghans only by working closely with the Taliban, is easily refuted. Between 1996 and 2001, India had kept up aid consignments to Afghanistan through other aid agencies. In any case, it is hardly likely that the Taliban would refuse to accept aid from India, given its importance. The third explanation is that India would lose strategic space in Afghanistan by not reopening its embassy there when all other countries in its neighbourhood have. However, expecting strategic space from the Taliban's Islamic Emirate, given its ideology, is a risky proposition. The relationship India forged with the Afghan Republic: a strategic partnership (Afghanistan's first), intelligence sharing with the National Directorate of Security (NDS), and working with the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) to protect Indian interests, cannot be built with the Taliban. If Taliban 2.0 has not changed from Taliban 1.0 in other respects, it would be foolhardy to assume a change of heart on India too, given how the group targeted Indian missions, workers, diplomats and security force personnel for the 25 years prior to the takeover of Kabul.

New Delhi should worry instead about losing mind-space amongst Afghans, who have been deeply disappointed by the Modi government's decision not to open visas for Afghans fleeing the Taliban in 2021, including those who risked their lives to protect Indians. According to officials privy to a high-level meeting on the issue, India's security establishment worried that those who come as "refugees" would later prove to be "terrorists". The lived experience, however, is that those who took shelter in India in the past and came as students, patients and traders, built reservoirs of goodwill for India back home and proved invaluable in positions of power during the tenures of President Hamid Karzai and Ghani. The legacy of India's support to leaders of the Northern Alliance such as Ahmad Shah Massoud (1990s) has lived on in the hearts of many who are hurt by the harsh rejection they face today, even as India moves closer into a clinch with the Taliban.

For all these reasons, the government must study the developing situation in Afghanistan more closely and reconsider any plans to allow the creeping Talibanisation of the Embassy in Delhi. Ties with the regime in Kabul may be a necessity, but there is an urgent need to rebuild ties with those opposed to the Taliban as well. India must speak up about the situation of women and provide them a platform when possible. It is surprising that with all its clout, The Board of Control for Cricket in India did not push the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) to recognise the Afghan women's cricket team that has regrouped in Australia, or even to host the women's team in India. India should not shy away from allowing leaders of the exiled community to hold conferences and forums in India to raise their voice for political representation inside Afghanistan either. If there is one thing India's past problems in its neighbourhood have revealed, it is that New Delhi must engage with those in power, without abandoning contact with others across the political spectrum, if it wants to remain relevant in all eventualities and outcomes.

## Flood management: Giving rivers room to move will help people, nature both

When we think about flood management, higher stop banks, stronger levees and concrete barriers usually come to mind. But what if the best solution — for people and nature — isn't to confine rivers, but to give them more space? This alternative is increasingly being considered as an approach to mitigating flood risk. But allowing rivers room to move also delivers ecological benefits far beyond flood risk reduction. It supports biodiversity, improves water quality and stores carbon. As climate change increases the frequency and intensity of extreme floods, rethinking our approach to managing floodplain rivers has never been more urgent. Climate change, floods and river confinement

Climate change is amplifying flood risks worldwide, and Aotearoa New Zealand is no exception. Large floods are expected to become much more frequent and severe, threatening communities, infrastructure and ecosystems. Many of these risks are made worse by past management decisions that have artificially confined rivers within narrow channels, cutting them off from their natural floodplains. Floodplain river systems have historically been dynamic, shifting across landscapes over time. But extensive stop banks, modification of river channels and land development have restricted this natural variability. Strangling rivers in this way transfers and heightens flood risks downstream by forcing water through confined channels at greater speeds. It also degrades ecosystems that rely on the natural ebb and flow of river processes. Giving rivers space to roam The idea of allowing rivers to reclaim space on their floodplains is not new.

In the Netherlands, the Room for the River programme was a response to flooding in 1995 that led to large-scale evacuations of people and cattle. In England, predictions that economic risks associated with flooding will increase 20-fold within this century ignited the Making Space for Water strategy. However, these initiatives typically remain focused on flood protection, overlooking opportunities to maximise ecological benefits. Our new research shows that well-designed approaches can deliver ecological gains alongside flood protection. This is crucial because floodplain river systems are among the most valuable ecosystems. They provide about a quarter of all land-based ecosystem services such as water retention and pollutant filtration, as well as educational, recreational and cultural benefits.

Managing rivers for variability A fundamental shift in river management involves acknowledging and accommodating natural variability. Floodplain rivers are not static: they change across landscapes and through time, responding to seasonal flows, sediment movement and ecological processes. Our research synthesises the ecological processes that are enabled when floodplain rivers have room to move. Rivers that are not unnaturally confined are typi-



cally more physically complex. For instance, along with the main river channel, they might have smaller side channels, or areas where the water pools and slows, springs popping up from below ground to re-join the surface waters, or ponds on the floodplain. A diverse range of habitats supports a rich variety of plant and animal life. Even exposed gravel, made available in rivers that flow freely, provides critical nesting sites for endangered birds. Biodiversity is not one-dimensional. Instead, it exists and operates at multiple scales, from a small floodplain pond to a whole river catchment or wider. In a dynamic, ever-changing riverscape, we might find the genetic composition of a species varying in different parts of the river, or the same species of fish varying in their body size, depending on the habitat conditions. These examples of natural biological variability enable species and ecosystems to be resilient in the face of uncertain future conditions. At a larger scale, the type and number of species that live in different floodplain river habitats also varies. This diversity of biological communities produces variation in the functions ecosystems perform across the river, such as the uptake of nutrients or processing of organic matter. This can even help to diversify food webs. These variations mean not all species or groups of species in the river will be vulnerable to the same disturbances — such as droughts or floods — at the same time. This is because plants and animals in rivers have evolved to take advantage of long-term rhythms of floods and droughts in different ways.

For instance, the cottonwood poplars of the southwest United States time their seed release with the highly predictable rhythms of snowmelt-driven spring floods in that part of the world. In Aotearoa New Zealand, whitebait fish species typically deposit their eggs during high autumn flows, which then get transported to sea as larvae during high winter flows. Some animals need multiple habitats within the river for different stages of life. Other creatures travel from afar to use river floodplains for only a short time. The latter includes the banded dotterel (*Charadrius bicinctus*), endemic to Aotearoa New Zealand.



# Researchers announce breakthrough in breast cancer care by using chromosomes to monitor treatment and predict recurrence

Cancer of the breast remains a major health concern in India, with 1 in 28 women at risk of developing it in their lifetime. While doctors typically track treatment effectiveness using tumour size, hormone levels, and imaging scans, a recent breakthrough study introduced a novel approach by analysing the physical properties of chromosomes to monitor therapy outcomes and predict cancer recurrence earlier. Tracking treatment outcomes Tati Rakshit, assistant professor, School of Natural Sciences, Shiv Nadar University (Delhi-NCR), in her recent research explores the impact of Valproic Acid (VPA), a well-known epigenetic modifier drug on breast cancer cells using Atomic Force Microscopy (AFM)—a cutting-edge tool that measures chromosomal stiffness and electrical properties. These microscopic changes can reveal whether a treatment is working well before traditional indicators show results. Chromosomes are the carrier of our genomic information and hold vital clues of the evaluation and therapeutic outcome of breast cancer. Monitoring treatment response and recurrence

"In an innovative approach, our study explores how

VPA alters the physical properties of breast cancer chromosomes. Using single molecule techniques, we physically touched single chromosomes with a sharp probe and assessed its mechanical and electrical properties. This strategy opens a new direction to monitor treatment response, therapy outcome and potential disease recurrence in breast cancer patients," said Dr. Rakshit. She added that breast cancer is among the leading causes of death worldwide. In 2024, breast cancer remained the most common cancer in women in India, with an estimated 310,720 invasive cases, and a significant number of deaths, highlighting the need for early detection and improved access to treatment. Late detection is a major factor contributing to high mortality rates and the 5-year survival rate for breast cancer in India is around 66.4%, but varies across different regions.

Integrated strategy for accurate results "To evaluate the outcome of breast cancer therapy in a patient, healthcare professionals typically assess factors like the size and stage of the tumour, lymph node involvement, hormone receptor status, patient survival rate (overall and disease-free), re-

currence rate, quality of life, and any treatment-related side effects, using a combination of clinical examinations, imaging tests, and patient-reported outcomes throughout the treatment and follow-up process," explained Dr. Rakshit. The research demonstrated that a multi-parametric strategy with the physical properties (dimensional, mechanical and electrical properties) of chromosomes as revealed by Receiver Operating Characteristics (ROC) analyses offers a new scope for studying chromosomal structural changes/aberrations linked to cancer. Further research and personalised cancer therapies Explaining that epigenetic modifier drug valproic acid alters the physical properties of cancer chromosomes, Dr. Rakshit said that this strategy can also be incorporated to monitor the medicine/chemotherapy response, treatment outcome and recurrence in breast cancer patients. "We used AFM, an advanced single molecule technique, that uses a very sharp probe (nano finger) which physically touches single chromosomes and generates critical responses. We are interested in collaborating with nearby hospitals to receive patient samples to validate our



strategy," said Dr. Rakshit. With further advancements, this work could be useful in tumour treating fields (TTF) therapy, a non-invasive cancer treatment that uses mild electrical fields to disrupt the ability of cancer cells to divide, which can slow the growth and spread of the tumour. We are hopeful in designing and monitoring personalised cancer therapies with this innovative approach," she said while explaining the future and scope of the research.

## What is balance rehabilitation therapy and why should it be a part of primary healthcare?



Balance rehabilitation, often referred to as Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT), plays a crucial role in improving body functioning and stability. This therapy involves exercises that strengthen posture, core stability, and coordination, helping to reduce fall-related injuries, aid stroke recovery, and improve mobility in older adults. Early detection of health issues and tailored therapy plans including balance rehabilitation, can help prevent health complications and enhance overall well-being, say experts. However, in India, this is still an under-researched area that needs awareness both amongst the public and healthcare professionals, they say.

Where does balance therapy come in?

Balance therapy has applications in a number of areas, including in cardiac, neurological and geriatric care. For instance, incorporating balance training into preventive healthcare and rehabilitation programmes could significantly improve outcomes for patients who are at risk for cardiovascular disease, say doctors. This apart, it has shown to be beneficial for diabetes and mental health too. "Cardiovascular conditions and diabetes-related neuropathy both benefit from balance therapy. With ageing, concerns like sarcopenia (a progressive muscle disorder) and cognitive decline are also on the rise and the need for proactive balance training is growing," says Murugan Madhavan, head of physical activity and physiotherapy at Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre in Chennai. "Even functional disorders, chronic pain conditions like fibromyalgia, and paediatric developmental disorders require structured interventions to improve mobility and independence," he adds. Another area that balance therapy can play a role in is the prevention of falls, especially among senior citizens. Falls remain a major public health concern: the World Health Organization (WHO) records 37.3 million falls each year that require medical attention, leading to over 38 million disability-adjusted life years lost. This burden surpasses that of transport injuries, drowning, and burns. Mr. Madhavan explains that balance training plays an essential role in managing health conditions that affect stability, coordination, and mobility. This includes neurological disorders such as stroke, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and vestibular disorders that can impair balance, while musculoskeletal issues like arthritis, post-surgical recovery, and sports injuries also require rehabilitation to restore coordination.

When do you need balance therapy?

While the benefits of balance therapy are well-established, the problem lies in most people not recognising, or not taking seriously, early symptoms that could signal a chronic health condition. For instance, doctors say, dizziness, a largely recognised balance impairment symptom, is often dismissed as a minor issue, but it can be an early indicator of an underlying health problem. Persistent dizzi-

ness can signal vestibular disorders, neurological issues, cardiovascular conditions, or even cognitive decline. Without timely intervention, these conditions can lead to more severe complications, including falls and reduced mobility. According to Jejee Karankumar, Medical Director at Abbott India, a global healthcare company, contrary to popular belief, dizziness is not always linked to vertigo. Vertigo is a vestibular dysfunction characterised by a sensation of movement, often a spinning or swaying feeling, even when you or your surroundings are still. Vertigo, he says affects approximately 70 million Indians. A survey conducted by Abbott revealed that 34 per cent of individuals with vertigo cancelled important events and 23 per cent reported reduced quality time with their families due to the condition. Common triggers include anxiety or stress (39 per cent), travelling (34 per cent), and weather changes (30 per cent), with symptoms such as headaches (52 per cent), double vision (43 per cent), and blackout feelings (40 per cent). "There is a misconception that vertigo only affects the elderly or is untreatable. Management options such as vestibular rehabilitation therapy, medications, and surgical interventions can help significantly in these cases," says Dr. Karankumar. "He explains that different health risks require different types of care. He stresses that this is why early detection is the most critical factor in preventing long-term complications. "Neurological conditions require specialised rehabilitation techniques focusing on neural plasticity and motor relearning, while musculoskeletal injuries demand a combination of strength training and physiotherapy," he says. "Cardiovascular patients benefit from targeted exercises to enhance circulation and endurance, whereas older adults require structured fall prevention programmes tailored to their mobility levels. Functional disorders and developmental conditions need individualised therapeutic approaches to improve coordination and daily functioning." Additionally, Mazhar Khan S, head physiotherapist at Fortis Hospital in Bengaluru, says, "Thorough diagnosis determines the right treatment plan. Misdiagnosis or late detection can lead to long-term complications."

Balance therapy for recovery and caregiving Balance therapy also plays a vital role in post-treatment care. It is particularly crucial for people living with dementia and stroke survivors. Alok Kulkarni, senior consultant psychiatrist at Manas Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, points out that even caregiving for dementia patients significantly affects the mental health of both patients and family members.

"Fifty per cent of caregivers experience moderate to severe stress, with 25 per cent meeting criteria for clinical depression," he says. "Balance therapy and training can help caregivers manage stress and anxiety while also improving the overall physical and mental well-being of patients." According to experts, despite its importance, India's lack of a specific programme or recognition for balance impairment and related health risks highlights the need for more research on the therapy's benefits for overall health and functioning. Despite a huge and growing burden of non-communicable disease that account for about 60% of all deaths in the country, India's National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases & Stroke (NPCDCS) does not specifically recognise balance impairment as a risk factor. This gap, underscore experts, needs to be plugged with more awareness and incorporating balance therapy into primary health care.

## ICMR successfully tests drone-based cornea transport to aid eye care

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), in collaboration with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi and Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital, in an initiative supported by the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation has successfully conducted a feasibility study to assess the potential of using drones to transport sensitive ophthalmic biomaterials, including human corneas and amniotic membrane grafts from peripheral collection centres to tertiary hospitals for transplantation procedures, in Haryana's Sonapat and Jhajjar on Tuesday (March 25, 2025).

The drone successfully transported corneal tissue from Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (Sonapat centre) to the National Cancer Institute (NCI), AIIMS Jhajjar, and subsequently to AIIMS New Delhi, a distance that usually takes about two-and-a-half-hours by road and was covered in 40 minutes with drones. The drone maintained optimal conditions for specimen integrity and the cornea was evaluated upon arrival, leading to a successful transplant surgery. Over the past few years, ICMR's i-DRONE initiative has demonstrated the successful use of drones to deliver essential medical supplies, including to States in northeast India (COVID-19 and Universal Immunisation Programme or UIP vaccines, medications, and surgical materials), Himachal Pradesh (medications and samples in high altitude and sub-zero temperatures), Telangana (TB sputum samples), and the National Capital Region (blood bags and related components). These efforts highlight the growing capability and promise of drones in bridging the last mile healthcare gap. Speaking of the successful deployment of drones, Rajiv Bahl, Secretary, Department of Health Research, and Director General, ICMR, said that the i-DRONE platform was originally conceived during the COVID-19 pandemic to deliver vaccines to remote regions. "Since then, we have

scaled our efforts to include low-temperature delivery of blood products and essential medicines to high-altitude and sub-zero [temperature] locations. This cornea transport study marks another step forward — enhancing patient access, ensuring timely transplants, and reducing pressure on overburdened tertiary hospitals," Dr. Bahl said. The Central government has also maintained that drones are emerging as gamechangers in healthcare logistics, offering rapid delivery of life-saving medical supplies to remote and hard-to-reach areas.

The timely transportation of corneal tissues is critical as the viability of donated corneas is time-sensitive. Delays in transportation can compromise tissue quality and reduce the chances of successful transplantation. Drone-based transport offers a swift, temperature-stable, and efficient alternative to traditional road networks, which are often slow or unpredictable, especially in semi-urban or rural areas. This can help bridge the gap between donor sites and recipients, ensuring that no viable tissue goes unused, and that more patients regain sight in time. Piyush Srivastava, Additional Secretary and Senior Economic Advisor, Ministry of Civil Aviation, said the collaboration between health and aviation sectors is an inspiring example of tech-enabled social impact. "Drones offer a scalable solution for timely medical delivery in geographically challenging areas," Mr. Srivastava said. M. Srinivas, Director, AIIMS, New Delhi said that corneal blindness affects millions in India, and timely availability of donor tissue is often a limiting factor. "This drone-based transport model could be a transformative step toward ensuring equitable access to vision-restoring surgeries, especially in underserved areas. The success of this pilot project opens the door to deploying precision drone logistics for a wide range of critical medical applications," Dr. Srinivas said.

## Lessons in resilience: How Sunita Williams' recovery and Avanthika Venkatachalam's success showcase the power of adaptability



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The journey of recovery is marked not only by physical healing but also by resilience, determination, and the ability to adapt. For astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore, what was initially planned as an eight-day test flight in space turned into a nine-month mission due to unforeseen technical issues. Their return to Earth, facilitated by a SpaceX aircraft, marked the beginning of an arduous rehabilitation process to readjust their bodies and minds to life on Earth. Similarly, the path to success in various fields — whether in space exploration, science, or academics — requires overcoming obstacles and adapting to challenges. The parallel between the astronauts' recovery and the struggles faced by those who achieve success after years of hard work is reflected in the experiences of individuals like Dr. Avanthika Venkatachalam, a research fellow at Mass General Hospital and Harvard Medical School. Just as astronauts undergo rigorous physical and mental training for space survival, others work relentlessly toward their goals, facing setbacks and overcoming adversity. Both journeys are a testament to the power of perseverance, discipline, and an unwavering drive to succeed. As seasoned space travellers, Williams and Wilmore had undergone extensive training to prepare for the physical and mental demands of space exploration. Their preparation had equipped them to make quick decisions and perform under immense pressure. However, following their return, they are now undergoing rehabilitation to readjust to life on Earth. Dr. Karthikeyan, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon specializing in sports injuries at Royal Care Hospital in Coimbatore, shared insights into the health challenges astronauts face after extended space missions. One of the primary concerns is the impact of microgravity on bone density. The absence of load-bearing activities in space accelerates bone loss, making astronauts more prone to fractures. "Astronauts can lose bone mass at a rate of 1-2% per month, but this is reversible with the right rehabilitation program once they return to Earth," said Dr. Karthikeyan. "Muscular atrophy is another major concern," he added. "The average recovery time for astronauts to regain muscle strength is about six weeks. However, in some cases, recovery can take up

to a year, depending on the severity of the atrophy." Dr. Karthikeyan also noted the risks posed by prolonged exposure to radiation, particularly from the Van Allen radiation belts. This exposure can have carcinogenic effects, increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases, and cause kidney-related complications. Psychological effects due to isolation in space can also impact rehabilitation, but astronauts are trained to cope with such challenges and are supported by a team of therapists during their recovery process. Drawing a comparison, Dr. Karthikeyan likened the astronauts' recovery to that of an Olympian or a student who has cracked a prestigious exam after years of hard work, despite facing various setbacks along the way.

Dr. Avanthika Venkatachalam, a research fellow at Mass General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, offered her perspective on the importance of training, resilience, and adaptability. Like the astronauts, her success was not driven by a single defining moment but by an ability to adapt to challenges. Dr. Venkatachalam has an impressive academic background, having cracked the IIT GATE Biotechnology exam, the CSIR Lectureship and JRF exam, and completed her Ph.D. in cancer biology at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She now works on skin pigmentation and melanoma at Mass General Hospital and Harvard Medical School. In a conversation about managing her time and staying focused, Dr. Venkatachalam emphasized the importance of structure. "I rely on to-do lists — always," she said. "Whether it's packing for a trip, studying for an exam, or organizing my daily tasks in the lab, having a structured list helps me stay focused. It provides a clear strategy for tackling tasks efficiently."

She further explained her approach to maintaining focus through the Pomodoro technique, which involves working in 25-minute intervals with short breaks. On challenging days, Dr. Venkatachalam listens to a single song on repeat to help her tune out distractions and regain her rhythm, likening it to a form of meditation, though she doesn't claim any deep philosophical connection. Dr. Venkatachalam also discussed the importance of maintaining a balanced schedule. She works best at night, and she sets aside specific times for work, leisure, and socializing. This disciplined approach reflects the structure necessary for success, while also offering the flexibility to accommodate her energy levels. Her experiences, she said, have taught her the value of accepting the unexpected. "It's rare that everything is someone else's fault or that it's entirely your fault," she remarked. "What truly matters is understanding whether the situation was within your control or not. Accepting outcomes beyond your control is essential, but equally crucial is recognizing your mistakes and figuring out how things could have been handled differently." Through her experiences, both in the lab and in life, Dr. Venkatachalam has learned to evolve, adapt, and improve over time. Like the astronauts, she continues to embrace the challenges that come with each new phase of her career.

## Understanding the different types of eczema and how to tackle them

Eczema is a widespread skin disorder that induces skin inflammation while creating dryness and producing an intense itching sensation in millions of patients every year, globally. Each case of eczema however, has individual characteristics. Different forms of eczema present distinct symptoms while requiring individual treatment methods, because each type behaves differently. The identification and treatment of eczema can become complicated because its appearance varies between different skin tones. Here we explore diverse types of eczema types, while analysing their skin tone presence and distinguishing between eczema and other skin problems before investigating available treatment options. Types of eczema

Eczema exists as multiple skin conditions that present different symptoms from distinct causes. The most common types include: Atopic Dermatitis: Atopic Dermatitis functions as the primary type of eczema due to its development from inherited characteristics as well as allergic processes. Young children typically develop this skin condition, which sometimes becomes chronic during the adult years. Its symptoms include: itchy skin, inflammation, and redness. This condition can be kept under control by using ceramide-rich moisturizers, a healthy diet (avoiding foods that can trigger atopy), and a well-balanced lifestyle. All these measures can help improve internal immunity. Dyshidrotic Eczema: A stressed person with allergic issues being exposed to metal that causes allergies may face this skin condition. Symptoms include itchy blisters on one's feet and hands. Contact Dermatitis: Getting exposed to harmful elements in the environment may cause this condition. This condition has two types under it: allergic contact dermatitis, which is caused by a reaction to allergic elements from metals, cosmetics, etc. and irritant contact dermatitis, which is caused as an immediate response to ingredients present in acids, soaps, detergents, or cleaning agents. Nummular Eczema: A prolonged skin condition, with a coin-like appearance of scaly patches, causing itchiness, and usually appearing on the arms and legs when the skin becomes dry, or when there is an infection. This condition may show



up and prevail till diagnosed. Stasis Dermatitis: Some individuals have very little to poor blood circulation in their legs, and that is when one suffers from this skin condition. This condition has symptoms such as the skin starting to itch and becoming dry and red. Hence, it is advisable to keep the legs elevated while resting and avoid prolonged standing or sitting.

Seborrheic Dermatitis: If there are symptoms like patchy, red, fungal-like formations and white flakes around the glands that produce oil in the body, then these are indications of this non-contagious skin condition. The importance of a correct diagnosis The appearance of eczema differs across skin tones, often leading to incorrect diagnoses, frequently in individuals with dark skin tones. Eczema shows up with red and inflamed symptoms in people with light skin tones, while appearing purple, grey, or brown with those who have dark skin tones. Another issue is that several other skin conditions have symptoms similar to those of eczema, making it difficult to differentiate eczema from other skin conditions. Here is a guide to differentiating between eczema and other skin conditions: Psoriasis vs. Eczema: Dry and itchy skin shows up in both conditions. Eczema demonstrates more inflammation, whereas psoriasis shows evident silvery scales and clear borders around areas that are affected.



## Bharti Airtel launches IPTV services across 2,000 cities in India. Plans starts at 699



Wi-Fi plans. Existing Airtel Wi-Fi customers can upgrade their plan to IPTV plans through Airtel thanks app or at any Airtel store. "As an introductory offer, all Airtel customers will get upto 30 days of free service on the purchase of IPTV plans which can be availed through the Airtel Thanks App," the telecom service provider said. Airtel IPTV plan starts at ₹699 offering 40 Mbps Wi-Fi speed, 26 streaming apps and 350 TV channels. The ₹899 pack gets 100 Mbps speed, 26 streaming apps and 350 TV channels.

The 1,099 plan gives 200 Mbps speed, 28 streaming apps including Apple TV+, Amazon Prime and 350 channels. Then there is 599 pack for 300 Mbps speed, 29 streaming apps including Netflix, Apple TV+, Amazon Prime and 350 channels. The top-most plan of 3,999 will give users 1 Gbps speed, 29 streaming apps including Netflix, Apple TV+, Amazon Prime and 350 channels. "The launch heralds a new era in home entertainment where cutting-edge technology seamlessly blends traditional linear TV with a bouquet of streaming Apps for an immersive digital experience for customers. Backed by Airtel's high-speed Wi-Fi, we are certain that consumers will have a fantastic converged home experience with Airtel IPTV," said Siddharth Sharma CEO - Connected Homes and Chief Marketing Officer, Bharti Airtel.

Bharti Airtel on Wednesday (March 26, 2025) launched its Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) services in 2,000 cities across India. Airtel's IPTV subscribers will access a library of on-demand content from 29 streaming apps like Netflix, Apple TV+, Amazon Prime, SonyLiv, Zee5, and 350 television channels, including Wi-Fi service. Airtel's IPTV service will not be available in Delhi, Rajasthan, Assam and the Northeastern states as the company said the launch in these states are expected in few weeks.

All new customers get IPTV on the purchase of new

## Donald Trump signals softening stance on reciprocal tariffs; talks in Delhi

TRUMP'S HINT of concessions on reciprocal tariffs raises investor and industry hopes for a less disruptive US tariff regime. India has also expressed willingness to slash tariffs on a range of US products. As US President Donald Trump hinted at a softening of stance on reciprocal tariffs, stating that a "lot of countries" would be given a break on April 2, officials in the Commerce Ministry began bracing for US demands for increased market access, primarily in automobiles, whisky and some agricultural products.

While uncertainty over the White House trade policy continues — especially as Trump said he would impose tariffs on automobiles before the April 2 reciprocal tariffs — the possibility of concessions to certain countries lifted market sentiment globally, including in India, Tuesday. Formal talks, initially expected to begin Tuesday, were deferred to Wednesday, with the Ministry engaged in drafting "terms of reference" (ToR) based on input from all ministries, a government official told The Indian Express. In trade parlance, the ToR is a document that outlines the scope, objectives of the negotiations. "Formal talks will begin Wednesday, focusing on the first tranche of the bilateral investment agreement, which involves market access and digital trade. The US has key demands, particularly in the automobile, whisky and agriculture sectors, including genetically modified (GM) products. Labour, environment and government procurement will be part of the second tranche," the official said.

While both countries have been engaged in discussions, the terms of reference are yet to be exchanged. However, India will primarily push for "concessions on reciprocal tariffs" alongside the removal of certain "labelling-related" non-tariff barriers and demands in the services sector, such as "more visas for working professionals" in the US. On digital trade, India expects the US to push for greater access to data, challenging India's strict data localisation norms, which require Indian data to be stored within the country's borders. During Trump's first term, disagreements over data localisation were a major source of friction between India and the US. While India has resisted altering its stance on data localisation under any plurilateral agreements at the



WTO, it further tightened its regulations in April 2018, when the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) mandated that payment system providers such as Mastercard and Visa store payment data for Indian residents within India. The Reuters news agency reported that India is open to cutting tariffs on more than half of US imports worth \$23 billion in the first phase of a trade deal aimed at fending off reciprocal tariffs. TRUMP'S HINT of concessions on reciprocal tariffs raises investor and industry hopes for a less disruptive US tariff regime. India has also expressed willingness to slash tariffs on a range of US products.

In an internal analysis quoted by Reuters, New Delhi estimated that such reciprocal tariffs would affect 87 per cent of its total exports to the US, valued at \$66 billion. Under the deal, India is open to reducing tariffs on 55 per cent of US goods it imports, which are currently subject to tariffs ranging from 5 per cent to 30 per cent. The Financial Times reported that Trump is considering a two-step approach to implementing his new tariff regime, potentially invoking rarely used emergency powers to impose immediate duties on imports while formal investigations into trading partners take place. According to the FT, officials are exploring legal avenues to expedite tariff implementation, with Section 301 investigations, the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, and Section 338 of the 1930 Tariff Act among the options under review. These measures could allow the administration to impose duties of up to 50 per cent on certain imports.



Measures such as road markings, signages, crash barriers, road studs, delineators, closure of median openings, traffic calming measures, etc., are implemented for the short-term rectification of black spots, in accordance with guidelines issued by the government. Long-term measures such as improvement of road geometrics, junction improvements, spot widening of carriageway, construction of underpasses/overpasses, are taken for permanent rectification of black spots.

## BHIM 3.0 now smarter, has these many languages, new features

New Delhi: NPCI BHIM Services Limited (NBSL), a subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) on Tuesday launched the latest version of the Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) app — BHIM 3.0. BHIM 3.0 marks the third major upgrade since the app was first introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016.

The new version promises a smoother and more user-friendly experience with enhanced features. It now supports over 15 Indian languages, making digital payments more accessible to users across the country. Additionally, it has been optimised to work efficiently in areas with low or unstable internet connectivity, ensuring seamless transactions even in remote locations. One of the key highlights of BHIM 3.0 is its advanced money management tools. The app now allows users to track and split expenses easily.

A new 'split expenses' feature enables users to divide bills among friends and family, making payments for group activities like dining, rent, or shopping hassle-free.

## One in 5 super rich wants to leave India for good, says survey



Mumbai: At least 22 per cent super rich Indians wish to leave the country due to factors like living conditions here, better standard of life abroad and also easier business environment in other countries, a survey said on Tuesday. The survey of 150 ultra high networth individuals (UHNIs) said that the US, UK, Australia, Canada and even UAE due to its golden visa scheme are the favourite destinations where the rich prefer to settle down. Kotak Private, a leading wealth manager in the country which undertook the survey in association with consultancy EY, said 25 lakh Indians migrate to other countries every year as per the foreign ministry. "One in five ultra HNI's surveyed are currently in the process of or plan to migrate," the survey findings said, adding most of them intend to reside in their host country of choice permanently while retaining their Indian citizenship.

They seek improved standard of living, healthcare solutions, education or lifestyle, the survey said, adding that over two-thirds said smoothening of business operations is a key driver for them. Calling the migration decision as an "investment in the future", the survey also said that pursuit of excellent higher education for their children leads them to make the choice. Kotak Mahindra Bank's president Gautami Gavankar, however, said the decision to migrate

should not be seen as a flight of capital out of the country, pointing out that the caps on such activities ensure that the money does not flow out even if a person changes residency.

She said an Indian citizen residing in India can only take out USD 2,50,000 per year, while a non-resident is allowed USD 1 million, which ensures that there is no flight of capital. The survey said the professionals show a higher propensity to migrate than the entrepreneurs or inheritors, while from an age group perspective, it is UHNIs in the 36-40 years and above 61 years who are more keen to migrate. There were 2.83 lakh Indians who can be tagged as UHNIs in 2023, with each having a net worth of over Rs 25 crore and their aggregate wealth was pegged at Rs 2.83 lakh crore. The same is expected to grow to 4.3 lakh individuals possessing a wealth of Rs 359 lakh crore by 2028, as per the survey. Factors like higher consumption, the demographics and strong economic growth will help in the growth of this segment, the survey said. From a spending perspective, health and wellness emerged as a key area, especially after the pandemic, it said, adding that 81 per cent have reported an increase in their spends under the category.

## Govt ends Gold Monetisation Scheme: What RBI says about status of existing deposits

After sovereign gold bonds, the Centre has drawn the curtains on another gold-related scheme — the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS) — amid a spike in gold prices. The Ministry of Finance in a release issued late on Tuesday said that it will discontinue medium- and long-term deposits under the Gold Monetisation Scheme from March 26. The Ministry cited evolving market conditions and performance of the scheme while announcing the discontinuation. However, short-term bank deposits, which are under the ambit of banks in the scheme, will continue at the discretion of individual banks based on the commercial viability as assessed by them, the Ministry said.

What is Gold Monetisation Scheme?

The Gold Monetisation Scheme was launched in November 2015 to make idle gold productive & let consumers to either sell their gold or store it with banks, so it could merge into the formal economy and reduce the country's gold imports and thus, reduce the current account deficit. Idle gold held by households, trusts and various institutions in India was deposited under this scheme. GMS was a revamped version of an older Gold Deposit Scheme. It consisted of three components: (1) Short-term bank deposit (1-3 years); (2) Medium-term government deposit (5-7 years); and (3) Long-term government deposit (12-15 years). The minimum deposit allowed was 10 gm of raw gold (bars, coins, jewellery excluding stones and other metals). There was no maximum limit for deposit under the scheme. The amount of interest rate payable for short-term deposits under the Gold Monetisation Scheme is decided by the banks on the basis of the prevailing international lease rates, other costs, market conditions, etc., and is borne by the banks. For medium- and long-term deposits, the rate of interest was decided by the government, in consultation with the RBI and borne by the Central government. Gold Monetisation Scheme interest rate was fixed at 2.25 per cent for medium-term bonds and at 2.5 per cent for the long-term bonds.

What the government, RBI said about the scheme's closure?

The Ministry of Finance on Tuesday said it has decided to discontinue the Gold Monetisation Scheme, except for short-term deposits that are rendered by the banks and not the government. "Based on the examination of the performance of the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS) and evolving market conditions, it has been decided to discontinue the Medium Term and Long Term Government Deposit (MLTGD) components of the GMS w.e.f. March 26, 2025," the statement said. Any gold deposits tendered at the designated collection and purity testing centre or GMS mobilisation, collection & testing agent (GMCTA) or the designated bank branches will not be accepted with effect from March 26, the Ministry said. However, the existing deposits will continue till redemption. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will issue detailed guidelines on this issue, the Ministry said. The RBI has not separately issued a release so far but it has updated the section on the Gold Monetisation Scheme on its website. "It may be noted that consequent to Government of India's press release dated March 25, 2025, mobilisation of MTGD and LTGD, including renewal of existing deposits, has been discontinued with effect from March 26, 2025," the RBI said. On the question of the impact of the discontinuation of the scheme on existing deposits, the RBI said the existing medium- and long-term government deposits are not impacted and will continue to be governed by the provisions contained in the Master Directions issued earlier. "These deposits shall run till maturity unless these are prematurely withdrawn," the RBI said.

How much gold was garnered under the scheme?

Till November 2024, approximately 31,164 kg of gold had been mobilised under GMS, as per official data. Out of this, short-term gold deposits accounted for 7,509 kg gold, medium-term gold deposits stood at 9,728 kg, and 13,926 kg of the yellow metal was mobilised for long-term gold deposits. About 5,693 depositors participated in GMS. As



per an earlier response by the Finance Ministry in Parliament, 1,134 kg of gold was collected from individuals/HUFs during the financial year 2016-17 and 2017-18. Separately, around 10,872 kg of gold was collected from temples/trusts, mutual funds/gold ETFs and other entities such as companies/firms, etc., under the scheme. HUF stands for Hindu Undivided Family.

What is the status of other gold schemes in India?

The Gold Monetisation Scheme is the second gold scheme to face closure by the government in recent months amid a sharp surge in gold prices. The Centre had earlier discontinued fresh issuance of sovereign gold bonds. Gold prices have risen sharply by Rs 26,530 or 41.5 per cent to Rs 90,450 per 10 gm (as of March 25, 2025) from Rs 63,920 per 10 gm on January 1, 2024. The government did not announce any fresh tranche of sovereign gold bonds in the Budget for 2025-26. After the Budget presentation in February, Economic Affairs Secretary (now Finance Secretary) Ajay Seth had said that gold bonds had been a "fairly high-cost borrowing" for the government and, hence, no fresh issuances were being made. Last year, officials had stated that sovereign gold bonds were issued with the objective to boost investment in gold, but the announcement to cut the import duty on gold in Budget 2024-25 was already in line with that objective and helped raise demand for gold.

## Safe harbour rules threshold raised; to include lithium ion batteries for EVs

Central Board of Direct Taxes, CBDT, safe harbour rules, lithium ion batteries, lithium ion batteries for EVs, electric vehicles, Indian express news, current affairs As per the CBDT statement, the threshold for safe harbour has been raised to Rs 300 crore from Rs 200 crore. Also, 'Lithium ion batteries for use in electric or hybrid electric vehicles' have been included in the definition of core auto components. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) notified amendments to Income-tax Rules on Tuesday to expand the scope of safe harbour rules by including lithium ion batteries for use in electric or hybrid electric vehicles and increasing the threshold for availing safe harbour to Rs 300 crore. Experts said this will help reduce transfer pricing disputes for imported EV components. The CBDT said it will provide tax certainty to the assessee's opting for safe harbour and the amendments will apply for two assessment years 2025-26 and 2026-27. As per the CBDT statement, the threshold for safe harbour has been raised to Rs 300 crore from Rs 200 crore. Also, 'Lithium ion batteries for use in electric or hybrid electric vehicles' have been included in the definition of core auto components. Safe harbour rules are defined under Section 92CB of the Income-tax Act, 1961 for the determination of arm's length price under section 92C or section 92CA. Safe harbour means circumstances in which the income-tax authorities accept the transfer price as declared by the assessee. Transfer Price is the actual price charged in a transaction between related entities which are part of the same multi national enterprises (MNE) group.



## 'Reality of Indian football': Sunil Chhetri's return cannot stop dire run as India get lucky 0-0 draw against Bangladesh



GNS News Agency, March 28

India mustered a grand total of two shots on goal in over 90 minutes of football, and opened their 2027 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers with a draw that really was an escape from a defeat. (Indian Football Team) India mustered a grand total of two shots on goal in over 90 minutes of football, and opened their 2027 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers with a draw that really was an escape from a defeat. (Indian Football Team)

India's last win of consequence was a 0-1 away victory against Kuwait in a World Cup qualifier in November 2023. Since then, an AFC Asian Cup has passed, numerous other WC qualifiers have gone by and those matches are sandwiched between friendlies played against different countries. The only result that has gone in their favour has been a 3-0 win against Maldives, a team that hasn't seen a domestic league in two years. Since that Kuwait win, India have picked up seven losses, six draws and one win. The sixth draw in that disastrous run of results came on Tuesday when India mustered a grand total of two shots on goal in over 90 minutes of football, and opened their 2027 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers with a draw that really was an escape from a defeat. To gather a larger picture of the game, against

a team ranked 185th in the world, Marquez was made to search for the right words, and the Spaniard had this to offer: "Maybe this is the reality of Indian football."

When prodded to say something positive about the abject football that has become a way of life, he pricked that little broadcaster bubble rather satisfyingly: "The positive is that we didn't concede a single goal with the chances they created." The entertainment factor of India's international games isn't the game itself, it might well be the visceral meltdown of its coach during and after the games. What better way to punish a Spaniard than to spend the first thirty minutes of the game kicking the ball further up the field – with no inking of pressure or player nearby. Unfortunately for India, Bangladesh is also no slouch when it comes to returning the ball back promptly – a sobering moment for Sheffield Wednesday loanee Hamza Choudhury. India have now drawn three of their last four games against Bangladesh. One draw or a loss can be brushed aside as happenstance but these results and their patterns point to just how far Indian football has receded even at the South Asian level. Bangladesh may have looked the lesser of the teams on paper, but India's weaker defensive line always felt like it was going to go under. (Indian Football Team) Bangladesh may have looked the lesser of the teams on paper, but India's weaker defensive line always felt like it was going to go under. (Indian Football Team) The Indian game

What has emerged as a pattern for this Indian team has been giving the ball away in possession via long balls. When going through the midfield, the first option is to go through the flanks, from where the ball is immediately dropped into the box, from where the opposition defender easily picks it off. Rinse, lather and repeat. Marquez tried to play a high line, but melding three lines of Indian players close together should have led to shorter passing options. Instead it led to opening up the defence, where captain Sandesh Jhingan and Rahul Bheke, two players who get caught out on pace, were regularly left to fend for them-

selves. Bangladesh tried to put themselves in one-on-one situations on the flanks with both and found great success, beating the ageing Indian centre-back pairing for pace. The second half saw an attempt from both teams to hold onto the ball. The home team were even a shade better but in a system where offensive output is negligent, chances needed to be taken. Chhetri got a couple of them, but as has been the case with the veteran Indian striker, goals usually only come when a large number of chances arrive as well. He had two half-opportunities but the real marker of his game was the relentless closing down of Bangladesh's defensive line and his defensive duty on Choudhury. Barring that, India really did not create anything of note. Bangladesh may have looked the lesser of the teams on paper, but India's weaker defensive line always felt like it was going to go under, a sentiment echoed by their coach Javier Cabrera. "It's a good result getting a point on the road against a Pot 1 team. But the feeling at the end of the first half was we could have been one or two goals up. But we're happy with the point," said Cabrera, who has the lowest-ranked team in a group consisting of India, Hong Kong and Singapore. Marquez's team on the other hand, the on paper giants in this quartet, will next face Hong Kong on the road on June 10. Hong Kong and Singapore also picked up a point each in a 0-0 draw to keep Group C well open. The only advantage that the team can carry to Hong Kong will be that the football calendar in the country will have come to a close by then and Marquez will finally get a long camp with the players, should the AIFF and its commercial partners deem it fit. It's unclear whether Chhetri would continue to play for India then as well or this return was for two matches alone. In the past few years, India has had a habit of struggling against ASEAN countries. Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam have caused all sorts of problems to this team and just like a result against Bangladesh wasn't a given even before the game, India's other fixtures come with the same risk of poor results. After qualifying for the AFC Asian Cup twice in a row, this campaign could well be a return to the old ways.

## 'There are some silver linings from the series': Pakistan T20 captain Salman Ali Agha backs new faces after 1-4 drubbing against New Zealand



GNS News Agency, March 28

Pakistan's new T20 captain Salman Ali Agha said he was not disheartened about his team's performance where they lost 1-4 to hosts New Zealand, adding that the new players will eventually find their feet in the team. Pakistan are currently in a transition phase in the shortest format with stalwarts like Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam not getting selected for the New Zealand tour.

"Look the conditions in New Zealand are normally challenging with the bounce, pace and movement in the pitches, so for players coming to play here for the first time it is always going to be difficult," Agha said after his side lost the fifth and final T20I against the Kiwis on Wednesday. "It was not easy for them to bat in these conditions. There are some silver linings from the series and some concerns as well but we have to address them before we go into the Asia Cup later this year," he said.

Salman, who was in good form in the series and scored a half century on Wednesday, said that it was necessary for players to understand that with aggression and intent they also have to use their minds. "We didn't play sensible cricket in the series most of the time and got out to bad shots. But with more exposure these new young players will learn and we have to be patient." Mohammad Haris, Hasan Nawaz, Irfan Khan Niazi, Abdul Samad, Omair bin Yousuf (who played on Wednesday), Jahandad Khan and Sufiyan Muqem were the relatively new faces in the squad. Muqem, a left-arm wrist spinner, played in his only game on Wednesday and ended with impressive figures of 2-0-6-2 despite a batting onslaught from Tim Seifert who scored 97 from just 38 balls with 10 sixes.

## 'I am really angry and disappointed': Manolo Marquez after India's goalless draw vs Bangladesh



GNS News Agency, March 28

The Indian football team head coach, Manolo Marquez minced no words and said he was 'angry and disappointed' with the way Men in Blue played against Bangladesh on Tuesday. India played a goalless draw with Hamza Choudhury-led Bangladesh in the third round of the AFC Asian Cup qualifiers at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Shillong.

"We didn't even defend well. I am really angry and disappointed. The best thing is that all four teams are level on one point, so we start from zero again," said Marquez during the post-match press conference. In the other group game, Singapore drew with Hong Kong, resulting in all four teams having the same points after their first matches. India went into the contest on a high, having beaten the Maldives 3-0 in an international friendly at the same venue last week. It was India's first international win in 489 days and also the maiden victory under the current head coach Marquez. Captain Sunil Chhetri also returned to the national team.

"If you ask me, maybe today is the most difficult press conference of my career because I don't want to say all the things that are in my head at this moment. We played a bad game and that's all. In the second half we tried, but not enough," said a visibly frustrated Marquez. 40-year-old, who scored a goal against Maldives, had retired from national duties last year but reversed his decision ahead of the Maldives game. India (World No. 126) is ranked 59 places above Bangladesh (World No. 185) in the FIFA men's team rankings. "My feeling is that when we started in Hyderabad against Mauritius with one training session, things improved with every game. But today, we took two or three steps back," Marquez said.

## From being in coma to India's flag-bearer in Paralympics

Hyderabad: In 2006, Bhagyashree Jadhav met with an accident, was in coma and on a ventilator for a long time – an accident that prefers not to recall! Now, Bhagyashree, India's flag-bearer at the 2024 Paris Paralympics, has a target of winning a medal in the 2028 Los Angeles Paralympics in shotput and javelin. The 37-year-old wheelchair bound Bhagyashree from Maharashtra won two gold medals – in shot put and javelin throw – in the Khelo India Para Games at JN Stadium in Delhi in the F 33-34 category. For the record, she won six gold across three events in the past year-and-a-half. "This is an iconic venue. I feel like giving my best here. This stadium has witnessed the history of Indian athletics. During the first edition of Khelo India Para Games, I felt a different kind of experience as soon as I stepped here. It is also very convenient for paralympic athletes. Here, we can focus on our performance without worries," Bhagyashree Informed Sai Media.

## 'Game not over until Ashutosh Sharma is batting': Kevin Pietersen's faith in Delhi's new finisher comes from courage forged by a fighter's upbringing

GNS News Agency, March 28

Delhi Capitals' last man Mohit Sharma had a simple question for Ashutosh Sharma when the two met at the start of the final over with their team needing 6 runs: "I give you one ball, can you hit it for a six?". Ashutosh, 26, would give a firm nod and deliver a confident 'Yes'. After blocking one ball, Mohit would tap and run a single. Ashutosh now had 4 balls, but he needed one. He smashed the ball over Lucknow SuperGiants off-spinner Shahbaz Ahmed's head and over the boundary rope. DC had won the match they had almost lost. Also, they finally had a lower-order batsman with the confidence and swagger of a finisher. It was something they had lacked and it was to fill this void that they had paid Rs 3.8 Crore to get Ashutosh. There was another new signing in the dugout, who too had a role to play in DC snatching victory from the jaws of defeat.

Ashutosh acknowledged the impact that Kevin Pietersen, former England and DC captain, now mentor of the Delhi-based franchise, had on him within minutes of hitting the winning runs. He mimicked KP's famous 'switch hit' and pointed his bat towards the mentor who was getting hugged by other DC team members around him. Ashutosh's unbeaten 66 off just 31 balls, ably supported by rookie leg-spinning all-rounder Vipraj Nigam's 39 off 15, had taken DC home. It was an unlikely result since his team was reeling at 65/5 in the seventh over. At that stage, the required rate was almost touching 10. The target of 210 looked too far. After scoring 20 off the first 20 balls he faced, Ashutosh would explode, going on to hit 46 runs off the next 11 balls. Back in the day, KP played such match-winning knocks. He would walk on to the turf to receive the day's last action hero. "Brilliant, brilliant... it is about the mindset," he would tell Ashutosh. He would also convey to him what he was telling others in the dugout during the tense moments of the game. "I told them, this game is not over till Ashutosh is batting." KP would then slap his arms just like ring-side boxing coaches do to motivate their wards. The DC social media handle put out a post that would show the master and disciple before the game. "Getting your team in a great position is one thing but great players finish games off." – KP is heard advising. Ashutosh has been showing shades of IPL greatness of late – for Punjab Kings last season and DC now. After bailing out the team from a deep hole, Ashutosh gave a glimpse about his mindset. "I learned from last year, because there were a few games where I couldn't finish it off, so I have been focusing on finishing games, even in domestic cricket. I have a lot of belief in myself that if I play till the last over and the last ball, any-



thing can happen. Because you just have to stay calm, and believe, and think about what shots you can play that you have practiced, so that's what I did today," he said.

Ashutosh has been a fighter since his childhood days. During his interaction with The Indian Express last year, he spoke about leaving his home in Ratlam when he was just 11. He moved to Indore and stayed in rented accommodation with another friend who was around the same age. His elder brother helped him get a room that was part of an office, whose owner would be his local guardian. "It was a lot of struggle, I stayed alone in Indore in a room with a friend. It has been 13 years I have been staying alone in Indore. I left home at 11 and then I was part of the MPCA academy. Amey Khurusiya was my coach for five years and then I stayed alone again. I represented MPCA last in 2019 and then I joined Railways," he had said. During his early days in Indore, Ashutosh would miss his mother a lot and at times cry. But after some time it became normal for him. He barely knew that down the line, he would make a few bowlers and owners cry as he was going to snatch wins from his opponents. Former Indian batsman-turned-coach Amay Khurasiya vividly remembers the first time he saw Ashutosh, a young kid who was struggling to tie his bootlaces at the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Academy (MPCA) in Indore. "When you see him opening the batting, you will forget many players. He was rare at 12. He has an attitude in his batting. He is a modest and honest boy but if you put him against a bowler, he will hit them out of the park, he doesn't show respect to the bowlers. He will play his shots. Even at that age, he didn't fear facing bowlers double his age; not every 12-year-old kid can do that." Khurasiya had told this paper last year. More than a decade later, it is that courage that defines Ashutosh's batting and character. Not many would show the dare to say that they are fine in getting just one ball when their team needs six runs.

## Argentina secures World Cup spot even before drubbing arch-rivals Brazil 4-1 in World Cup qualifying



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Joao Gomes walks off after Brazil's loss to Argentina in a World Cup 2026 qualifying soccer match at Monumental Stadium in Buenos Aires. (AP Photo) Joao Gomes walks off after Brazil's loss to Argentina in a World Cup 2026 qualifying soccer match at Monumental Stadium in Buenos Aires.

Despite missing their talisman Lionel Messi, Argentina thrashed arch-rivals Brazil 4-1 in a World Cup qualifying encounter that had some edge to it, especially after Brazil's Raphinha had bragged about beating the world champions "on and off the field if they needed to" before the game started. What made the victory sweeter for Argentina was that they also qualified for the FIFA World Cup in 2026, which will be co-hosted next year by the US, Canada and Mexico, before the match against Brazil even kicked off! Argentina's qualification happened because of Bolivia's failure to beat Uruguay in another World Cup qualifying game. That result meant that Argentina will now easily breeze through in South American qualifying to secure one of the continent's six direct spots for the expanded 48-team World Cup. Argentina were 2-0 up in just 12 minutes. Julián Álvarez, Enzo Fernández, Alexis Mac Allister and Giuliano Simeone scored for the reigning world champions on the night. Brazil got one back via Matheus Cunha. Coach Lionel Scaloni has not used Messi, who is 37 years old, in several games with the national team, which has still raises doubts on whether the star will play at the World Cup next year. Messi has an adductor injury. The star forward has not been named in the squad for the two latest matches. For Brazil, the defeat marked a fresh blow to their hope of securing a World Cup spot. The South American football giants are in fourth place in continental qualifying with 21 points, 10 behind Argentina but only two behind second-place Ecuador. But Uruguay and Paraguay also have 21 points, so the race to qualify will be tight. This is Brazil's worst deficit in South American World Cup qualifying history, which piled on the pressure for national team coach Dorival Júnior.

## 'It's definitely not finished': Marcus Stoinis on Virat Kohli's career

GNS News Agency, March 28

Marcus Stoinis Virat Kohli Marcus Stoinis and Virat Kohli before the start of the match 55 of season 13 of the Indian Premier League (IPL) between the Delhi Capitals and the Royal Challengers Bangalore at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates on the 2nd November 2020.

Australian player Marcus Stoinis, currently representing the Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League (IPL), said that he still remains in touch with Indian star Virat Kohli, a connection which goes way back to their U-19 days when Kohli led won the World Cup with his team in 2008.

"We've known each other for a long time. We've got a mutual friend in Perth that has known him for a long time as well. So that's sort of how that relationship started. But yeah, what a great career it's been so far. It's definitely not finished. It seems like he's worn a few caps throughout his career in terms of being the young guy coming into an Indian team that forced his way in there at such a young age and showed such confidence in himself to crack into such a good team to then leading the team and almost changing the whole culture of Indian cricket and inspiring a lot of the young cricketers around India and around the world," Stoinis said to PTL.

## 'They are super confident': Marcus Stoinis praises India's cricketing depth

GNS News Agency, March 28

Australia's Marcus Stoinis returned to the Punjab Kings after almost a decade and said he was excited to work with head coach Ricky Ponting. He also praised the young Indian batters like Priyansh Arya who has put the league on notice with his performance in Tuesday's match against Gujarat Titans.

Arya made a blistering 47 off 23 deliveries with his innings going a long way in helping the Punjab Kings post a massive 243 against the Titans. "There's great depth here (in Indian cricket). There always has been. And I think they're getting the chance to show their skills on a world stage. They are super confident. They've had almost the advantage of growing up with IPL, being under pressure from early stages in their career. It's brilliant to see how fearless they are with their cricket and especially (while playing for) Indian cricket (team)," Stoinis said.

"Some of the youngsters in the Punjab Kings camp who have never really played the IPL are very impressive," the 35-year-old added. Talking about his return to the PBKS, he said, "A lot of Aussie boys here, which is nice for me. So it does feel at home it was my second year in the IPL that I moved to here. So yeah, it's all familiar. I love the IPL." "It's a mainstay in the calendar. It's something we all look forward to and personally I look forward to. It's exciting to have the opportunity to bring some success to this franchise,"



Stoinis scored a 15-ball 20 on Tuesday on his re-debut for the Punjab franchise while skipper Shreyas Iyer blasted a 42-ball 97 and Shashank Singh slammed 44 from 16 as PBKS posted 243.

he added. Stoinis scored a 15-ball 20 on Tuesday on his re-debut for the Punjab franchise while skipper Shreyas Iyer blasted a 42-ball 97 and Shashank Singh slammed 44 from 16 as PBKS posted 243. In reply, Gujarat came close with efforts from Sai Sudharshan 74 (41), Jos Buttler 54 (33) and Shorfane Rutherford 46 (28) but ultimately fell 11 runs short as Iyer's stint as PBKS captain started off with a bang.



## Alappuzha Gymkhana trailer: Naslen dreams big as a boxer, but does he have what it takes?



Alappuzha Gymkhana trailer: Directed by Khalid Rahman, the sports comedy revolves around a group of youngsters who dream of entering the Kerala State Amateur Boxing Championship but might be severely undertalented. Alappuzha Gymkhana trailer: Director Khalid Rahman's sports comedy features Premalu star Naslen K Gafoor in the lead role.

Alappuzha Gymkhana trailer: "I can't say whether I'll return in an ambulance or as a champion, but wait and watch!" Jojo Johnson (Naslen K Gafoor) tells his mother before heading off to a boxing competition. Though he puts on a confident front, his mother's expression — mirroring our own — suggests otherwise as we are able to see right through him and realise that he is not that sure of himself. Yet, his bravado makes us all the more eager to see how things unfold. The much-anticipated trailer of Alappuzha Gymkhana has arrived, promising a film packed with fun and excitement.

The 158-second trailer kicks off with a petty quarrel between two groups of youngsters, which quickly escalates when one of them throws a punch. What makes this mo-

ment significant in the narrative is that the punch inadvertently reveals the striker's hidden talent — he's a boxer. This revelation pushes the rival group to take up boxing themselves, determined to become a formidable force. Among them is Jojo, who, along with his friends, soon realises that mastering the sport is no easy feat. However, with the guidance of national boxing champion-turned-coach Antony Joshua (Lukman Avaran), they just might stand a chance at achieving their dream. As the trailer progresses, we catch glimpses of Jojo's personal life as well, including his romantic relationships and his relentless pursuit to establish himself as a skilled boxer, ultimately leading him to the Kerala State Amateur Boxing Championship. However, the general perception of him and his gang is poor: "They aren't good enough," we hear one of the characters saying. The implication? They might be all talk and no action. But what if they finally prove everyone wrong? Also starring Ganapathi, Sandeep Pradeep, Anagha Ravi and Kottayam Nazeer, Alappuzha Gymkhana is directed by Khalid Rahman, known for Unda and Thallumaala. The film features music by Vishnu Vijay, cinematography by Jimshi Khalid and editing by Nishadh Yusuf.

## Sadia Khateeb on playing Kashmiri Pandit in Shikara and burkha-clad Muslim in The Diplomat: 'Scripts choose you'



Sadia Khateeb made her debut as Shanti Sapru, a Kashmiri Pandit, in Vidhu Vinod Chopra's 2020 directorial Shikara. Little did she know that just five years later, she'd be essaying an Indian Muslim woman stuck in Pakistan in Shivam Nair's The Diplomat. "I don't know. It's not something I sit and choose. It's something that happens. There's been a long time period between these. So it's something that comes your way after a lot of auditions. When you look back, you only see the summarised version. We miss the years in between," Sadia tells SCREEN. In an interview, Sadia Khateeb opens up on her choices, nepotism in the film industry, and her preparation for the real-life role of Uzma Ahmed in John Abraham-starrer The Diplomat.

You've only been in three movies in the five years since you debuted — Shikara, Raksha Bandhan (2022), and The Diplomat. Has that been a conscious decision?

I've been very precise with one thing: I have to choose quality over quantity. I don't have to fall into the trap of doing something that my heart doesn't allow. Sometimes, you end up doing that because I understand the pressure that comes along. But my heart wasn't willing to give up. It was hoping for something better. It was wishing for something nicer. It only makes me feel grateful that, wow, God's plan is happening, and it's going in the right direction.

When The Diplomat came to you, did you have any concerns about whether the audience would see you as a burkha-clad Muslim after your debut as a Kashmiri Pandit in Shikara?

Not at all. That's not how I see it. I just see if what I read is something I'd like to do, who all are making it, if it's a meaty part. That's how you go about it. Thankfully, I can't correlate both of them at all. It's majorly the script that chooses you, not the other way round.

Did you meet Uzma to prepare for your role in The Diplomat?

After the film released, I met her for the first time at a promotional podcast. My director was very sure that he didn't want me to meet her because he asked me to do what the script wants. I just followed the human emotions, considered what I'd have done had I been trapped in the same situation, and listening to my director who had his own vision. He had met Uzma, he knew more about the

character. Whatever he narrated, I put my insights into it, went ahead and lived it.

Is it true that during the domestic abuse scenes, you chose to actually go through the motions for effect, instead of staging them?

I didn't choose to do that. When we're acting and trying to be as real as possible, then actors sometimes forget who they are. We're just in character in front of the camera, living that part. Similar thing happened with me and my co-actor. Now, when I look back, things like these help. Sometimes not, maybe. Why do you want to get beaten up? But yeah, the more honesty, the more it's impactful.

Is it also true that your debut film was supposed to be Sajid Ali's Laila Majnu (2018)?

That's how it all started. I was an engineering student. I'm from Jammu & Kashmir, and had no background in acting. They asked me to play Laila and I blocked the number, thinking it's a fake call. Imagine if you're living in a small town, would you have any idea who's actually casting in Mumbai? It can be human trafficking!

Outsiders often blame nepotism for not making it in the film industry. Then how do you see yourself getting a good break sitting in Jammu & Kashmir, with no ambition of becoming an actor? It's all destiny, 200%. Now that I'm a part of the film industry, I can proudly say it's all destiny. My sister's friend, a Kashmiri guy, was scrolling through Instagram, sitting next to the casting director. He spotted and made the call. Today, that casting director is a great friend of mine. It's a non-stop journey. It's tough like in any other profession. It's as difficult for everyone, whether you're an actor, a journalist, even the CEO of a company, the director of a board.

## Salman Khan's film receives a U/A certificate, makers to trim its runtime by 14 minutes

Salman Khan and Rashmika Mandanna's upcoming film Sikandar is set to hit the screens on March 30. Ahead of its release, the censor board has cleared the movie with a U/A certificate. While CBFC requested minor modifications, the makers have voluntarily decided to trim the film's length by 14 minutes and 28 seconds.

According to a report in Bollywood Hungama, the initial runtime of Sikandar was 2 hours, 30 minutes, and 8 seconds. However, the final cut now stands at 2 hours, 15 minutes, and 46 seconds, with a total of 26 scenes being altered. Among the changes, a scene featuring the dialogue "Offer aukat ke bahar tha" has been omitted. Additionally, the filmmakers have removed several scenes exceeding one minute in duration, including a 2-minute, 26-second scene, a 1-minute, 12-second scene, and a 4-minute scene. Another sequence, lasting 56 seconds, has also been deleted. A sequence featuring Salman Khan singing "Ajeeb Dastaan Hai Yeh" has been shortened by 11 seconds, while the Holi scene has been trimmed by 40 seconds. Additionally, the makers have inserted 7 seconds of Salman's reaction shots. Other modifications suggested by the CBFC include removing the word "Home" from "Home Minister" and blurring all visuals of a political party's hoardings.

## Ram Charan's pan-India film #RC16's pre-look grabs attention; first look out tomorrow

Hyderabad: Global star Ram Charan is back, and he's bringing his magic on to the big screen like never before. For his highly anticipated 16th film, tentatively titled #RC16, Ram Charan joined forces with the sensational director Buchi Babu Sana, known for his debut film 'Uppena'. This pan-India spectacle is presented by Mythri Movie Makers, alongside Sukumar Writings, ensuring a cinematic experience that will redefine storytelling and grandeur.

The film is produced by Venkata Satish Kilaru, marking the debut of the production house Vriddhi Cinemas, and it's poised to set the screen on fire with its bold and go-getting approach. #RC16 is being crafted on an unprecedented scale, with a colossal budget, breathtaking visuals, world-class production values, and cutting-edge technical excellence. The excitement surrounding this project is palpable, and it's ready to take the industry by storm.

In celebration of Ram Charan's birthday (March 27), the excitement surrounding the upcoming film reaches a fever pitch with the unveiling of the film's first look on Thursday. But before the grand reveal, the makers have treated fans to a tantalising pre-look poster that shows the intensity of the character. The poster features Ram Charan in a captivating back pose, embodying a rugged and raw persona. His dishevelled hair, beard, and serious expression add layers of intensity to his character, while the subtle yet powerful inclusion of a cigar held behind his back enhances the sense of intrigue. The pre-look is designed to tease the audience and fans with the promise of a powerful first-look



poster. Buchi Babu Sana is crafting a larger-than-life character for Ram Charan. He's committed to making each frame a visual spectacle, ensuring every moment is packed with excitement and keeps the audience hooked.

The movie features an ensemble of renowned actors from various film industries, creating an exciting blend of talent and star power. Kannada superstar Shiva Rajkumar plays a pivotal and powerful role in the film. The film's music will be composed by the Academy Award-winning composer, AR Rahman. The stunning visuals will be captured by R Rathnavel ISC, with Avinash Kolla serving as the production designer. Janhvi Kapoor is the leading lady, opposite Ram Charan, with Jagapathi Babu, and Divyendu Sharma playing key roles. While more details about the cast and crew are set to be revealed soon, the anticipation surrounding this film continues to grow.

## Kim Soo Hyun not linked to Kim Sae Ron's death, claims ex-boyfriend; blames her 'abusive' husband for emotional distress

Kim Sae Ron's ex-boyfriend has spoken out amid the ongoing controversy surrounding the late actor's death and her alleged ties to top Korean star Kim Soo Hyun. In an interview with The Fact on Wednesday, he claimed that the Queen of Tears actor is being "unfairly targeted" and insisted that the real issue lies with Sae Ron's "abusive" husband, whom she married in the U.S. His remarks come as controversy continues to impact Soo Hyun's career and brand endorsements, with his recent Taiwan fan meeting being cancelled.

Kim Sae Ron's ex-boyfriend expressed frustration over the false narratives circulating online. "I know for sure that Sae Ron's death had nothing to do with Kim Soo Hyun," he stated. "There are too many misleading claims. I'm angry, and I want at least part of the truth known so that she can rest in peace." Rumours have linked Kim Sae Ron's death to various factors, including her past relationship with Kim Soo Hyun, financial struggles, and issues with her former agency, Gold Medalist. However, her ex-boyfriend clarified that she would not have wanted her passing to be tied to misinformation.

According to her ex-boyfriend, The Queen's Classroom star was drowning in emotional distress in the months leading up to her death. She was caught between her past relationship with him and a wedding she had in January in New York. He claimed that after the marriage, she confided in him about her husband's alleged emotional abuse. She told him that her husband took away her phone, monitored her messages, and verbally harassed her. The same claims were made in an audio recording released by YouTuber Lee Jin Ho, who first reported on her marriage overseas.

In a message dated January 13, her husband allegedly wrote, "You're married now, so don't contact anyone else. Clean up the mess you made. You disgusting idiot." Kim Sae Ron's ex-boyfriend also revealed that she had attempted self-harm multiple times during this period. Contrary to the wild claims made by Dispatch and GaroSero, he stated that Kim Sae Ron's distress was far from her 7700 million (\$522,000) dispute with her former agency, co-owned by Soo Hyun. He explained that the issue had been raised over a year ago and was largely procedural rather than a sudden financial crisis. The ex-boyfriend then showed another message, dated January 15. In it, Kim Sae Ron expressed deep fear and regret. "I'm sorry. Just curse at me. Call me crazy, call me a lunatic. I keep getting hit and yelled at, but nothing changes. If only you could be happy, I



wouldn't ask for anything else, not even dreams. You were the person I loved most in the world." She also revealed that she had married her husband out of fear, and now she feels trapped.

"I started seeing him in November. At first, it was just loneliness. I needed someone who would listen and help. But soon, he threatened to leak our chat history and photos, hacked my Instagram, hit me, and screamed at me. I was terrified. I couldn't leave, and I was afraid it would hurt you." He also pointed out that Kim Sae Ron was allegedly abandoned by her family. On November 1, 2024, after a self-harm incident, no family members visited her at the hospital despite being contacted. He found it especially painful that her aunt, who acted as the family's spokesperson after her death, appeared on a YouTube channel and suggested Kim Soo Hyun was somehow linked to the tragedy. "How could her family not even know she got married? That alone shows how little communication there was," he said. "Now that she's gone, bringing up her past with a celebrity feels like an attempt to push a certain narrative. I don't know Kim Soo Hyun, but blaming him just because he's famous is incredibly unfair."

## Shark Tank India makers frisked founder to prevent on-air proposal to his girlfriend

Burger Bae's Rohan Kashyap had a secret plan to propose to his girlfriend, Janvi Sikaria—who is also the company's co-founder—on Shark Tank India Season 4. However, his plan didn't materialize as the show's makers were not in favor of it. In a recent interview with The Times of India, Rohan revealed that he had been manifesting a spot on the show for the past two years. Their selection felt like a miracle, as they were among the last ones chosen.

Rohan Kashyap, who isn't very comfortable in front of the camera, shared that the Shark Tank team helped him prepare. However, once they discovered his plan to propose to his girlfriend on the show, they were completely against it. In the interview, Rohan shared that the Shark Tank India team somehow found out about his proposal plan and made him sign an agreement stating that he wouldn't go through with it. The rea-



In a recent interview with , Rohan revealed that he had been manifesting a spot on the show for the past two years. Their selection felt like a miracle, as they were among the last ones chosen.

son was that a proposal could shift the focus away from the show's core purpose—entrepreneurship.

To ensure he didn't attempt it, the team even

frisked him before he entered the tank and checked him again just before he reached the stage to make sure he wasn't carrying a ring. Burger Bae entered the

tank seeking Rs 1 crore for 2.5% equity. They secured a deal with Aman Gupta, Anupam Mittal and Kunal, who offered them Rs 2 crore for 20% equity.