

# INDIAN CHRONICLE

## Jilted lover sets married woman afire after she refuses to elope with him

Mathura (UP): A 28-year-old man disguised as a woman set his married lover afire inside her house here after she refused to elope with him, police said.

As the woman's neighbours rushed to her house after hearing her screams on Tuesday afternoon, Umesh, who was wearing a lehenga, tried to escape by jumping from the terrace and sustained severe injuries in the process, police said. Both Rekha (30), who suffered over 70 per cent burns, and Umesh are undergoing treatment at SN Medical College in Agra, they said.

## Liquor outlets to remain closed in the view of Holi festival on March 14 in Hyd

Hyderabad: Rachakonda Police Commissioner G Sudheer Babu on Wednesday has issued an order on the closure of liquor outlets for the Holi festival from 6am to 6pm on March 14. The Commissioner said wine shops, toddy shops and bars attached to restaurants, excluding those attached to star hotels and clubs (excluding bars in star hotels and registered clubs) in the Rachakonda Police Commissionerate, would be closed on the day of the festival. In view of Holi festival, Cyberabad Police Commissioner Avinash Mohanty on Wednesday had issued an order warning citizens against throwing colour or water on unknown persons, places, vehicles or smearing people with colours on roads, causing annoyance.

## CM Revanth Reddy says salaries may be 'affected' if employees don't cooperate



GNS News Agency, March 12

Hyderabad: While admitting delays in salary payments to ASHA and Anganwadi workers, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday issued a veiled threat as well, stating that non-cooperation from government employees could worsen the financial crunch, leading to even salary disbursements being 'affected'. At the same time, while addressing newly recruited junior and polytechnic lecturers at Ravindra Bharati, Revanth Reddy continued to blame former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao for Telangana's fiscal distress.

"With a monthly revenue of Rs.18,500 crore against required Rs.22,000 crore to fulfill all our commitments, we are deferring payments of salaries to ASHA and Anganwadi workers, and welfare schemes like Shaadi Mubarak and Kalyana Lakshmi. Basically, we are following a rotation system from one section to another to defer payments," he said, also surprising the audience by stating that he was ready to hand over financial management to government employees. "Let them decide how to distribute funds," he said. There were other contradictions as well in the Chief Minister's speech. While stressing the need to uplift government schools and reduce dropout

rates, he also endorsed the Young India Skill University, run entirely by private industrialists. "We brought in Mahindra, Apollo Hospitals, and Reddy Labs as board members - they will train students, while the government acts as only a facilitator," he said.

Revanth Reddy stated that the government was investing Rs 80,000 to Rs 1 lakh per student in public schools, insisting that teachers must ensure results. Ironically, he emphasised school education at an event attended by junior lecturers and polytechnic faculty, who teach higher classes. Also continuing his abusive language against Chandrashekar Rao, Revanth Reddy stated that BRS leaders were talking about the former Chief Minister's stature, but he was now on a stretcher and would soon end up in the mortuary. The derogatory language has already triggered protests from many quarters on social media, with many asking how could a Chief Minister use such language.

## KCR Handed Over A 'Financial Cancer' To Telangana: Revanth

Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has asserted that former minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has left behind a 'financial cancer' as a legacy for Telangana during his time leading the previous BRS government. During a ceremony on Wednesday where appointment letters were distributed to 1,292 newly appointed Junior Lecturers and 240 Polytechnic Lecturers at Ravindra Bharathi, the Chief Minister remarked that the Congress administration has inherited significant debts and errors from KCR's government. He noted that the current administration is obligated to pay Rs 6,500 crore monthly to manage the debts and interest on loans incurred by the former government. KCR has handed over a 'financial cancer' to Telangana. If this situation worsens, does it imply that the state is on the brink of bankruptcy? How long can the truth be concealed? Whenever I reveal these realities, the opposition raises a commotion and targets me to demand my resignation," Revanth Reddy stated. He further claimed that while some individuals discuss stature, the leaders who previously spoke about stature are now found lying on stretchers. Stature pertains to positions rather than individuals. The entire KCR family is spreading falsehoods as if it's a collective effort. I refuse to govern the state based on lies. I will present the truth and focus on the state's development. Your support is essential for creating a prosperous future for the generations to come in Telangana," stated Revanth Reddy. The Chief Minister expressed his worry regarding the declining educational standards in government schools and colleges, emphasising that this situation reflects poorly on the State. "All the newly recruited teaching staff should perform and raise the educational standards with the same emotion they showed during the Telangana movement. The government schools and colleges should compete with corporate private schools. Student enrollment is dwindling in the government schools every year and increasing in the private institutions. I appeal to the teaching staff to think seriously about the issue," Revanth Reddy said. "Spending money on the students is not expenditure, but an investment in the future. We need to examine the main reason for declining the number of students studying in the government schools," the Chief Minister said.

## Telangana Budget To Fulfill Aspirations Of People: Governor Jishnu Dev

Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Governor Jishnu Dev Varma announced that the State government is focused on advancing the development of Telangana, with the budget designed to meet the aspirations of its people. While addressing a joint session of the Legislative Council and Assembly on Wednesday, the Governor highlighted ongoing efforts to address the needs of farmers, women, and young people. Emphasising Telangana's rich cultural heritage, he noted that the State government had adopted "Janani Jayakethanam" as the official State song, and the statue of Telangana Talli was unveiled at the Secretariat. "Farmers are the soul of the state, and efforts are being made for their development. Those who work tirelessly for the people are the true providers, and farmers play a crucial role in the state's development. Supporting farmers and empowering them is the government's responsibility. Telangana is the state that produces the highest amount of paddy in the country. The government has waived farm loans, which



stands as a testament to its sincerity toward farmers," the Governor said. "A total of 25.35 lakh farmers have benefited, with Rs.12,000 per acre being provided under the 'Rythu Nestham' scheme. A bonus of Rs.500 per quintal is being given to paddy farmers, and an agricultural commission has been set up for their welfare. The 'Mahalakshmi' scheme is a game changer, offering free bus travel for women. Telangana is not just progressing but also transforming," he said. He stated that the vision is to build an inclusive, self-sufficient, and empowered Telangana. The Telangana model should serve as a guiding light for development and prosperity. Telangana is not just a geographical entity, but also an emotion, symbolising stability and strong determination, the Governor said. "With a record paddy production of 260 lakh metric tonnes, Telangana has set a national benchmark. This achievement is a testament to the resilience and dedication of the state's farmers," Vishnu Dev Varma said. The Governor stated that the State government is implementing a Rs.2 lakh farm loan waiver, benefiting 25.35 lakh farmers with an allocation of Rs.20,616 crore. This proves the government's commitment to fulfilling its promises on time. Under the 'Rythu Bharosa' scheme, direct financial assistance is being provided, with annual support increased to Rs.12,000 per acre, he added. (NSS)

## Telangana Assembly Budget Sessions To Continue Until March 27



Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): The Business Advisory Committee (BAC) has decided that the Telangana Assembly budget sessions will continue until March 27. It has been decided that the budget will be presented on March 19, with Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka presenting it in the Assembly. March 14 and 16 have been declared holidays for the Assembly. The BAC meeting, held in the Assembly chamber, was attended by Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar, Bhatti Vikramarka, Ministers Sridhar Babu and Ponnamp Prabhakar, Whip Birla Ailiah, BRS MLAs Harish Rao and Vemula Prashanth Reddy, BJP representative Maheshwar Reddy, AIMIM MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi and CPI MLA Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao were also present. (NSS)

## Uttam Lauds Governor's Address As A Visionary Roadmap For Agriculture

Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy praised Governor Jishnu Dev Varma's address to the Telangana Legislature, calling it a visionary roadmap for agrarian progress. He highlighted the speech's strong emphasis on irrigation, agriculture, and farmer welfare, reinforcing the Congress government's commitment to empowering the farming community. He noted that the Governor underscored record-breaking agricultural output and farmer-centric initiatives that have strengthened Telangana's rural economy. "The Telangana has emerged as the highest paddy-producing state in India, harvesting over 260 lakh metric tonnes - a historic achievement attributed to improved irrigation and the resilience of farmers. The government has stood 'shoulder to shoulder' with farmers, ensuring an en-



abling environment for unprecedented production," the Minister said. A key highlight of the government's commitment to farmers has been the Rs 2 lakh crop loan waiver, fulfilling a major electoral promise. The initiative, which cleared Rs 20,616.89 crore of farm loans, benefited 25.35 lakh farmers. Calling it a "lifeline," Uttam Kumar Reddy echoed the Governor's assertion that it was "not assistance but justice". The debt relief has given farmers a fresh start and enhanced financial security," he said. The government has also strengthened direct income support. Under the Rythu Bharosa scheme, annual assistance per farmer has been increased to Rs 12,000 per acre, allowing investments in better seeds, modern techniques, and irrigation. Beyond financial aid, the government has invested in institutional and technology-driven support for farmers. A network of 566 Rythu Vedikas with modern communication facilities has been established, while the

Rythu Nestham digital platform now connects all 532 rural mandals via video conferencing. These initiatives facilitate direct interaction between farmers, agricultural scientists, and officials, enabling real-time problem-solving. Uttam Kumar Reddy lauded these innovations as crucial steps in bridging the gap between policy and practice. "Ensuring fair crop prices has been another priority.

The state government released a special bonus of Rs 500 per quintal for the Sannarakam variety of paddy, disbursing Rs 1,206.44 crore to farmers. This move, highlighted in the Governor's speech, aimed to protect farmers from market fluctuations and secure their incomes," he said. To further support the agricultural sector, the government has established the Telangana Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Commission.

## Ktr Slams Governor's Speech In Assembly



Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Bharat Rastra Samithi (BRS) working president and former minister K Tarakarama Rao today claimed that the Governor Jishnu Dev Varma's speech in the State Assembly was like a press meet of the ruling Congress party leaders in Gandhi Bhavan. He criticized the Governor for telling blatant lies.

KTR spoke at the Assembly media point after the address of the Governor to the joint session of the State legislature on the first day of the budget session. "We expected the Governor to say new things in his speech. We thought he would reassure the farmers of the State. More than 20 to 30 percent of the farmers' loans were not waived off so far. But, the ruling party leaders lied to the Governor that it was done completely. The Governor has lowered his status with this speech. Due to CM Revanth's incompetence, many acres of land was not getting water," he said. KTR mocked that this was a government without vision except for the 20% commission being charged by the ruling party leaders. He claimed that the Governor did not say a single word on the irrigation crisis and farmer suicides in his address and added that there was no mention of the debts taken by the Congress party in the Governor's speech. "This government exists only to send packages to Delhi," KTR criticized. (NSS)

## Harish Rao Condemns Journalist Revathi's Arrest



Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Former minister and BRS party leader Harish Rao today strongly condemned the arrest of female senior journalist of the State Revathi. He questioned whether this was a democratic State or a dictatorial State? He criticized that the Revanth Reddy government was responding to those who are protesting on issues with arrests. Seeing the illegal arrest of senior journalist Revathi at around 5 am, Harish Rao criticized that it shows how insecure and cowardly this government was? He said he was strongly condemning the 'shameful attempt to suppress the questioning voices and press freedom. On Wednesday at 5 am, 12 policemen in mufti went to Revathi's house and arrested her. The police also forcibly took away journalist Revathi's phone, her husband director Chaitanya Dantuluri's phone and laptop. Revathi's Pulse YouTube office was also seized.

## Humbled to receive highest national award of Mauritius, dedicate it to 140 crore people of India: PM Modi

Port Louis: Spotting the special and unique partnership between India and Mauritius, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who on Wednesday attended the country's National Day celebrations as the Chief Guest for the second time in last 10 years, said that he was "humbled" to receive the Highest National Award of Mauritius. "Humbled to receive the Highest National Award of Mauritius. I dedicate it to the 140-crore people of India and the centuries-old friendship between our nations," said PM Modi during his remarks at the event.

PM Modi is the Chief Guest at Mauritius' National Day for the second time, an honour he first received in 2015. The rare repeat invitation underscores India's special relationship with Mauritius which remains rooted in shared history, culture, and diaspora ties. The government of Mauritius on Tuesday announced its decision to bestow the country's highest honour 'The Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean' to Prime Minister Modi during his ongoing two-day State Visit to the Indian Ocean archipelago. Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam made the announcement just before PM Modi began addressing an Indian community event in Port Louis on Tuesday evening. Prime Minister Modi is the first Indian to receive the honour. It is also the 21st international award

bestowed upon PM Modi by a country. "It is very fitting for you, Prime Minister. Since we became a republic, only five foreign dignitaries have got that title and among them there is a person who we call the 'Gandhi of Africa' - Nelson Mandela who received it in 1998. Let me tell you that we are greatly honoured to have you amongst us here today and that you managed to find time out of your very, very busy schedule," said Ramgoolam amidst huge applause.

In December, Kuwait bestowed its highest honour 'The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer' to PM Modi, in appreciation of his distinguished achievements and the efforts made to strengthen the relations between the two countries. The Order is awarded to Heads of State and foreign Sovereigns and to members of foreign royal families in sign of friendship. It has been previously awarded to foreign leaders like Bill Clinton, Prince Charles and George Bush besides other dignitaries like Queen Elizabeth and Prince Muhammad bin Salman. Before that, Prime Minister Modi was conferred with Guyana's highest civilian honour, 'The Order of Excellence', by the country's President Mohamed Irfaan Ali, for his visionary statesmanship, championing the rights of developing countries on the global stage, exceptional service to the global community and for his commitment to strengthening India-Guyana relations.

## Kcr Attends Assembly

Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): BRS party chief and former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao today arrived in Telangana assembly budget session. He arrived in the assembly about 50 minutes earlier. On the occasion, KCR was welcomed by the BRS party MLAs and MLCs. However, KCR has not been coming to the assembly as the main Opposition leader for the last 15 months.

This time KCR has decided to attend the assembly and entered it 50 minutes in advance. Earlier in the day, KCR held a meeting with his party legislators at the BRSLP in the inner lobby of the assembly. However, though KCR came to the Assembly, many party MLAs and MLCs did not turn up in time. KCR had directed all the BRS party members to come to the assembly in advance at the LP meeting held on Tuesday. (NSS)

# Indian Chronicle

## English Daily

### Smogged out

INDIA's cities continue to choke. The latest IQAir report once again this year delivers the grim reality check — 13 of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in India, with Bymihat topping the list and Delhi remaining the most polluted capital for the sixth consecutive year. Delhi's PM2.5 concentration of 91.6 µg/m<sup>3</sup> is nearly unchanged from last year. This underscores the stagnation in efforts to combat urban pollution. Air pollution is also a public health emergency. The World Air Quality Report confirms that the average citizen's life expectancy is cut short by over five years due to hazardous air. This crisis is fuelled by industrial emissions, vehicular pollution, construction dust and seasonal crop burning. While policymakers often tout a decline in the country's overall PM2.5 concentration, a 7 per cent reduction does little when 35 per cent of the cities still exceed the WHO's safe limit by tenfold.

Meanwhile, the economic ramifications of pollution are mounting. A 2021 study by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air found that air pollution costs India around Rs 7 lakh crore annually in healthcare expenses and lost labour productivity. Another report by The Lancet (2020) estimated that 1.67 million deaths in India in 2019 were directly linked to air pollution-related diseases.

However, political discourse around air pollution remains mired in blame games. Every winter, Delhi's crisis is reduced to a partisan slugfest, with leaders trading accusations over stubble burning, industrial emissions and urban planning failures. They must abandon political posturing and treat pollution with the same urgency as economic growth and infrastructure development. The lack of long-term policy vision and stringent enforcement is as lethal as the pollution itself. The government must implement stronger regulatory measures, incentivise clean energy transitions and enforce emission norms strictly.

### Shabbir Ali Hails Governor's Address



Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS):Telangana Government Advisor (SC, ST, OBC & Minorities) Mohammed Ali Shabbir praised Governor Jishnu Dev Varma's address to the Telangana Legislature on Wednesday for its strong focus on social welfare and empowerment. He welcomed the government's commitment to uplifting Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and minorities through various welfare schemes. Shabbir Ali said the Governor's speech highlighted Telangana's leadership in social welfare and inclusive growth. He pointed out that the government has prioritised economic and social justice, ensuring marginalised communities get better access to education, jobs, healthcare, and financial aid. He also appreciated the Congress government's data-driven approach, particularly the recent Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political, and Caste Survey, which collected precise data on marginalised communities. "For the first time, governance is based on real statistics, not assumptions. This survey will ensure that welfare schemes reach those who need them most," he stated. Quoting from the Governor's address, Shabbir Ali welcomed the proposed 42% reservation for Backward Classes (BCs) in education and jobs, based on the survey's findings. He also backed the new Bill for sub-categorisation of Scheduled Castes (SCs), which follows the recommendations of the Justice Shameem Akther Commission. "These steps will ensure fairer distribution of reservation benefits and better representation for backward communities," he said. A key welfare initiative announced in the speech was the Indra Mahila Shakti Mission, aimed at empowering underprivileged women. With a target of creating one crore women entrepreneurs and a financial package of Rs 1 lakh crore, the program will provide sustainable livelihood opportunities. Women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) will manage canteens, make school uniforms, and run vocational training centers. The Gruha Jyoti scheme, which provides free electricity for families consuming up to 200 units, has benefited nearly 50 lakh low-income families. The Rs 500 LPG cylinder subsidy has helped 43 lakh households, reducing financial stress on daily wage earners. Shabbir Ali called these measures essential for ensuring economic stability for poor families. "In education, the government has expanded Integrated Residential Schools for SC, ST, OBC, and minority students, offering free, high-quality education. The Amma Adarsha Pathashala initiative has strengthened community participation by allowing SHGs to manage school infrastructure. Diet charges in government hostels have increased by 40%, and cosmetic allowances have gone up by 200%, improving living conditions for students," he said. Shabbir Ali also said to boost skill development, the government has launched Young India Skill University, which will train youth for better job opportunities. The Rajiv Gandhi Civils Abhyasa Hastham Scheme provides Rs 1 lakh financial aid to civil services aspirants from SC, ST, OBC, and minority communities, ensuring financial difficulties do not stop them from pursuing their goals, he said.

### Local body elections, BRS will be sure back bounes Telangana freedom fighter, BRS Medak district one of the founder KK goud stated



Ind. Medak, mar 10 "In the Medak district veldurthy center BRS founder, Telangana freedom fighter Kk goud said to to congress government hanged to entier formers and educated people past elaction congress geaved falts promised to the Telangana people, in the villages no free current and also not presenting kalyana laxmi, saadhi mubarakh, raitu barosa, mahalaxmi scheeme, and also many schemes false promising to the Congress party, electricity department officers lot of trouble to the poor people in the villages that is the reason will be sure BRS government take action in the future and alsoin the villages people lot of troubled Congress government, definitely people through out entier Congress party in the nallamala forest, BRS founder, Telangana freedom fighter kodanda Krishna goud stated at the centre of veldurthy Medak district.

### Tenthpin Launches Ai Labs In Hyderabad's Life Sciences Hub



Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Switzerland-based Tenthpin Management Consultants, a global consulting leader in technology advisory for Life sciences companies, today announced the launch of Tenthpin AI Labs (TAIL) in Hyderabad, establishing a Global Center of Excellence dedicated to AI-driven transformation in Life Sciences. Jayesh Ranjan, Special Chief Secretary, Information Technology, Electronics & Communications (ITE&C) and Industries & Commerce, formally inaugurated the same. Speaking on the occasion, Ranjan said Tenthpin has chosen Hyderabad among many other cities in India for their expansion. The more Life Sciences action is happening in Hyderabad compared to any other global city. Hyderabad is the Life Sciences Hub and Pharma Hub. "We have more than 1800 pharma manufacturing units in and around Hyderabad. we have also focused on vaccines and dedicated industrial park, Genome Valley, India's first organised cluster for Life Sciences R&D and Clean Manufacturing. One third of the world's vaccines are manufactured here. The city has a

good blend of Lifestyle and Technology ecosystem. The Technology ecosystem comprises 1400 tech companies and one million working in them. The city has the best of Biology, Life Sciences, Technology and Data Sciences. Seven out of the top 10 life sciences companies in the world have their presence in Hyderabad. The Government of Telangana is all set to launch in the next couple of weeks its new dedicated life sciences policy. It will chart a bold new growth trajectory for this sector. It will also boost the state's prospects in new domains such as cell and gene therapy, genomics, biologics, precision medicine, peptides, digital innovation, advanced R&D, Cell-Genie Therapy (CGT), a treatment that modifies cells or genes to treat disease, is the future. It can treat rare and severe diseases like cancer and others. The new Next Gen Lifesciences Policy the government is coming out with will support these and many. The city of Hyderabad has 24 innovation spaces like T-Hub which will support the life science sector.

TAIL's mission is to help pharmaceutical, MedTech, biotech, and research organizations distinguish between AI hype and accomplishing real value. By leveraging India's tech talent and Hyderabad's position as a life sciences hub, Tenthpin aims to support companies in accelerating AI adoption across the drug life cycle, from R&D to better patient outcomes. He further said Hyderabad is the place to be in. It is the most happening life sciences city in the country. Hyderabad is the life sciences hub. The leadership of the government is also very supportive. The newly inaugurated centre is the largest in the world. It currently employs 40 and is likely to increase up to 100. Eckhard Drager, Founder and Member of the Executive Board of Tenthpin also spoke. (NSS)

### Ktr Dubs Governor's Address As Congress Propaganda



Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao launched a scathing attack on Governor Jishnu Dev Varma's budget speech delivered in the State Assembly, labelling it a "Congress workers' press meet" rather than a dignified address befitting the Governor's office. In a fiery response to the Governor's speech on Wednesday, KTR accused the ruling Congress government, led by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, of scripting the speech with "blatant lies, half-truths, and misleading statements" to mask 15 months of "miserable and utterly failed governance." KTR expressed dismay that the Governor's address, instead of outlining new policies or addressing the status of Congress's 420 election promises and six guarantees, appeared to serve as a mouthpiece for the party's propaganda. "We expected the speech to be a confession of their disastrous rule," he said, "but it felt like a press meet at Gandhi Bhavan." Highlighting what he called an "unprecedented and disgraceful incident," KTR pointed to a recent protest by contractors outside Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka's chamber in the Telangana Secretariat. He alleged that the contractors were demanding clearance of pending bills, claiming they were being coerced into paying a 20% commission. "This never happened in any State secretariat in India," he remarked and accused the Congress government of prioritizing "commissions and corruption" over governance.

KTR painted a grim picture of the State's agrarian crisis, attributing it to the Congress government's failures. He claimed that crops are drying up due to worsening irrigation water crisis, with the Medigadda Barrage—part of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project—left unrepaired for 15 months due to Revanth Reddy's "blind hatred" for former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR). "Thousands

of acres of crops have been destroyed, and farmers are forced to use their fields to graze cattle," he said, questioning why the Governor's speech ignored these pressing issues. He further challenged the government's claims of farm loan waivers, asserting that waivers have not exceeded 25-30% anywhere in the state. "Show me one village where 100% loan waivers have been implemented, and BRS leaders will resign," KTR declared, noting the government's silence on his challenge. He accused the Governor of falsely claiming that loan waivers were complete and that "lakhs of farmers are happy," calling it a "fabricated lie." Additionally, he dismissed assertions that the "Rythu Bandhu" scheme and a ₹12,000 annual benefit for labourers were being implemented, labeling them as further distortions. KTR contrasted the financial management of the BRS and Congress regimes, noting that while KCR's government borrowed 4.17 lakh crore over a decade—investing ₹4.5 lakh crore in farmer welfare schemes like Rythu Bandhu (73,000 crore), loan waivers (₹28,000 crore), free electricity, and irrigation projects—Revanth Reddy's administration has borrowed ₹1.62 lakh crore in just one year without launching a single welfare scheme or infrastructure project. "Telangana became number one in paddy production under KCR, yet Revanth Reddy shamelessly takes credit," he said.

He also debunked the government's claim of securing 1.79 lakh crore in investments at the World Economic Forum in Davos, calling it an "absolute lie." KTR pointed out that last year's announced ₹40,000 crore in investments has yet to materialize, challenging the Chief Minister to release a white paper on actual investments received. He alleged that due to Congress's incompetence, major projects secured during the BRS tenure—such as Kanes (₹3,800 crore), Corning (₹1,000 crore), and Premier Energy (₹1,700 crore)—have shifted to Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. KTR accused the Congress of failing students by not providing overseas scholarships and neglecting Gurukul schools, where he claimed students are "starving" and 83 have died. "Not a single word of condolence was mentioned in the Governor's speech," he lamented. He also criticized the government for betraying the Backward Classes (BC) community with unfulfilled promises of a caste census and for suspending a Congress MLC who raised concerns about reservations. KTR warned that the people of Telangana are beginning to see through the Congress government's "deception" of farmers and its plunge into debt and corruption. "The Governor's speech was an attempt to cover up these failures," he said, predicting a strong public backlash when the time comes. (NSS)

### There Was Nothing To Say About Previous Govt: Congress Mlc Balmoor Venkat

Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Congress MLC Balmoor Venkat Narsig Rao remarked that the previous BRS administration could only be characterised by its debts and misconduct. Addressing the media at the Assembly on Wednesday, he criticised BRS working president KT Rama Rao for making outright false statements about the State government and for misleading the people on various matters. He extended a challenge to KT Rama Rao to engage in a debate regarding the decade of BRS governance compared to the 12 months of Congress leadership. Balmoor

Venkat Narsig Rao pointed out that during the ten years of BRS leadership, only the Kalvakuntla family thrived, while the people of Telangana did not see any improvements. Since the Congress party assumed power, the State government has been focused on improving the lives of all communities.

It is rolling out welfare programs aimed at students, jobless individuals, women, and farmers. Moreover, it is striving to fulfill the hopes and dreams of the martyrs. The government is also committed to assuring job seekers while

ensuring transparency in job announcements and recruitment processes," he stated. The Congress MLC expressed disappointment regarding the conduct of the main opposition Members during the Governor's address, remarking that their behavior is particularly unfortunate given their decade-long rule and familiarity with the regulations.

There exists competition among family members within BRS. With KCR entering the Assembly, discussions have arisen about who will attain higher marks," he remarked. (NSS)

### Gangadhar bhai helping hand geaved to the poor people

Indian chrinicle, March 11. Medak. "In the Medak district narsapur constancy one of the famous Congress leader Gangadhar helping hand geaved to the poor people, Gangadhar helping to pelli kuturlaku kalyana sutraas almost 500, and also his helps to free education providing valantires in villages Gangadhar makes many social voluntary schemes sponsoring in the Medak district, Gangadhar down to worth person in the Medak district, he is one of the most popular bahujana leader in the entire narsapur con-



stancy and also Gangadhar helps to so many temples, devotional places narsapur constancy.

### Blind Assns Leaders Plead Help Of Aimim Mla For Solving Their Woes



Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): K. Srinivas, secretary, Development & Welfare Association of the Blind, Hyderabad and K. Madhusudhan Rao, PRO, All India Confederation of the Blind, Delhi met Mir Zulfiqar Ali, MLA, Charminar Constituency, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) at their headquarters in Hyderabad to represent the long pending issues of Blind community. They also thanked the AIMIM MLA for responding positively to their appeals and assuring that they would take up their issues with government at appropriate forums, particularly for appointment of Independent State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities. The MLA also prepared a letter addressed to Chief Secretary to respect the High Court Order given in December 2024 for appointment of Independent State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities within six weeks. The Blind Community has been consistently requesting the Governments of Telangana since 2016 to implement the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 came into existence in 2016. One of the important rules was to appoint an Independent State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities with judicial powers as per the RPWD Act 2016 Section 79(1). Instead of implementing the rule, the successive governments have been giving additional responsibility to the existing Director for Disabled Welfare who is a government employee. "This practice is continuing since 2016. If the responsibilities of both the State Commissioner and the Director are held by the same person, it defeats the natural justice and undermines the cause of disabled welfare. Any violation in implementation of RPWD Act by the Government officials will have to be brought to the notice of the Independent State Commissioner, who has judicial powers. In the present case, there is no provision as the Commissioner and the Director is one person.

Successive governments since 2016 have been turning a blind eye to the cause of Disabled people in general and blind people in particular. By giving monthly pensions of Rs 4016/- with the demand from disabled to increase up to Rs 6000/- and giving other freebies to disabled, the government has been trying to escape from its responsibility of uplifting and empowering the disabled people. The Governments are also trying to ensure that there is no platform to question any violations in implementation of Acts and Rules. The Governments are going to the extent of ignoring even Court Orders for implementing the rules. "On our Writ petition, the Telangana High Court issued orders on December 12, 2024 to appoint an Independent State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities within six weeks, but it is now more than three months and there is no information about this appointment. There is no response from the Government to our various follow up letters regarding this court order. We have been consistently requesting the officials and Ministers to give us an opportunity to meet them in person to explain our issues but all our requests are falling on their deaf ears. We have been submitting several appeals, but there is total apathy towards the disabled in general and blind people in particular. This may be because we do not come under their vote banks. By just doling out freebies like laptops for blind, modified vehicles for disabled and giving monthly pensions, the government is trying to shut the mouths of disabled people and make them dependent for life on their freebies", said Ponugoti Chokka Rao, Vice-President, All India Confederation of the Blind, Delhi & General Secretary, Development & Welfare Association of the Blind, Hyderabad. (NSS)

### I Left Ysrcp Due To Coterie Around Jagan: Vijayasai Reddy



Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Former leader of YSRCP Vijayasai Reddy, who recently resigned from the party, has made sensational comments against YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. He alleged that there was a coterie around Jagan and added that he was upset with Jagan because of the coterie around him. He also said he told Jagan not to listen to those around him but he did not listen to him. "It was the people in the coterie who created the differences between me and Jagan. I have no place in Jagan's mind.

## Tested in India, Made for India – OPPO F29 Series, the Durable Champion, Launches on 20th March



At the same time, the new Raised Corner Design Cover on the OPPO F29 series protects all four corners against damage.

The Lens Protection Ring on the smartphone, which is crafted out of strengthened glass, sits higher than the camera lens to prevent scratches on it. Also, the smartphone's internal frame, which protects its motherboard, has been upgraded to aerospace-grade aluminium alloy; this increases structural integrity by 10% over its predecessor. All-round Durable Champion

OPPO—the most preferred brand for water and dust resistance\*—has subjected its F29 series to 14 Military Standard (MIL-STD-810H-2022) tests that certify it against high temperature, low temperature, shock, rain, freezing water, sand, dust, salt mist, solar radiation, humidity, vibration, fluid contamination, mold, acceleration that tests for g-loads, and resistance. Its IP66 rating certifies it against powerful water jets; ideal for users who work in wet conditions, from vendors to construction workers. The IP68 rating endorses it for submersion in 1.5 metres of water for 30 minutes; this means it is built to survive accidental drops in water-filled potholes and kitchen sinks, while its IP69 rating implies it can endure high-pressure, high-temperature water jets up to 80°C, making it perfect for those working in industrial settings or extremely humid weather conditions. The OPPO F29 series takes water resistance to the next level to offer enhanced protection against myriad types of liquids. The smartphone has been internally tested against heavy rain, in river water, hot springs, daily spills from juice, tea, milk, coffee, beer, household liquids such as steam, dishwasher, detergent, and even exposure to ice water, cleaning foam, and muddy water. Furthermore, after submersion, the OPPO F29 Series emits a pulsating sound that drains trapped water within the speaker enclosure. The OPPO F29 Pro will be available in two colours: Marble White, inspired by sunlight reflecting off pristine marble to offer a sophisticated yet rugged aesthetic, and Granite Black with its bold, textured black finish for cool sophistication.

Hyderabad:OPPO India will launch the OPPO F29 series, the Durable Champion, on 20th March 2025. The smartphone—built to withstand India's most challenging environmental conditions—features a 360° Armour Body, extreme waterproofing, and carries certification for 14+ military-grade environmental tests.

The F29 series—as lightweight as 180g and just 7.55mm slim—is not only made in India but also tested by SGS (Société Générale de Surveillance) in India for IP66, IP68 and IP69 ratings that certify it against the highest levels of dust and water ingress. Damage-proof 360° Armour Body\* In keeping with the needs of the Indian workforce, the OPPO F29 series is engineered to endure unexpected drops and impacts with its 360° Armour Body. The Sponge Bionic Cushioning on the OPPO F29 series absorbs impact to minimise damage from falls while its elevated battery cover and side frame add an extra layer of protection.

## Tata Play's South Talkies presents 'Actor Special': Yash and Sai Pallavi shine in Heart Attack 3 & Shyam Singha Roy



'Heart Attack 3' with the portrayal of Lucky, a character who undergoes a transformation to win over his love interest. Yash alongside Ramya have showcased their lighter side, highlighting their comedic timing and romantic appeal.

Shyam Singha Roy: Sai Pallavi's brilliance

On the other hand, 'Shyam Singha Roy' is a period action romantic drama that stars Nani in a dual role, alongside Sai Pallavi and Krithi Shetty. Sai Pallavi, known for her captivating performances in films like 'Fidaa' and 'Premam', adds depth to the narrative with her portrayal of Maitreyi, a devadasi who becomes Rosie. Sai Pallavi's contribution to 'Shyam Singha Roy' is not just about her acting prowess but also her ability to bring authenticity to her characters. Her performance in the film was widely praised and won many acclaims.

In 'Shyam Singha Roy', she brings to life the story of reincarnation and love, making it a compelling watch for audiences.

Why you should watch these films

Both 'Heart Attack 3' and 'Shyam Singha Roy' offer something unique to viewers. Yash's versatility in 'Heart Attack 3' and Sai Pallavi's depth in 'Shyam Singha Roy' make these films a treat for fans of South Indian cinema. Whether you're looking for a light-hearted romantic comedy or a period drama with a twist, these films are sure to captivate.

Catch these films on Tata Play South Talkies to experience the magic of Yash and Sai Pallavi firsthand. With their incredible performances and the intriguing narratives, these movies are set to leave a lasting impression on viewers. Stay tuned for the cinematic brilliance of Yash and Sai Pallavi—only on Tata Play South Talkies #350!~

## Harish Rao Highlighted Key Points In Assembly



Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Following the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting, former minister and BRS leader Harish Rao spoke briefly (Chit Chat) with reporters, highlighting the key points raised. "We asked the BAC to run the Assembly session for at least 20 days. Highlighted how the Chief Minister is unfairly pressuring the Speaker to silence the Opposition's voice. Demanded Assembly speaking time proportional to BRS strength, and the BAC accepted our request. Insisted on discussing pressing issues like farmer distress, drinking water problems and recent collapses of projects at Lagacherla, Peddavagu and Ashoknagar; he urged ministers to come prepared with clear answers; asked the Speaker to actively ensure funds for the develop-

ment of constituencies; Called for a debate on recent collapses of important projects; Raised the issue of the government's failure to fulfil the six guarantees; de-

## Neera Cafe Transferred To Telangana Kallu Geetha Financial Cooperative Society

Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Minister for Transport and BC Welfare Ponnampalabharani has informed that a decision has been taken to transfer Neera Cafe and its assets, which are now under the purview of the Tourism department, to the Telangana Kallu Geetha Financial Cooperative Society. Tourism Minister Jupalli Krishna Rao and BC Welfare Minister Ponnampalabharani signed an agreement in this regard at the Secretariat here on Wednesday. With this transfer, Neera Cafe will now operate under the Kallu Geetha Cooperative Society, focusing on the economic development of toddy tappers. On the occasion, leaders of the Goud community have welcomed the State government's decision and expressed their gratitude to the Ministers.

## Gaddar Telangana Film Awards Will Be Presented In April: Dil Raju

Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Telangana State Film Development Corporation Chairman Dil Raju today revealed that the State government had decided to give Gaddar Telangana Film Awards. Speaking to media persons on the issue, he said the government had also formed a committee to this effect. He also said the rules and regulations had been framed and added that the awards would be given for the year 2024. He also said not only Gaddar Awards, but also awards in the name of Paidi Jayaraj and Kantha Rao would be given by the State government. He revealed that an award is going to be given to encourage Urdu films. Dil Raju said the award would be given to the best films released from June 2014 to 2023. Stating that the government was planning to give awards in April, Dil Raju said the money paid by some of the Film Development Corporation for Simha Awards since 2014 would be returned. (NSS)

## Can't Sleep Well? The Real Culprit Could Be Lurking in Your Bedroom Know how to sleep cleaner, better, and healthier this World Sleep Day



Amerisleep study.

How can we enhance sleep hygiene?

Joanne Kang, Lead Research Scientist in Microbiology at Dyson, sheds light on this overlooked aspect and offers tips to help achieve a cleaner bedroom environment through consistent cleaning and vacuuming to remove allergens from the bedroom. Wash Bedding Weekly: Washing sheets, pillowcases, and blankets in hot water will help break and reduce allergens. It's recommended that you launder and change your bedding once a week to keep allergens at bay.

Power Up the Clean: Dust mites cling to fibres deep in mattress, making them difficult to remove. Dyson cordless vacuums are equipped with 240AW powerful suction and with the Hair screw tool, can remove dust embedded in your mattress. A good practice is to vacuum pillows, cushions, soft toys to remove any allergens present. Reach Every Nook and Cranny: Once you deep clean your mattress, remove hidden dust from the edges with Dyson's Crevice tool. Don't forget under your bed and cupboards. Shawn Navarednam, Design Engineer at Dyson shares tips on how to improve Bedroom Air Quality. The bedroom can be a surprising source of pollutants, through routine activities like cleaning, cooking, and even the use of candles. Considering we spend nearly one-third of our lives sleeping, taking steps to improve air quality is essential. Invest in an Air Purifier: Air purifiers help manage pollutant exposure by capturing and destroying particles, improving indoor air quality. The Dyson air purifier removes up to 99.95% of particles as small as 0.1 microns, including dust, pollen, and bacteria. Its advanced filtration ensures cleaner air for a healthier sleep environment.

Hyderabad: In the chaos of our busy lives, sleep often takes a backseat, yet it is the cornerstone of our health—both physical and mental. As World Sleep Day approaches, it's a good time to reflect on whether we're doing enough to create an environment that fosters deep, restorative sleep. According to Dyson's Global Connected Indoor Air Quality Data Research, the highest levels of indoor air pollution (PM2.5) occur between 6 p.m. and midnight—right when most of us are settling in for bed. As the season changes in India, allergens like pollen and airborne particles linger well into the night, and can become a hidden obstacle to achieving quality sleep.

The Hidden Culprits in Your Sleep Space

An unwashed pillowcase can harbour 3 million bacteria in just a week—making it 17,000 times more contaminated than a toilet seat? Even more shocking, an unwashed bedsheet can host 24,631 times more bacteria, viruses, pollen than a bathroom doorknob, according to a report by

## Golden Women Club Hosts Golden Women Excellency Awards



Hyderabad: The Golden Women Club proudly presented the Golden Women Excellency Awards to 25 remarkable women achievers from various fields, as part of its International Women's Day celebration. This prestigious event took place on March 12, 2023, at NIMSME, Yousufguda, Hyderabad. The aim of the event was to honor and celebrate the exceptional achievements of women leaders and entrepreneurs across diverse sectors. The Chief Guest for the occasion was Ms. Konda Surekha, the Cabinet Minister of Telangana, who emphasized the importance of both family and societal support in empowering women. "Every step towards empowerment is vital, and we cannot overlook the significance of supportive families," said Minister Konda Surekha. "Our government is committed to women's empowerment by encouraging entrepreneurship among women, which is crucial for our nation's economic growth. We must also prioritize their mental health, which adds to their resilience and ability to thrive." Ms. Uma Peri, the founder of the Golden Women Club, expressed her enthusiasm for the event, stating, "This celebration is a testament to the relentless spirit and achievements of women."

The Golden Women Excellency Awards will recognize those who have made significant contributions to their fields and inspire future generations of women leaders."

\*Event Highlights:\*

- \*He for She Launch: A pioneering initiative promoting partnerships to foster women's growth.

- \*Power Talks by Industry Experts: Insightful sessions sharing experiences and strategies from renowned leaders.

- \*\*Golden Women Excellency Awards:\*\* Recognizing outstanding achievements by women leaders and entrepreneurs.

- \*Networking & Business Summit: An opportunity to connect with influential leaders.

- \*Panel Discussion on Cybersecurity: Addressing the importance of digital safety for women.

The Golden Women Excellency Awards attracted over 700 attendees, including women leaders, business owners, industry experts, influencers, and advocates for women's empowerment.

## Tdp Strove For Women Empowerment: Chandrababu



Amaravathi, March 12 (NSS): Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu today said the TDP was a party of women and added that whatever a programme, the government had undertaken, it was done keeping the women in mind. NTR had given women an equal share in the property. A person who did not give a share to his mother and sister had earlier served as the CM. If reservation is implemented, 70-75 women MLAs would have been present in the assembly. Even in countries like the US, there is no equality for women and there is a need for a change in the society," he said. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu spoke in the Assembly on the issue of women empowerment. Talking about women's empowerment, he said women are still being discriminated against. Women are still looked down upon. The situation where women depend on someone at every stage, women's empowerment started from TDP," he added. Stating that women should be encouraged in education, he said Suryakumari, who was selected with the 33% reservation given to the women, is now the secretary of the Women & Child Development department. He said the President of India Droupadi Murmu and Union Min-

ister Nirmala Sitharaman had set an example for the women. He said during the previous TDP regime, they encouraged girls by giving those bicycles free of cost that they were now providing three gas cylinders free of cost in a year under Deepam-2 scheme. (NSS)

## IndusInd Bank's accounting discrepancies: How worried should depositors be?

Mumbai: IndusInd Bank shares were locked in a 20 per cent lower circuit on Tuesday, March 11, as the lender's internal review projected an adverse impact of approximately 2.35 per cent on its net worth (as of December 2024). The steep fall erased around Rs 14,000 crore in the bank's market value. The stock hit a 52-week low of Rs 657.70 down, 26.96% on the NSE. On the BSE, the stocks were down 26.94 per cent and were trading at Rs 658.00. Falling for the fifth straight day, the stock emerged as the major laggard on the 30-share BSE Sensex. In a regulatory filing on Monday, IndusInd Bank said that during an internal review of processes relating to the derivatives portfolio, it noted some discrepancies in the account balances. Mumbai-based IndusInd Bank's detailed internal review has estimated an adverse impact of approximately 2.35 per cent of bank's net worth as of December 2024, the company said in a statement. The bank's net worth is expected to decline by nearly Rs 2,100 crore after accounting discrepancies. The Hinduja-promoted lender plans to absorb this loss in its Q4 earnings or the first quarter of the next fiscal year (FY26).

## In second arrest in Bengaluru airport gold smuggling case, DRI nabs actor Ranya Rao's associate



GNS News Agency, March 12

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, which is investigating a gold smuggling syndicate following the arrest of Kannada actor Ranya Rao with 14.2 kg of gold at the Bengaluru International Airport on March 3, has arrested her associate in connection with the case. DRI said it arrested Tarun Konduru Raju, who belongs to a prominent

business family in Bengaluru, Sunday after investigations based on information gathered from Ranya Rao revealed his role in the gold smuggling syndicate. Raju was produced at the home office of a special judge who remanded him in the custody of DRI for five days. DRI indicated to the court that the link between Raju and Ranya Rao and the gold smuggling racket emerged from the data extracted from a mobile phone and laptop seized from the actor after her arrest. Raju is reportedly associated with Rao for a long period, and knows about the gold smuggling activities. On Monday, DRI presented Rao in a special court after her custody ended, and the court sent her to prison for 14 days. "Considering the submissions by the Sr. Standing Counsel, learned counsel for the accused No 1 (Ranya Rao), this court is of the considered view that it is just and proper to take the accused No 1 to the judicial custody of this court," the special court ruled Monday. Ranya Rao was arrested at the Bengaluru airport while attempting to smuggle 14.2 kg of gold in the form of biscuits strapped to her body. DRI said the seizure of gold worth Rs 12.56 crore was one the largest at the Bengaluru airport.

## Singer Shree Brar opens up against Pinky Dhaliwal, submits police complaint

GNS News Agency, March 12

Troubles of music producer Pushpinder, aka Pinky, Dhaliwal seem to be escalating, as after Punjabi singer Sunanda Sharma, singer Shree Brar has now also come forward with allegations against him. Taking to Instagram, Brar announced that he has submitted a police complaint along with evidence against Dhaliwal. "I know that after this step, they will conspire against me, but I will keep speaking the truth till my last breath. Even if I have to fight against the entire world, I will not back down," Brar stated. In his Instagram post, Brar wrote, "I want to share something with you all. Today, we have officially filed a complaint against Pinky Dhaliwal, providing all the necessary evidence of fraud committed against us. I feel immensely proud of Sunanda Sharma for initiating this fight. He said, 'A few years ago, I had informed the then Punjab chief minister about this issue, but nothing was resolved. Instead, they started black-mailing and pressuring me from all sides. My own survival became a major challenge, forcing me to step away from this fight. To this day, I have not received a single penny of my rightful earnings.'"



fight against the whole world, I will. Punjab and Punjabiyat Zindabad!" After the arrest of Pinky Dhaliwal following allegations made by Punjabi singer Sunanda Sharma, she took to social media once again to voice her concerns. In her latest post, she wrote, "How many more children like me have fallen victim to such people? Everyone, come forward—this is our time."

Brar also made shocking claims about financial fraud, alleging that his bank account details were tampered with. He stated, "They had so much power that they removed my phone number from my bank account and added their own, gaining complete control. You may think this is a small issue, but it is much bigger than it seems." He accused Dhaliwal and his associates of using their influence to silence anyone who speaks against them, saying, "They are connected with powerful people. If someone raises their voice against them, they destroy their career, ridicule their character, and shut down their business. They have so much money that they can buy anyone at any price."

Brar criticised the Punjabi music and film industry for remaining silent, hinting that many are either afraid or complicit. "You can tell how powerful they are just by looking at the industry's silence. Almost 90% of people in the industry support them. Anyone who dares to speak out or demand their rightful payment is silenced and completely boycotted." Despite his past distrust, Brar praised the Punjab Police and government for taking action. "I have always spoken about Punjab's issues. Due to my past experiences, I believed that the government and police only worked for the powerful. But today, I am forced to change my perspective. The Punjab Police and the government have done something that not everyone can do." Concluding his statement, Brar vowed to continue the fight, no matter the consequences. "I don't know what conspiracies will be hatched against me now, but I will not step back. Even if I have to

Sharma alleged that these individuals exploited artists, made them work tirelessly, filled their own pockets with the hard-earned money of others, and treated them like beggars. The singer also opened up about her personal struggles, saying, "They pushed me to such a point that I cried alone in my room for days. I even attempted to end my life multiple times. Yet, I continued to smile in front of everyone." She urged the Punjabi music industry to unite against such exploitation. Sunanda said after the arrest, Pinky Dhaliwal reportedly said, "The child who is fed will behave in this manner." In response, Sunanda wrote: "You claim to have fed him, but I came barefoot. Oh Waheguru, the humans you created consider themselves superior to you." In her post, she reiterated her call to action, saying, "I don't know how many more have suffered like me. Everyone, step forward. This is our time. The hard work is ours, and we deserve it rewards." According to an FIR, Sharma accused Dhaliwal and his son, Gurkaran Singh Dhaliwal, of exploiting her through false promises of marriage. The police are currently investigating Gurkaran's role in the alleged exploitation. Sharma also alleged that Dhaliwal subjected her to severe financial exploitation over the years, forcing her to perform at events and concerts without fair compensation. "Despite earning over 7250 crore during this period, Dhaliwal unlawfully took control of my income and denied me my rightful dues," Sharma stated. "I didn't receive a single direct payment, and this blatant financial exploitation has severely impacted my financial stability and well-being."

## Maize push on lips, Punjab MLA Rana Gurjeet puts up show of strength on Raja Warring's turf



GNS News Agency, March 12

In a major show of strength in the stronghold of Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring Monday, Kapurthala MLA Rana Gurjeet Singh held a farmers' rally in Muktsar along with his son Rana Inder Partap Singh, an independent MLA from Sultanpur Lodhi. The rally, held to propagate crop diversification initiative undertaken by Rana Gurjeet, was held in the backdrop of the comments made by him about Warring where he called him "selfish" and accused him of having orchestrated denial of Lok Sabha ticket for his son from Anandpur Sahib.

Around 5,000 farmers attended the event where maize was presented as an alternate crop. The event, titled 'Navi Soch Nava Punjab' was also attended by former Muktsar MLA Karan Kaur Brar. Questions are being asked within Congress on the Kapurthala MLA's forays across the state on issue of maize. Significantly, there has been no echo of his demand for Minimum Support Price (MSP) for maize from the Congress. Rana Gurjeet has offered to purchase maize crop from farmers at the MSP for two years. This initiative aims to encourage farmers to shift from water-intensive paddy to maize, addressing Punjab's depleting groundwater levels.

Rana Gurjeet highlighted the environmental and economic benefits of maize, which requires less water and electricity compared to paddy. He assured farmers of his support, leveraging his business experience to note the high demand for maize in the corporate sector, particularly for ethanol production. Rana Gurjeet also suggested that the Punjab government provide Rs 10,000 per acre and the central government Rs 15,000 per acre to incentivize this transition, though he committed to stepping in even if governmental support falls short. This offer has sparked a debate, with fellow Congress MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira

questioning his motives, suggesting it benefits his ethanol-related business interests. Rana Gurjeet, however, emphasised his focus is on farmers' welfare and agricultural diversification. He called upon the farmers not to turn their back on traditional crops such as cotton that offers high remunerative prices to the growers.

## Scr Gm Conducts Safety Inspection Of Vijayawada Division

Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, South Central Railway undertook safety inspection of - Kakinada - Samalkot - Rajamundry - Nidadavolu - Eluru section of Vijayawada Division on March 12. He was accompanied by Narendra Patil, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada Division and other senior officials throughout the inspection.

The General Manager commenced the inspection at Kakinada Port running room, wherein he examined facilities available for the loco crew and interacted with the crew members. He also planted saplings at the running room towards promotion of green environment. Further, he carried out a detailed inspection of Samalkot Railway station, where he reviewed the passenger amenities available. He also inspected the station master's office and circulating area. Arun Kumar Jain conducted inspection of Rajahmundry Railway station and reviewed the passenger facilities and circulating area of the station. He also interacted with the staff members and discussed on further developmental plans with the officials. He conducted a detailed inspection of the Godavari Railway Bridge and reviewed the safety aspects of the bridge and Rail tracks. The General Manager proceeded to Nidadavolu Railway station, wherein he reviewed the progress of redevelopment works undertaken at the station as part of Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. He also received representation from various public representatives regarding Rail developmental works pertaining to their region. Later, the General Manager inspected Level Crossing Gate No. 368 at Kms No. 528/2, wherein he reviewed the safety aspects and examined the official records. Further, the General Manager carried out a detailed inspection of Eluru Railway station. (NSS)

## Sikhs being forced to shift out, migrants being settled in large numbers in Punjab: Jathedar



GNS News Agency, March 12

Amid an ongoing row over the removal of three jathedars in past one month, Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaj on Monday assumed charge as the jathedar of Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib and called upon the Sikhs to unite in light of the current 'Panthic' situation and said that internal divisions and ideological differences have created significant rifts within the community. Gargaj also raised concern over "demographic and political shift" in Punjab, alleging that Sikhs were being forced to migrate while a deliberate effort is underway to make the community a minority in the state by settling a large number of non-Punjab populations. He also accused politicians of prioritising migrant votes over Sikh interests.

Originally scheduled for 10 am, the installation ceremony was conducted in the early hours Monday, in the wake of threats by some Nihang bodies and the Damdami Taksal, which had vowed to prevent the ceremony from taking place at Anandpur Sahib. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) on March 7 appointed Gargaj as the jathedar of Takht Kesgarh Sahib. He would also serve as the acting jathedar of the Akal Takht, the highest temporal seat of Sikhs. The appointment was made after the SGPC removed Giani Ragbir Singh from the post of Akal Takht jathedar and Giani Sultan Singh as the jathedar of Takht Kesgarh Sahib. The move drew condemnation from various Sikh and political leaders, including Shiromani Akali Dal's Bikram Singh Majithia.

Gargaj's installation was carried out in the presence of the Panj Piare. SGPC secretary Pratap Singh and Takht Sahib manager Malkit Singh. The granthi honoured the new jathedar with siropas (robe of honour). Later, he reached the Golden Temple to take charge as the acting jathedar of the Akal Takht. He also performed 'sewa' of cleaning dishes in the community kitchen. Various Nihang bodies, however, claimed that 'maryada' (code of conduct) was not followed as Gargaj assumed charge.

The chief of Nihang group 'Baba Budha Dal 96 Crori', Baba Balbir Singh, said neither the SGPC president, SGPC chief secretary, 'head granthi' of the Golden Temple, nor

any 'Sant mahapurkh' (saintly person) was present on the occasion. "We strongly oppose the violation of maryada," he told reporters in Anandpur Sahib. Asked whether the Nihang bodies accept Gargaj as the jathedar, he said all Nihang outfits and the 'Khalsa panth' do not approve of him. A spokesperson of the Damdami Taksal (Sikh seminary) said the 'Khalsa Panth' will never accept the new jathedar and urged the Sikh community to oppose Gargaj.

Talking to reporters in Amritsar, Gargaj said he assumed the charge at Takht Kesgarh Sahib in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib at 'amrit vela' (early hours). He refused to comment on the opposition by Nihang bodies, saying "these are great and respectable organisations". The SGPC too claimed that the installation ceremony was held as per the 'rehat maryada' (Sikh code of conduct) in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. Asked why Gargaj assumed charge at 2:50 am instead 10 am as was scheduled, SGPC vice-president Raghuji Singh Virk said a heavy rush of devotees was anticipated in view of the commencement of the Holla Mohalla festival. In his address, Gargaj affirmed that the decisions taken by Akal Takht on December 2 would remain in effect. He emphasised that hukamnamas (edicts) issued in accordance with Gurmat (Guru's teachings) are final and unalterable. Moving forward, he said, the claims of the concerned parties will be reviewed to ensure that the edicts are acted upon. The December 2 decisions had led to internal disputes within the SAD, as they included the excommunication of former party president Sukhbir Singh Badal and withdrawal of the Panth Rattan Fakhr-e-Qaum title conferred former chief minister, the late Prakash Singh Badal. Dismissing speculation about any rollback, the new Jathedar called for restraint, urging all groups to avoid inflammatory remarks. He also highlighted broader challenges facing the Sikh community, in light of the current 'Panthic' situation and called upon them to unite under one 'Nishan Sahib'. Emphasising that internal divisions and ideological differences have created significant rifts, Gargaj also criticised the lack of cohesive religious and political leadership, which, he claimed, has led to a culture of undermining people instead of resolving the issues collectively. "In these difficult times, the urgent need is to establish platforms for dialogue based on mutual trust in the Guru," he added.

He criticised what he called an atmosphere of fear among minorities in India, the prolonged imprisonment of Sikh youth under laws like UAPA and NSA, and the lack of justice for the 1984 Sikh massacre even after four decades. On social issues, he expressed alarm over rampant drug addiction among Sikh youth, blaming materialism and a disconnect from religious values. He called for a grassroots-level religious awareness campaign to counter alleged religious conversions and urged Sikh politicians to draw inspiration from the Akali movement leaders of the 20th century.

## SKM protests outside houses of Punjab AAP MLAs, ministers over police action against farm leaders

SKM leaders alleged that the Punjab government's crackdown on farmers was dictated by the central government. SKM leaders alleged that the Punjab government's crackdown on farmers was dictated by the central government. Several farmer organisations under the banner of Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) staged sit-ins outside the residences of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) ministers and MLAs throughout Punjab on Monday in response to the state government crackdown on farm leaders ahead of their thwarted march to Chandigarh on March 5.

SKM leaders said a large number of farmers, farm labourers and women took part in the protests held from 11 am to 3 pm outside the residences of nearly 80 AAP ministers and MLAs, including Minister Mohinder Bhagat in Jalandhar and MLAs Narinder Kaur Bharaj in Sangrur, Dev Mann in Nabha, Amansher Singh Sherry Kalsi in Batala, and Manjit Singh in Moga, raising slogans against them and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. BKU (Ugrahan) general secretary Sukhdev Singh Kokrikalan said, "The protest saw strong outrage towards the Punjab government for transforming the state into an open prison by imposing an undeclared emergency to suppress the farmers' march to Chandigarh through arrests and restrictions." Addressing protests, farm union leaders condemned Mann's statement that "the farmers' demands have no connection with Punjab" and "farmers are troubling the common people by blocking roads and railways" and challenged him to an open debate. "Such a debate will expose Mann's misleading statements," they said.

In Samrala, SKM leader Balbir Singh Rajewal said, "The US and the European Union are pressing the Indian government to implement free trade agreements to allow them to control our agriculture sector and foodgrain." "We are holding our protests peacefully," said farmer leader Ravneet Brar, sitting outside MLA Kulwant Singh's office in Mohali, along with other farmers. SKM leaders alleged that the Punjab government's crackdown on farmers was dictated by the central government. They slammed the Punjab government for "detaining" several farmer leaders ahead of



their March 5 protest programme. The SKM, a conglomerate of 37 farmer bodies, had planned a week-long 'dharna' in Chandigarh from March 5 to demand, among multiple requests, the purchase of six crops at minimum support price by the state government. However, the Punjab Police stopped farmers from going to Chandigarh for the protest.

The SKM, which had led the 2020 agitation against the now-repealed three farm laws, on Monday demanded the implementation of the state's agricultural policy, a legal framework for debt relief after coordinating with the Centre, ownership rights of land tillers and payment of sugarcane arrears. Besides these demands, it is pressing to stop the "forcible" acquisition of land for the Bharatmala projects, jobs, compensation for kin of farmers who lost lives during the farmers' stir in 2020-21, revoking the policy of installing pre-paid electricity metres, resolving issue of stray animals and curbing black marketing of fertilisers and spurious seeds. They demanded the rollback of the draft National Policy Framework on Agriculture Marketing (NPFAM), the legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP), and the implementation of an environmentally friendly agricultural policy for sustainable farming and soil conservation. They also highlighted an 18-point memorandum submitted to the Punjab government on March 3, warning that if demands were not met, the joint farmers' movement would be intensified.

## Now, concern over member of committee formed to appoint new V-C of Gujarat's M S University

GNS News Agency, March 12

The controversy over the appointment of former MS University Vice-Chancellor VK Shrivastava, who resigned from the post in January, is yet to die down and the varsity is facing another concern — eligibility of a member of the search committee appointed to select his successor. A section of academicians and citizens have raised concerns that search committee member Atul Vaidya does not meet the required criteria. While stakeholders have chosen to remain anonymous, sources within the university management said that the matter over the eligibility of the three-member search committee has been raised before the Registrar and Board of Management. The University, though, is yet to take any formal action. Vaidya, who was the Director of National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) at the time of his selection as search committee member, is currently serving as the V-C of Laxminarayan Innovation Technological (LIT) University in Maharashtra.

"It has come to light that the ongoing Vice-Chancellor selection process at The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (MSUB) may be facing a procedural irregularity due to a key discrepancy in the composition of the Search Committee. As per the statutory requirements, the Search Committee must include a director or head of an institution of national repute established by an Act of Parliament," said

an academican, requesting anonymity.

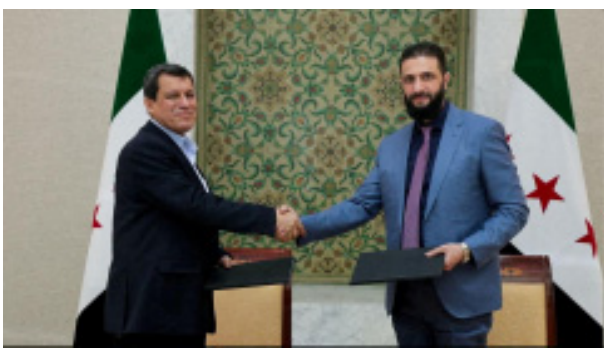
"Dr Atul Vaidya was appointed to this committee while serving as the Director of NEERI. However, he has since assumed the position of Vice-Chancellor at LIT, Maharashtra — a state university established by the Government of Maharashtra, not by an Act of Parliament. Given this change in position, his continued presence on the Search Committee raises concerns regarding its legality and compliance with the university's governing statutes," the academican further said. MSU professors and citizens are now calling upon the university administration to take prompt action and prevent any procedural lapses that could compromise the credibility of the V-C appointment. Vaidya, for his part, said he had informed the MSU authorities about the switch, adding he was willing to resign "in case, anyone has an objection" to his presence in the committee. A senior professor said, "We have already seen the controversy around the two-year tenure of Shrivastava that ultimately resulted in a writ of mandamus in the Gujarat High Court and his eventual resignation with the court hearing pending. We would not like a repeat of the same... Moreover, when Vaidya was appointed to the committee, around October last year, he was nominated by the Board of Management and the Executive Council and it had a lot of influence from Shrivastava, who was at the helm of affairs at that time..."

# Syria's government signs breakthrough deal with Kurdish-led authorities in the northeast

GNS News Agency, March 12

Syria's interim government signed a deal Monday (March 10, 2025) with the Kurdish-led authority that controls the country's northeast, including a ceasefire and the merging of the main U.S.-backed force there into the Syrian army. The deal is a major breakthrough that would bring most of Syria under the control of the government, which is led by the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham that led the ouster of President Bashar Assad in December. The deal was signed by interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa and Mazloum Abdi, the commander of the U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. The deal is to be implemented by the end of the year would bring all border crossings with Iraq and Turkey, airports and oil fields in the northeast under the central government's control. Prisons where about 9,000 suspected members of the Islamic State group are also expected to come under government control. Syria's Kurds will gain their "constitutional rights" including using and teaching their language, which were banned for decades under Mr. Assad. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds, who were displaced during Syria's nearly 14-year civil war, will return to their homes. Thousands of Kurds living in Syria who have been deprived of nationality for decades under Assad will be given the right of citizenship, according to the agreement.

The deal also says all Syrians will be part of the political process, no matter their religion or ethnicity. People celebrate, after the Kurdish-led and U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which controls much of Syria's oil-rich northeast, signed a deal agreeing to integrate into Syria's new state institutions. People celebrate, after the Kurdish-led and U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which controls much of Syria's oil-rich northeast, signed a



deal agreeing to integrate into Syria's new state institutions | Photo Credit: Reuters/Syria's new rulers are struggling to exert their authority across the country and reach political settlements with other minority communities, notably the Druze in southern Syria.

Worst fighting Earlier on Monday, Syria's government announced the end of the military operation against insurgents loyal to Assad and his family in the worst fighting since the end of the civil war. The Defense Ministry's announcement came after a surprise attack by gunmen from the Alawite community on a police patrol near the port city of Latakia on Thursday spiraled into widespread clashes across Syria's coastal region. The Assad family are Alawites. "To the remaining remnants of the defeated regime and its fleeing officers, our message is clear and explicit," said Defense Ministry spokesperson Col. Hassan Abdel-Ghani. "If you return, we will also return, and you will find before you men who do not know how to retreat and who will not have mercy on those whose hands are stained with the blood of the innocent." Abdel-Ghani said security forces

will continue searching for sleeper cells and remnants of the insurgency of former government loyalists. Attacks on Alawite community. Though the government's counter-offensive was able to largely contain the insurgency, footage surfaced of what appeared to be retaliatory attacks targeting the broader minority Alawite community, an offshoot of Shia Islam whose adherents live mainly in the western coastal region. Sajid Allah Al-Deek, a security official in the coastal region, told The Associated Press that security forces were deployed in the area from the Latakia governorate to Jableh and that the coastal highway is functioning again after being closed because of the fighting. "The civilians have begun returning to their homes," Al-Deek said, adding that authorities have started detaining those blamed for acts of violence. Imad Baytar said his father, who worked for a taxi company, had gone from Jableh to Damascus and on his way back over the weekend "he was killed in the checkpoint." Baytar blamed Assad supporters for the killing.

1,130 dead in clashes The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, said 1,130 people were killed in the clashes, including 830 civilians. The AP could not independently verify these numbers. Al-Sharaa said the retaliatory attacks against Alawite civilians and mistreatment of prisoners were isolated incidents, and vowed to crack down on the perpetrators as he formed a committee to investigate. Still, the events alarmed Western governments, who have been urged to lift economic sanctions on Syria. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in a statement Sunday urged Syrian authorities to "hold the perpetrators of these massacres" accountable. Rubio said the U.S. "stands with Syria's religious and ethnic minorities, including its Christian, Druze, Alawite, and Kurdish communities."

# Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh becomes India's 58th Tiger Reserve



GNS News Agency, March 12

The Centre declared the Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh as the country's 58th tiger reserve on Sunday (March 9, 2025), with Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav making the announcement. The newly added national park was also the ninth from the State to get the recognition. Mr. Yadav posted on X, "58th roar and counting! Thrilled to announce that the country has added the 58th Tiger Reserve to its tally with the latest entrant being Madhya Pradesh's Madhav Tiger Reserve. This is MP's 9th Tiger Reserve."

Located in the Shivpuri district in Chambal region, the reserve has five tigers at present, including the two cubs born recently. Two more tigers could be released into the reserve by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav soon. "With historic emphasis laid on restoring the ecological diversity on planet Earth by PM Shri Narendra Modi ji, India continues to make great strides in environmental protection and wildlife conservation. I congratulate all wildlife lovers and conservationists. The development is a testament to the relentless efforts of our forest officials who are selflessly working towards the cause," the Union Minister added. Applauding the development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that India was blessed with wildlife diversity and a culture that celebrated wildlife. "Amazing news for wildlife lovers! India is blessed with wildlife diversity and a culture that celebrates wildlife. We will always be at the forefront of protecting animals and contributing to a sustainable planet," he said on X. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav also thanked the Prime Minister for the development. "Heartfelt thanks to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for your visionary leadership in designating Madhav National Park as India's 58th and MP's 9th Tiger Reserve! Madhya Pradesh is proud to lead wildlife conservation and protect our biodiversity," he wrote. Three tigers, including two females, were introduced to the Madhav National Park in 2023 as part of the tiger reintroduction project in the State.

# Russian defences shoot down 337 Ukrainian drones over 10 regions

GNS News Agency, March 12

Moscow: The Russian military said it shot down 337 Ukrainian drones over 10 Russian regions overnight in what appears to be the biggest Ukrainian drone attack on Russia in three years, hours before key Ukraine-US talks were to start on Tuesday. The attack, which killed one person and wounded several, came as a Ukrainian delegation was to meet with America's top diplomat in Saudi Arabia about ending the three-year war with Russia. There was no immediate comment from Ukrainian officials on the attack.

The talks in Saudi Arabia reflect a new diplomatic push after an unprecedented argument erupted during President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's February 28 visit to the White House. Most of the drones — 126 of them — were shot down over the Kursk region across the border from Ukraine, parts of which Kyiv's forces control, and 91 were shot down over the Moscow region, according to a statement by Russia's Defence Ministry. Other regions listed in the statement included Belgorod, Bryansk and Voronezh on the border with Ukraine and those deeper inside Russia, such as Kaluga, Lipetsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Oryol and Ryazan. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said over 70 drones targeted the Russian capital and were shot down as they were flying toward it.

The governor of the Moscow region surrounding the capital, Andrei Vorobyov, said that one person was killed and nine were wounded in the attack, which also damaged several residential buildings and a number of cars. Another person was wounded on a highway in the Lipetsk region, Gov. Igor Arsamovov said. Sobyanin said the roof of a building in Moscow also sustained damage, which he described as "insignificant". Footage of the building, published by RIA Novosti, showed a charred spot on the facade of a multi-story residential building near the roof, with bits of the building's lining stripped off. Flights have been temporarily restricted in and out of six airports, including Domodedovo, Vnukovo, Sheremetevovo and Zhukovskiy just outside Moscow, and airports in the Yaroslavl and Nizhny Novgorod regions.

# Meeting Soon On Journalists' Health Scheme

Hyderabad, March 12 (NSS): Minister for Medical, Health and Family Welfare C. Damodar Raja Narasimha has assured that a high-level meeting will be held soon to ensure the effective implementation of the health scheme for journalists and their families in Telangana State. On Wednesday, a delegation from the media, headed by K. Virahat Ali, the State president of the Telangana State Union of Working Journalists (TUWJ), met Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha in his Assembly office to discuss the rollout of the Journalists' Health scheme. The journalists presented a petition to the Minister addressing this issue.

During the meeting, Virahat Ali highlighted the challenges journalists have encountered due to the lack of implementation of the health scheme over the past five years. He expressed his concern that rising medical costs have become a significant burden for journalists, who are already struggling financially. Virahat Ali said there is a situation where journalists are having to borrow money to get medical treatment. Responding to this, Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha said that journalists need not worry and assured that special efforts would be made to resolve this issue soon. The TUWJ delegation that met the Minister included Union State Deputy General Secretary Kalkuri Ramulu, State Secretary Varakala Yadagiri, IUJ National Council member Rajinikanth, and several senior journalists. (NSS)

# New Delhi considers restoring High Commissioner to Canada to reset ties

GNS News Agency, March 12

The government is considering restoring its High Commissioner to Canada, sources said, in signs that the exit of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau from office could signal a thaw in bilateral ties that have been virtually frozen since 2023 over the Nijjar case. Canadian Security Intelligence Service's (CSIS) chief Daniel Rogers is also set to visit India next week to attend a meeting of intelligence chiefs hosted by the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS). The meeting, which is held each year on the sidelines of the Raisina Dialogue (March 17-19 this year) since 2022, will be the first such meeting since a heated, extended exchange over the case between Indian and Canadian national security teams headed by National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and his Canadian counterpart in Singapore last October.

According to the sources, the Ministry of External Affairs has discussed possible candidates to replace previous High Commissioner to Canada Sanjay Kumar Verma, as the position remains vacant since he was expelled along with five Indian diplomats in October 2024, a few days after that Singapore meeting. The Trudeau government called them "persons of interest" in the June 2023 killing of Khalistani separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, but the Modi government denied all the charges, and claimed that no evidence has been shared of the claims, including those linking Home Minister Amit Shah to the plot.

New Delhi then withdrew its diplomats and expelled six Canadian diplomats including the Acting High Commissioner in retaliation. It is unclear whether a new Canadian High Commissioner to India will be appointed by newly elected leader of the Liberal party and Prime Minister-designate Mark Carney after he is sworn in in the next few weeks, or after Canadian federal elections are held later this year, but sources said "diplomatic movements" are already under way. In addition, both Mr. Carney and his Conservative Party rival Pierre Poilievre have indicated they would like to rework ties with India. Last week Mr. Carney, a former Central Bank Governor, said there were "opportunities to rebuild relationships with India" as Canada diversifies trade ties in the wake of tensions with U.S. President Donald Trump over tariffs. "There needs to be a shared sense of values around that commercial relationship [with India]. If I am Prime Minister, I look forward to the opportunity to build that," he said at a public event in Calgary. Some former diplomats from Delhi and Ottawa have met in the past few months for track-two discussions on how to re-



build ties that have skidded downhill since September 2023, when Mr. Trudeau announced in Parliament that Indian "government agents" were suspected to have orchestrated the killing of Nijjar outside a Gurudwara in Brampton. They have said Mr. Trudeau's departure was an opportunity for the relationship.

"Given the existential crisis Canada faces from Trump, India has to be an important piece of Canada's diversification strategy. The lowest hanging fruit is the speedy return of High Commissioners to both capitals," said former High Commissioner to Canada Vikas Swarup. Former Canadian diplomat David McKinnon, who served in Delhi, concurred, although he pointed out that the Nijjar case is now before the courts, and there would be some "twists and turns" in the trial that could still affect ties. "There are real problems to be addressed by both sides, but with subtlety and sophistication. Given his background, I would like to think Mark Carney will be inclined to engage in international relations more thoughtfully and quietly. But he is completely untested in the political realm, of course, and he will be relying on much of the same party apparatus that served Justin Trudeau as leader," he added.

Former High Commissioner to Canada and Pakistan Ajay Bisaria suggested that apart from the restoration of High Commissioners, working on a trade agreement, as well as an invitation from the new Canadian Prime Minister to India for the G-7 Summit to be hosted in Canada this year could be ways to take the relationship forward. "Any new Prime Minister of Canada will have a natural opportunity to get off ramp from the current political deadlock with India and to stabilise the relationship... All this should become politically more attractive, given the broader geopolitical problems that Canada now has with the U.S. and China," he added.

# What's so special about Ukraine's minerals?

GNS News Agency, March 12

Plymouth: Ukraine's minerals have become central to global geopolitics, with the US President Donald Trump seeking a deal with Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy to access them. But what are these minerals exactly and why are they so sought after? Ukraine is often recognised for its vast agricultural lands and industrial heritage, but beneath its surface lies one of the world's most remarkable geological formations, the "Ukrainian Shield". This massive, exposed crystalline rock formed over 2.5 billion years ago, stretches across much of Ukraine. It represents one of Earth's oldest and most stable continental blocks. The formation has undergone multiple episodes of mountain building, the formation and movement of magma and other change throughout time. These geological processes created favourable geological conditions for forming several mineral deposits including lithium, graphite, manganese, titanium and rare earth elements. All these are now critical for modern industries and the global green energy transition. Ukraine has deposits containing 22 of 34 critical minerals identified by the European Union as essential for energy security. This positions Ukraine among the world's most resource-rich nations. As the world races to decarbonise, demand for critical minerals is skyrocketing. Electric vehicles, wind turbines, solar panels and energy storage systems all require lithium, cobalt and rare Earth elements which Ukraine has in abundance. The price of lithium has surged from US\$1,500 per tonne in the 1990s to around \$20,000 per tonne in recent years. Demand is expected to increase nearly 40-fold by 2040. According to the International Energy Agency, the number of electric vehicles is projected to exceed 125 million by 2030. Similar growth is expected for other battery metals. Each electric vehicle requires significantly more lithium than conventional electronics. For example, a Tesla Model S battery requires approximately 63kg of high-purity lithium. Ukraine has three major lithium deposits. These include Shevchenkivske in the Donetsk region as well as Polokhivske and

Stankuvatske in the centrally located Kirovograd region — all within the Ukrainian Shield. Despite the significant mineral potential, many of Ukraine's mineral deposits have remained largely unexplored due to the war with Russia, which has disrupted mining operations and damaged infrastructure. The Shevchenkivske lithium deposit contains high concentrations of spodumene — the primary lithium-bearing mineral used in battery production. Its reserve is estimated as 13.8 million tonnes of lithium ores. That said, extracting it requires an estimated US\$10–20 million in exploration investment before mining can begin. Meanwhile, the Polokhivske deposit at is approximately 270 thousand tons of lithium is considered one of the best lithium sites in Europe. That's because of its favourable geological conditions, making extraction more economically viable. But lithium represents just one element of Ukraine's mineral resources. According to the US geological survey, Ukraine ranks globally as the third-largest producer of the mineral rutile — making up 15.7% of world's total output. It is the sixth-largest producer of iron ore (3.2% of total output) and titanium (5.8%), as well as the seventh-largest producer of manganese ore (3.1%). Ukraine also has Europe's largest uranium reserves, crucial for nuclear power and weapons. It boasts significant deposits of rare earth elements, including neodymium and dysprosium, which are needed for manufacturing everything from smartphones to wind turbines and electric motors. In addition, Ukraine is home to the world's largest proven reserves of manganese ores. There's approximately 2.4 billion tonnes of it concentrated primarily in the Nikopol Basin on the southern slope of the Ukrainian Shield. The strategic significance of Ukraine's minerals has gained recognition in international diplomacy. Recent bilateral negotiations between Ukraine and the US highlight the geopolitical importance of these resources. A proposed minerals deal would involve Ukraine contributing 50 per cent of future proceeds from state-owned mineral resources, oil and gas and other extractable materials to a reconstruction investment fund for Ukraine's post-war rebuilding.

# Ukraine's Zelenskyy arrives in Saudi Arabia ahead of summit with US

GNS News Agency, March 12

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived on Monday (March 10, 20225) in Saudi Arabia for a visit with its powerful crown prince ahead of his team's meeting with America's top diplomat. While President Zelenskyy won't be there, his team will try to repair the damage done when his February 28 visit to Washington descended into an Oval Office argument with President Donald Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance.

At stake is the military aid and intelligence previously offered by the United States that had helped Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and President Zelenskyy landed a few hours apart in Jeddah, a port city on the Red Sea where the Ukraine-U.S. summit will take place Tuesday.

President Zelenskyy was due to meet with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman after sunset, following the end of the daily fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. It didn't appear that Mr. Rubio and President Zelenskyy would meet in person in Jeddah, though the secretary of state also was due to meet Prince Mohammed.

Speaking to reporters aboard his plane, Mr. Rubio said he and national security adviser Mike Waltz would take stock of Ukraine's responses. If Ukraine and the U.S. reach an understanding acceptable to President Trump, that could accelerate his administration's push to peace talks. "What we want to know is, are they interested entering some sort of peace conversation and general outlines of the kinds of things they could consider, recognizing that it has been a costly and bloody war for the Ukrainians. They have suffered greatly and their people have suffered greatly," Mr. Rubio said. "And it's hard in the aftermath of something like that to even talk about concessions, but that's the only way this is going to end and prevent more suffering."

He added: "I'm not going to set any conditions on what they have to or need to do. I think we want to listen to see how far they're willing to go and then compare that to what the Russians want and see how far apart we truly are." President Zelenskyy has said a team including his chief of staff Andriy Yermak, Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha and Defense Minister Rustem Umerov will take part in the talks Tuesday. Mr. Rubio will lead the U.S. team. The European Union last week agreed to boost the continent's defenses and to free up hundreds of billions of euros for security in response to the Trump administration's shift in stance on Ukraine.

White House special envoy Steve Witkoff told Fox News on Monday that the pause of U.S. intelligence-sharing with Ukraine has not limited defense intelligence-sharing. "We never shut off intelligence for... anything defensive that the Ukrainians need," Mr. Witkoff said. A pause on sharing U.S. intelligence that can be used for offensive purposes by Ukrainian forces remains in effect, according to a U.S. official familiar with the matter who was not authorized to comment and spoke on the condition of anonymity. The official suggested that progress could be made toward reinstating intelligence-sharing with Ukraine during the Saudi talks.

# US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard to visit India

New York/Washington: US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard on Monday said she will visit India as part of a "multi-nation" trip to the Indo-Pacific she is undertaking with the aim of building strong relationships and open lines of communication to achieve President Donald Trump's objectives of peace and freedom.

"I am #WheelsUp on a multi-nation trip to the Indo-Pacific, a region I know very well having grown up as a child of the Pacific. I'll be going to Japan, Thailand, and India, with a brief stop in France enroute back to DC," Gabbard said in a post on X, with a photograph of her boarding an airplane.

"Building strong relationships, understanding, and open lines of communication are vital to achieving President Trump's objectives of peace, freedom and prosperity," she said.

Her first stop will be Honolulu where she will visit "IC partners and INDOPACOM" (US Indo-Pacific Command) leaders, and "our troops engaging in training." This will be Gabbard's first trip to India after taking over as the eighth Senate-confirmed and first female combat veteran Director of National Intelligence (DNI) in the second Trump administration.

# Majority of Indian-Americans feel U.S.-India relationship would have been stronger under Harris: survey

GNS News Agency, March 12

A majority (53%) of Indian-Americans feels that U.S.-India ties would have become stronger or much stronger under a Kamala Harris administration in Washington, according to a new study published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. This is in contrast to 40% who feel the same way about the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump. However, Indian-Americans rate the erstwhile Biden administration's record of handling ties with India only slightly better than the record of the first administration of Mr. Trump. Around a third of respondents said that bilateral ties — which have enjoyed strong bipartisan support — would remain the same under Mr. Trump or Ms. Harris. The results are part of a new report based on the Indian-American Attitudes Survey 2024. The survey examines attitudes around some of the foreign policy issues that appear to have impacted the diaspora in the 2024 election cycle.

For instance, it examines diaspora attitudes towards the U.S. Department of Justice's indictment in the 'murder for hire plot', a conspiracy allegedly masterminded by Indian government agents to kill Khalistan separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in New York. While his story featured in the news both in India and the U.S just before the elections, only around half the survey respondents were even aware of the story. Of those who were aware, a slim majority (51%) felt India would not be justified in taking such action and had identical feelings about the U.S. if the roles of the countries had been reversed. Only 26% say India would have been justified in taking such action, while 23% responded, "Don't know". On Israel and Palestine, another important issue around the 2024 U.S. elections, Indian-Americans were divided. Some of the diversity in views could be explained by party-affinity (with Democrats more

sympathetic to the Palestinian cause). No Partisan Divide on Values vs Interests Debate The survey examined how Indian-Americans felt the Biden administration did in terms of the balance between values and interests in its bilateral relationship with New Delhi. There was negligible consensus on this question, with 31% of respondents saying that the Biden administration balanced values and strategic interests in its dealings with the government (of India). Another 28% felt strategic interests were prioritised over values, 17% felt the previous administration prioritised values over interests and just under a quarter (24%) of respondents did not have a clear view on the question. Interestingly, the survey finds there is little partisan variation on this subject. The responses are noteworthy, the authors say, because Indian-Americans are seen broadly as supportive of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, so it follows that many members of the diaspora might recoil at Washington's criticism of India's democratic process.

Asked which President did a better job of handling U.S.-India relations, 34% said Mr. Biden did, while 28% said Mr. Trump did (i.e., in his first term). Just over a quarter (26%) of respondents said both presidents did about the same in this respect. Democrats Better at Handling U.S.-India Relations: survey result Abstracting from the last four years of the Biden administration, respondents in general felt the Democratic Party (41%) was better than the Republic Party (24%) at handling U.S.-India relations. A quarter said there was no difference between the parties. Diaspora more bullish on India The number of Indian-Americans who feel India is on the right track has grown between 2020 and 2024 from 36% to 47%, as per the survey. Another 32% feel it is on the wrong track. Significantly, U.S.-born respondents are more enthusiastic (55% vs 42%) about India's direction than foreign-born Indian-Americans (i.e., immigrants). Forty-six

per cent of those surveyed say they are either strongly or somewhat supportive of the Modi Government's policies. Thirty-six per cent report are somewhat or strongly critical.

The authors' posit that the greater bullishness in the assessment of India could be because the 2024 elections resulted in greater power dispersion in Parliament and a more robust opposition. Forty one per cent of respondents agree with this sentiment, saying the 2024 elections made India "somewhat more" or "much more" democratic, while 14% felt the situation remains unchanged before and after the elections. Twenty eight per cent said India is less democratic in the aftermath of last year's general election. To study diaspora views on Hindu majoritarianism, the survey asked respondents to reflect on an April 2024 campaign speech by Prime Minister Narendra Modi where he had warned that Hindus' assets and mangalsutras would be redistributed to Muslims if the Congress came to power. Respondents were asked if the speech was an example of growing threats to minorities in India. A significant majority of 70% strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that it did, while under a third (31%) disagreed with this notion. Responses vary by across religious lines. In terms of support for Prime Minister Narendra Modi among the diaspora, overall approval ratings have not shifted much between 2020 and 2024 among the Indian-American diaspora, as per this survey. In 2020, 50% approved of the job Mr. Modi was doing versus 47% in 2024. Support for Modi stays the same, but underlying variations across groups However, there is a story around the underlying patterns of support across gender, age, socioeconomic status and citizenship. There is an increase in support for Mr. Modi among younger Indian-Americans from 35% (2020) to 49% (2024). Support for Mr. Modi dipped among 30-50 year olds (by 5 percentage points) as well as among those over 50 years of age (9 percentage



points). Support for the Prime Minister declined among those who earn less than \$50,000 per year while it increased among those who earn more than \$1,00,000 per year. Support for Mr. Modi dipped among Indian-American Hindus (69% to 64%) and Christians (33% to 24%) and remained at about the same level among Muslim Indian-American and those identifying with other religions. Support for Mr. Modi among Indian-Americans who are U.S. Citizens remained unchanged between 2020 and 2024 as per the survey's findings. However, support for the Prime Minister drops from 54% (2020) to 40% (2024) among non U.S. citizen Indian-Americans. The report finds that while Indian-Americans in general do not possess clear partisan identities (in the Indian political party context), to the extent they do, there is a tilt towards the BJP. Survey details: The report is based on a nationally representative online survey of 1206 Indian American adult residents, part of the Indian American attitude survey, and was conducted by CEIP between September 18 and October 15, 2024, in partnership with YouGov. The margin of error is +/- 3%.

## Indian-origin student Sudiksha Konanki goes missing while vacationing in Dominican Republic



GNS News Agency, March 12

New York: A 20-year-old Indian student has gone missing while on vacation in the Dominican Republic and US federal law enforcement agencies are working with authorities in the Caribbean country on the investigation into her disappearance. Sudiksha Konanki is a citizen of India and a permanent resident of the United States. A student at the University of Pittsburgh, Konanki was reported to be vacationing with five female college friends at a resort in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office said in a statement Monday.

Konanki was reported missing on March 6. The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) said it continues to assist and support the US federal law enforcement agencies working with the Dominican National Police and others to determine Konanki's whereabouts and what may have happened to her. Konanki, a resident of Loudoun County, Virginia, was reported missing while vacationing on a spring break trip in Punta Cana and was last seen in the early morning of March 6. The ongoing investigation includes wide-ranging search efforts, along with a review of surveillance video and telephone records. Interviews are also continuing with anyone who may have seen or been with Konanki before she went missing," the LCSO statement said. It added that the LCSO has filed for a Yellow Notice (worldwide police alert for a missing person) to be issued by INTERPOL. A report in ABC News said three Domini-

can officials involved in the investigation told the outlet "over the weekend that Konanki is believed to have drowned in the ocean." The LCSO cautioned against drawing any unsubstantiated conclusions, saying there has been considerable public speculation about what may have happened to Konanki and who may be involved. "We caution anyone from drawing any unsubstantiated conclusions and are committed to ensuring that a thorough investigation is conducted before any conclusions are reached," it said.

The LCSO said it is hopeful for Konanki's safe return and "we are committed to supporting this investigation and her family in every way possible". The LCSO is working closely with federal partners at the US Department of State, FBI, DEA and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) as well as the University of Pittsburgh Police in support of the ongoing investigation by the Dominican National Police. The report in ABC News quoted two police sources with knowledge of the investigation as saying that Konanki's clothes were discovered on a "portable beach bed close to the beach where she went missing". The police have found no evidence of violence, according to sources. The ABC News report said that after going to a nightclub on the night of March 5, Konanki and a group of people went to the beach about 4 am local time on Thursday, March 6. The report quotes sources as saying that the other women travelling with Konanki went back to their hotel about 5:55 am, with security cameras capturing their return to their rooms. "A man stayed behind with Konanki on the beach," according to a Dominican Republic investigative police report. "The man, whose name was not released, told police that he and Konanki went for a swim and got caught by a big wave, the police report said," according to the ABC News report. The man is understood to have told the police that when he got back to the beach, he threw up and went to sleep on a beach bed. "When he woke up, Konanki was nowhere to be seen," the report said. Sources have said that the man, who was seen in security video coming back to his hotel room at 9:55 am, is "not considered a suspect in Konanki's death". Officials said Konanki's friends, who were with her around the time of her disappearance, were also questioned by the police and have not been charged with crimes, the ABC News report said.

## Ex-Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte arrested on an ICC warrant over drug killings

GNS News Agency, March 12

Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte was arrested at Manila's international airport on Tuesday (March 11, 2025) on order of the International Criminal Court in connection with a case of crime against humanity filed against him, the Philippine government said. Duterte was arrested after arriving from Hong Kong and police took him into custody on orders of the ICC, which has been investigating the mass killings that happened under the former president's deadly crackdown against illegal drugs, President Ferdinand Marcos' office said in a statement.

"Upon his arrival, the prosecutor general served the ICC notification for an arrest warrant to the former president for the crime of crime against humanity," the government said. "He's now in the custody of authorities." The surprise arrest sparked a commotion at the airport, where lawyers and aides of Duterte loudly protested that they, along with a doctor and lawyers, were prevented from coming close to him after he was taken into police custody. "This is a violation of his constitutional right," Sen. Bong Go, a close Duterte ally, told reporters. Duterte's arrest and downfall stunned and drove families of the victims of his bloody crackdowns against illegal drugs to tears. A supporter of former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte speaks to media members outside the Villamor Airbase where Duterte is currently held after being arrested, in Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines, on March 11, 2025.

A supporter of former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte speaks to media members outside the Villamor Airbase where Duterte is currently held after being arrested, in Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines.

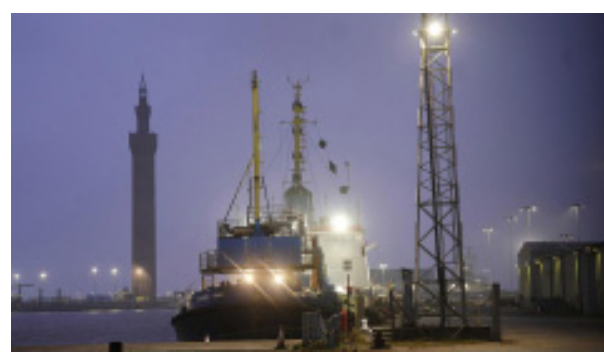
"This is a big, long-awaited day for justice," Randy delos Santos, the uncle of a teenager killed by police during an anti-drug operation in August 2017 in the Manila metropolis, told The Associated Press. "Now we feel that justice is rolling. We hope that top police officials and the hundreds of police officers who were involved in the illegal killings should also be placed in custody and punished," delos Santos said. Three of the police officers who killed his nephew, Kian delos Santos, were convicted in 2018 for the high-profile murder, which prompted to Duterte at the time to tempo-



rarily suspend his brutal anti-drugs crackdown.

The conviction was one of at least three, so far, against law enforcers involved in the anti-drugs campaign, reflecting the concerns of families of victims of suspected extrajudicial killings that they would not get justice in the Philippines, hence, their decision to seek the help of the ICC. It was not immediately clear where Duterte was taken by the police. The government said the 79-year-old former leader was in good health. The ICC began investigating drug killings under Duterte from November 1, 2011, when he was still mayor of the southern city of Davao, to March 16, 2019, as possible crimes against humanity. Duterte withdrew the Philippines in 2019 from the Rome Statute in a move human rights activists say was aimed at escaping accountability. The Duterte administration moved to suspend the global court's investigation in late 2021 by arguing that Philippine authorities were already looking into the same allegations, arguing the ICC — a court of last resort — didn't have jurisdiction. Appeals judges at the ICC ruled in 2023 the investigation could resume and rejected the Duterte administration's objections. Based in The Hague, the Netherlands, the ICC can step in when countries are unwilling or unable to prosecute suspects in the most heinous international crimes, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who succeeded Duterte in 2022 and became entangled in a bitter political dispute with the former president, has decided not to rejoin the global court.

## Fuel tanker carrying fuel for U.S. military, cargo ship collide, catch fire in North Sea off Britain; crew rescued



GNS News Agency, March 12

A cargo ship hit a tanker carrying jet fuel for the American military off eastern England setting both vessels on fire and sending fuel pouring into the North Sea. The collision triggered a major rescue operation by lifeboats, coast guard aircraft and commercial vessels. All 37 crew members aboard the two vessels were safe and accounted for, with one hospitalised, local lawmaker Graham Stuart said. Mr. Stuart said he was concerned "about the potential ecological impact" of the spill, whose cause was being investigated by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch. The U.S.-flagged chemical and oil products tanker MV Stena Immaculate was at anchor near the port of Grimsby on Monday morning (March 10, 2025) after sailing from Greece, according to ship-tracking site VesselFinder. The cargo vessel, Portugal-flagged container ship Solong, was sailing from Grangemouth in Scotland to Rotterdam in the Netherlands when it struck the side of the tanker. U.S.-based maritime management firm Crowley, which operates the Stena Immaculate, said the tanker "sustained a ruptured cargo tank containing Jet-A1 fuel", when the container ship struck it, triggering a fire and "multiple explosions onboard," with fuel released into the sea. It said all 23 of the mariners on the tanker were safe and accounted for. The Stena Immaculate was operating as part of the U.S. government's Tanker Security Programme, a group of commercial vessels that can be contracted to carry fuel for the military when needed.

## US and Ukraine to meet in Saudi Arabia after disastrous White House talks

JEDDAH, GNS News Agency, March 12 U.S. and Ukrainian officials were to meet in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday for talks aimed at mending ties and gauging if Ukraine is willing to make concessions under President Donald Trump's push to end Russia's war with Ukraine swiftly. Washington, Ukraine's main ally before Trump's inauguration in January, has upended its policy on the conflict to pursue a rapid end to the fighting. Trump has engaged directly with Moscow, stopped military assistance to Kyiv and paused intelligence sharing with Ukraine, which Russian troops invaded at scale in 2022.

A stunning White House clash last month between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy deeply soured relations. That left in limbo a minerals deal that Trump framed as key to continued U.S. support and compensation for some \$65 billion in U.S. military aid to Ukraine since Russia invaded three years ago. Under intense U.S. pressure, Zelenskyy has been at pains to show that Kyiv is committed to ending the war, despite failing to win U.S. security guarantees in the minerals accord that Kyiv sees as vital for any peace deal. "We have to understand the Ukrainian position and just have a general idea of what concessions they'd be willing to make, because you're not going to get a ceasefire and an end to this war unless both sides make concessions," U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters on Monday en route to Jeddah. The top U.S. diplomat will be joined by U.S. national security adviser Mike Waltz when they meet with senior Ukrainian officials led by Andriy Yermak, a top Zelenskyy aide. Zelenskyy, who was in Saudi Arabia on Monday to meet with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, will not be joining the talks.

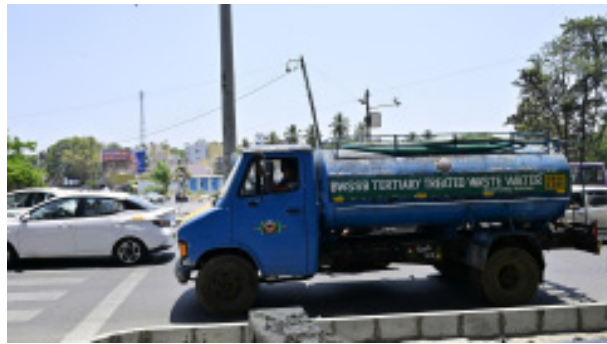
Although Rubio was more cautious, Trump's special envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff, who has been drafted into Ukraine diplomacy, said he was hopeful the U.S.-Ukraine minerals deal would be signed. Witkoff plans to visit Moscow to meet President Vladimir Putin, a person briefed on the plans said on Monday, following a meeting with the Kremlin leader in Russia last month. Ukraine's European allies argue that Ukraine can only negotiate a peace deal with Russia from a position of strength and Kyiv should not be rushed to the bargaining table with an aggressor.

Zelenskyy has said that Putin does not want peace and



has warned that Russia could attack other European countries if its invasion of Ukraine does not result in a clear defeat. Rubio declined Monday to specify concessions each side would have to make but said Kyiv would have difficulty reclaiming all of its lost territory. "The Russians can't conquer all of Ukraine, and obviously it'll be very difficult for Ukraine in any reasonable time period to sort of force the Russians back all the way to where they were in 2014," he told reporters. Russia holds around a fifth of Ukraine's territory, including Crimea which it annexed in 2014, and its troops are pressing on the eastern Donetsk region. U.S. and Russian officials met in the Saudi capital in February in a rare encounter between the former Cold War foes. The discussions were focused largely on restoring ties after a near-total freeze on official contact under former U.S. President Joe Biden, Trump's predecessor. The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here. Reporting by Daphne Psaleadakis and Pasha Magid; Writing by David Brunstrom Editing by Humeyra Pamuk and Cynthia Osterman Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles., opens new tab Daphne Psaleadakis is a foreign policy correspondent based in Washington, D.C., where she covers U.S. sanctions, Africa and the State Department. She has covered the rollout of U.S. sanctions on Russia after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Washington's efforts to enforce its sanctions and the U.S. response to the conflict in Ethiopia, among other issues.

## How potable water need not be wasted on BBMP parks and home gardens



GNS News Agency, March 12

According to a recent Indian Institute of Science-Bangaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (IISc-BWSSB) collaborative study, groundwater table on the outskirts of the city has fallen by at least 10 to 15 metres this year, and the situation may worsen during peak pre-monsoon months of March and April. This triggered the BWSSB to recently announce a ban on using drinking water for non-essential activities as the city is gearing up for a scorching summer. The ban, effective immediately, prohibits the use of potable water for gardening, car washing, swimming pools, and construction. The BWSSB said that violators would face a 5,000 fine, with an additional 7500 daily for repeat offences. Amid the BWSSB's ban, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) recently announced that it would be using non-potable water for all its parks around the city.

BBMP chief announced that the BBMP plans to acquire treated sewage water from the BWSSB to maintain its 1,280 parks across Bengaluru. A couple of days ago, during a meeting at the BBMP head office, the BBMP chief announced that the BBMP plans to acquire treated sewage water from the BWSSB to maintain its 1,280 parks across Bengaluru. Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath directed officials to submit a report on conditions of borewell in BBMP-managed parks and called for immediate water supply arrangements at parks that had partially working or dried up borewells.

"With summer approaching, adequate water supply is crucial for maintaining parks, lakes, and median plantations. Officials have been instructed to assess the exact water requirement, and the number of tankers needed and make the necessary arrangements at the earliest," Giri Nath said. Speaking to The Hindu, Chandrashekhar M.R., Deputy Director of BBMP's Horticulture Department, said that the BBMP is coordinating with the BWSSB to map parks to the nearest sewage treatment plants (STPs) for efficient water distribution. "The BWSSB has asked the BBMP's Horticulture Department to assess demand, and we will be giving the report to them within a week. Based on our report, the BWSSB will map parks to STPs and supply water. As of now we have identified around 120 parks that need immediate attention and mapping to STPs. However, we will have the complete data of parks that need supervision and connection to treated water within a week's time." Chandrashekhar added that along with the parks, the treated water from STPs will also be used to water plants, bushes and trees on medians and pavements on the roads.

## A more conciliatory approach



The AIADMK general secretary and Leader of the Opposition in the Tamil Nadu Assembly, Edappadi K. Palaniswami, who burnt his fingers during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections by not stitching up an alliance with several anti-DMK parties, seems to be changing tack regarding the BJP. This was evident last week in Attur in Salem district. A journalist asked whether the AIADMK was holding talks with the BJP for an alliance for the 2026 Assembly elections. Mr. Palaniswami said that the AIADMK's goal was to defeat its "only enemy", the DMK, and that the party was looking "to harvest all votes against the DMK..." Till recently, Mr. Palaniswami had maintained that the AIADMK would form a "formidable alliance" and fight the elections without any electoral understanding with the BJP, as it did in 2024. His party has so far been soft on the latest entrant to Tamil Nadu politics, the Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK), founded by actor Vijay.

The timing of the statement is significant. Just a day earlier, the bonhomie between leaders of the BJP and the AIADMK was on display at the wedding of the son of former Minister, S.P. Velumani, in Coimbatore. The BJP State president, K. Annamalai, and a host of the AIADMK's second-line leaders exchanged pleasantries. Mr. Palaniswami was absent then, but attended the reception on March 10. In fact, the AIADMK has cited the Annamalai factor as the main reason for the severance of ties with the BJP in September 2023. Its main grouse was that Mr. Annamalai had disrespected its "guiding lights", such as former Chief Ministers C.N. Annadurai and Jayalalithaa. Even Mr. Palaniswami had given the impression all along that he was unmindful of his party's disastrous performance last year, by holding that the AIADMK, with a 20.66% support base, had increased its vote share by about 1% point compared to 2019.

At the same time, certain sections of the AIADMK are reportedly unhappy with the way the party's affairs are being run. They are getting restless over the present approach of having no truck with erstwhile colleagues, including former coordinator O. Panneerselvam, and adopting a hard line towards the BJP. Mr. Velumani was the first to strike a different chord. A few days after the results of the Lok Sabha elections were announced last year, he claimed that had his party's alliance with the BJP continued, the alliance could have "easily won" 35-40 seats in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. It was another matter that he blamed Mr. Annamalai for the separation of ties between the two parties. In early July 2024, a group of senior leaders, including K.A. Sengottaiyan, Natham R. Viswanathan, Mr. Velumani, P. Thangamani, C. Ve. Shanmugam, and K.P. Anbalagan, met Mr. Palaniswami and impressed upon him the need to bring back all those who are out of the organisation. Even though Mr. Palaniswami denied that such a meeting took place, more than half the leaders confirmed to this journalist that it did happen. In October, the party's Kanniyakumari (East) district secretary, N. Thalavai Sundaram, flagged off a rally of the RSS in his part of Kanniyakumari district. Mr.

Rudraiah M., a regular walker at a park in B.T.M. Layout, said that it was an appreciable move. "Last summer we noticed that parks around the area went very dry. There was a shortage of water for many residents in the area, as borewells had dried up. Watering parks was not even an option due to the shortage. Using treated water will help save water for human consumption and also contribute to ground water levels," he said.

However, Raghu S., a resident of Thalgaatpura, cautioned that water must be treated rightly or could cause discomfort to regular walkers. "We used to use treated water for the garden area of our apartment for a long time. However, the stench was really bad, and we were forced to stop. This was because our STP could treat sewage water only to an extent. The BBMP or BWSSB must make sure the sewage water is treated well," he argued. While the BBMP is gearing up to use treated water in water parks, home gardeners from around the city said that they have been using innovative methods and using recycled water for their gardens. "We have found an innovative way to repurpose around 600 litres of RO wastewater daily which we use for gardening and other purposes, and have stuck to the method since," said Rohini Ghose, secretary of the Aristocrat Apartments association in Kasturinaagar. "Being an older apartment complex, installing new pipelines wasn't feasible, so we conducted a survey last summer and discovered that at least 70 of our 145 RO units could collectively generate about 10 litres of wastewater each day. To make collection easier, we provided residents with 10-litre jerry cans, which they fill and place outside their homes. The water is then transferred into two 200-litre drums fitted with taps and a hose for practical use in car washing, mopping, gardening, and even the swimming pool. We had a lab test confirming that our water quality, including RO reject water, meets WHO standards, allowing us to safely integrate it into our daily needs apart from drinking and cooking," she explained.

Sushma Rao a resident of Poornapragna Layout, said that her family uses used water for their gardens. "When we wash vegetables, fruits and non-greasy utensils without soap, we do not let the water go down the drain through the sink. Most of the water is collected in a tub, which is later used for watering plants in our garden. The water used for cooking or boiling rice, lentils or vegetables is also collected in the same tub, which is also rich in nutrients and helps the plants grow better," she explained. Sushma said that her family also has a rainwater harvesting system with two tanks, which helps them restore their ground water levels throughout the year, and there is hardly any shortage during the summer. Ananya Iyer, a resident of Jayanagar, shared how her family has found a practical way to use non-potable water for their garden. "We have placed a bucket near our kitchen sink to collect water used for rinsing vegetables, fruits, and pulses. Instead of letting it go down the drain, we store it in a large bucket and use a small pump to distribute it to our garden plants," she explained. Ananya added that they also collect RO reject water in a drum, which is later diluted and used for watering hardy plants like shrubs and trees. "Cauvery water is strictly used in our house only for drinking. These simple steps have helped us reduce wastage and keep our garden thriving without depending entirely on fresh water," she said.

Palaniswami promptly "relieved him temporarily" of the responsibilities of the posts of district and organisation secretary. A month later, Mr. Sundaram was re-inducted into the party after he regretted his conduct. In early February this year, eyebrows were raised in political circles when AIADMK veteran, Mr. Sengottaiyan, known for maintaining a low profile, stayed away from an event organised by farmers to honour Mr. Palaniswami in Annur, Coimbatore district, for the Avinashi-Athikadavu water project, which eventually took off in 2019. His criticism was that the invites and banners for the event did not feature the images of former Chief Ministers M.G. Ramachandran and Jayalalithaa, who were instrumental in keeping the project alive.

It was against this backdrop that Mr. Palaniswami called for the consolidation of anti-DMK forces and sounded conciliatory not only towards the BJP, but also those in his party who have been keen on reviving ties with the national party. Mr. Annamalai responded saying that there were parties "performing penance" to forge an alliance; Mr. Palaniswami rejected this. The AIADMK chief said he would firm up the alliance in six months, but is keeping everyone guessing on whether he would go along with the BJP or strike a deal with the TVK.

## Canada's Ontario Province slaps 25% tax increase on electricity exports to US

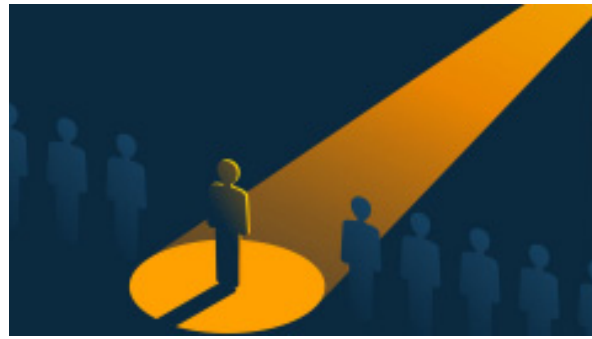
GNS News Agency, March 12

Ontario's premier, the leader of Canada's most populous Province, announced that effective on Monday (March 10, 2025) it is charging 25% more for electricity to 1.5 million Americans in response to U.S. President Donald Trump's trade war. Ontario provides electricity to Minnesota, New York and Michigan.

"I will not hesitate to increase this charge. If the United States escalates, I will not hesitate to shut the electricity off completely," Ontario Premier Doug Ford said at a news conference in Toronto. "Believe me when I say I do not want to do this. I feel terrible for the American people who didn't start this trade war. It's one person who is responsible, it's President Trump." Mr. Ford said Ontario's tariff would remain in place despite the one-month reprieve from Mr. Trump, noting a one-month pause means nothing but more uncertainty. Quebec is also considering taking similar measures with electricity exports to the U.S. Mr. Ford's office said the new market rules require any generator selling electricity to the U.S. to add a 25% surcharge. Ontario's government expects it to generate revenue of CA\$300,000 (\$208,000) to CA\$400,000 (\$277,000) per day, "which will be used to support Ontario workers, families and businesses".

The new surcharge is in addition to the federal government's initial CA\$30 billion (\$21 billion) worth of retaliatory tariffs have been applied on items like American orange juice, peanut butter, coffee, appliances, footwear, cosmetics, motorcycles and certain pulp and paper products. Mr. Trump launched a new trade war last week by imposing tariffs against Washington's three biggest trading partners, drawing immediate retaliation from Mexico, Canada and China and sending financial markets into a tailspin. Mr. Trump later said he has postponed 25% tariffs on many goods from Canada and Mexico for a month, amid

## The warp and weft of existentialism and svadharna



GNS News Agency, March 12

"It is certain that we cannot escape anguish, for we are anguish," Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in Being and Nothingness. It is as if he was reflecting on Arjuna's confusion at the outset of the Kurukshetra war. "I am confused about my dharma, and am besieged with anxiety and faint-heartedness," Arjuna beseeches Krishna.

But what exactly is this dharma? Traditionally, dharma is taken to mean life affirming "orders and customs", "virtues", "righteousness", "religious and moral duties" or "law". The term sanatana dharma has found a revival in recent history, and refers to that part of dharma which is eternal. The now famed dictum, "speak the truth, speak it pleasantly, do not speak truth unpleasantly, do not speak untruth pleasantly, that is the eternal dharma", rather succinctly captures the meaning of santana dharma. However, as with the English word 'law', the word 'dharma' has taken on different connotations. This is clear from terms such as laws of nature (prakritidharma), laws of war (yuddhadharma) etc. In this sense, the dharma of one individual in the context of his or her society is one's svadharna — the code that determines one's conduct in relation with oneself and with others. A more subtle explanation is expounded on in the Mahabharata. Therein it states, "it is said that dharma is that which is held; (and) held it holds the people. That which holds together; that is assuredly dharma." And yet in our age, plagued with zealotries of one sort or another, such a unifying vision hardly exists. In an age of fanatical revivalism, there has been a recrudescence of elaborate pageantry and ceremonial pomp. The undiscovered individual is squandered in the pursuit of a herdlike faith. How then is the individual to find oneself in this labyrinth of race, caste, creed, and faith?

To that end, the philosophy of existentialism propounded in the 19th and 20th centuries, provided a bulwark against the growing collectivist tendencies of that age. Danish theologian and philosopher Søren Kierkegaard was a pioneering influence in what came to be known as Christian Existentialism. "The key is to find a purpose, whatever it truly is that God wills me to do; it's crucial to find a truth which is true to me, to find the idea which I am willing to live and die for," Kierkegaard wrote. Reeling from the shock of the collective massacre of the Second World War, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone De Beauvoir et al conceptualised what is the bulk of the extant existentialist philosophy. Sartre in his seminal lecture, Existentialism is a Humanism, contends that, "This is humanism, because we remind man that there is no legislator but himself; that he himself, thus abandoned, must decide for himself." It is this self-legislating aspect of existentialism that finds its intersection with the philosophy of svadharna. "Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world — and defines himself afterwards," Sartre had said in Existentialism is a Humanism. The philosopher was speaking of the primacy of the existence of an individual before all the many layers of identity are superimposed atop. This notion is not new to Indian philosophical tradition. "In the beginning, this was but the self of a human form. It reflected and found nothing else but oneself. It first uttered, I AM", declares the Brihadaranakya Upanishad stipulating that identification always comes after existence. Similarly, "Put me in a system and you negate me. I am not a mathematical symbol. I am," Kierkegaard had said once.

The idea is a perennial one. To find oneself, one must see oneself as apart from the whole and one with the whole in similitude. To be one with all things, one must first identify oneself as separate from the whole; only when this illusion of separation is stultified can one discover oneself in a true sense. But what happens to one's choices in a society that is dictated by caste and class and creed, where social forces determine the position of the individual within its vast tapestry? Sartre anticipates this quandary, and responds to it in Dirty Hands: "I was not the one to invent lies: they were created in a society divided by class and each of us inherited lies when we were born." The ancient Indian seer Ashtavakra, describes this dilemma in the context not of class but of an age ridden by caste. "You are neither a brahmana nor of any other caste, nor are you at any stage

of life (asrama)" the boy sage stated in his Ashtavakra Gita. In a single declaration, all social conventions with regards to varna and jati are laid bare. It is the individual human who comes first and social conventions are creations of men at a later stage. "Freedom's possibility is not the ability to choose the good or the evil. The possibility is to be able," Kierkegaard writes in his The Concept of Anxiety. Referring to a little Parisian scene at a café where a waiter who is "playing at being a waiter in a café", Sartre declares "the waiter in the café cannot be immediately a café waiter in the sense that this inkwell is an inkwell". These words about the play acting of one's role in life, reflects Karna's proud declaration in the 7th century work Venisahanar, "charioteer or charioteer's son or this or that shall one be; God decides the clan of one's birth but my manhood is all by me." "When I chose the hardest path, I made my choice deliberately. A man is what he wills himself to be," Sartre writes in the play No Exit almost recalling Karna's declaration.

How is the individual to operate in this world of competing identities and contrasting ideologies. Nations, the state, caste, creed, religions, faith traditions, races, and even languages, all seem to pull the individual apart. "I cannot make liberty my aim unless I make that of others equally my aim," Sartre opines in Existentialism Is a Humanism. This notion that one's own liberation is bounded with the freedom of others, is an idea that finds a voice in the Bhagavad Gita. "Act must thou with a view to bring the world together" says Krishna in his oration to Arjuna.

A divine question As a Christian Existentialist, Kierkegaard declared in his Works of Love, "Only by loving God above all else can one love the neighbour. Love for the neighbour is therefore the eternal equality in loving." For Kierkegaard, the individual's actions are determined by the knowledge of oneself in his or her capacity to shape and reshape their own self-identity since that freedom is a brute fact originating from God. Nothing binds him to his relationships, and as such nothing binds him to his past actions. In this sense, Kierkegaard prelates to the type of Existentialism, particularly espoused in the early 1940s, which stood on the dictum that "existence precedes essence". However, the atheistic doctrines that ensconced Sartre and his peers denied the need for a God to provide this freedom. In Saint Genet, Sartre states: "For those who want to change life", 'to reinvent love,' God is nothing but a hindrance." Does such an atheistic position square with the doctrine of svadharna?

"He who has served and helped one poor man, seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees him only in temples," Swami Vivekananda had said in his Practical Vedanta. In The Age of Reason, Sartre states: "He was free, free in every way, free to behave like a fool or a machine, free to accept, free to refuse, free to equivocate; to marry, to give up the game, to drag this death weight about with him for years to come. He could do what he liked, no one had the right to advise him, there would be for him no Good or Evil unless he thought them into being." Ashtavakra renders the same sentiment in this fashion, "neither duty nor obligation exists for the yogin; to the one liberated in life, this life is all there is."

But leaving aside of all things predefined would be for most people a plunge into desperation. Our relationship with human society and its constituents, our personal history placed in the midst of world history, is the predicate for most people. Their identity as a whole, is defined by these external factors. Giving all that up, knowing that it is a superimposition onto one's real self, can be a crippling thought for most. "With despair, true optimism begins: the optimism of the man who expects nothing, who knows he has no rights and nothing coming to him, who rejoices in counting on himself alone and in acting alone for the good of all," Sartre wrote in On Existentialism: A Focus. "Better to die following one's own law than to die pursuing the law of another" is Krishna's dictum for those plagued with the angst of realising oneself being pulled apart by the various forces of identity.

Therefore, two somewhat dissonant concepts, the existentialist vision of freedom and the dharmic notion of liberation in life can exist, and possibly thrive, in harmony. As Sartre put it: "If I am an incarnation of freedom, it is directed at me; I am the source of it." The Chandogya Upanishad said: "What a person wills in his present, he becomes in the future. One should bear this in mind and will accordingly." Kierkegaard illustrates this becoming in a most refined way in his Either/Or, "When around one everything has become silent, solemn as a clear, starlit night, when the soul comes to be alone in the whole world, then before one there appears, not an extraordinary human being, but the eternal power itself, then the heavens open, and the I chooses itself or, more correctly, receives itself."

widespread fears of a broader trade war. Mr. Ford estimated it will add about CA\$100 (\$69) a month to the bills of each American affected. "It needs to end. Until these tariffs are off the table, until the threat of tariffs is gone for good, Ontario will not relent," Mr. Ford said.

Mr. Ford said Mr. Trump changes his mind every day, but if he continues to attack Canada he will do everything it takes to maximise the pain. "Republicans, at least the ones I speak to, do not agree with President Trump but they are too scared to go out there and say it publicly," Mr. Ford said. "It's a shame but we need to end this." Mr. Trump has urged U.S. automakers to move auto production from Canada and Mexico to the U.S. Last week Mr. Trump granted a one-month exemption to 25% tariffs on vehicles and auto parts traded through the North American trade agreement USMCA after speaking with leaders of automakers Ford, General Motors and Stellantis. Ontario is the auto sector hub of Canada. Premier Ford also noted Mr. Trump is threatening Canada with steel, aluminum and dairy tariffs. "I will do whatever it takes to maximum the pain against Americans," Mr. Ford said.

Stephen Lecce, Ontario's Minister of Energy and Electrification, said the U.S. needs Canada's power and it could impact other States as well as the three States often resale Ontario's electricity. "It is regrettable we are here," Mr. Lecce said. Mr. Trump's trade war and his talk of making Canada the 51st U.S. State have infuriated Canadians, who are booing the American anthem at NHL and NBA games. Some are cancelling trips south of the border, and many are avoiding buying American goods when they can. Mr. Ford's Progressive Conservative government just won re-election by standing up for Canada against Mr. Trump.

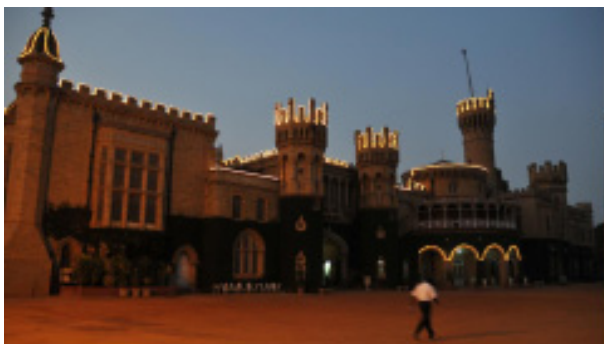
Mr. Ford said the Canadian Province of Alberta should agree to put an export tax on oil. Alberta provides 4.3 mil-



Ontario provides electricity to Minnesota, New York and Michigan; Quebec is also considering taking similar measures with electricity exports to the U.S.; about 60% of U.S. crude oil imports are from Canada, and 85% of U.S. electricity imports as well

lion barrels of oil a day to the U.S. "You want to talk about a Trump card. That will instantly change the game," Mr. Ford said. "I know the Americans. If all of a sudden their gas prices go up a dollar a gallon they will lose their minds." Despite Mr. Trump's claim that the U.S. doesn't need Canada, nearly a quarter of the oil America consumes per day comes from Canada. About 60% of U.S. crude oil imports are from Canada, and 85% of U.S. electricity imports as well. Canada is also the largest foreign supplier of steel, aluminum and uranium to the U.S. and has 34 critical minerals and metals that the Pentagon is eager for and investing for national security. Nearly CA\$3.6 billion (\$2.7 billion) worth of goods and services cross the border each day.

## How the Bangalore Palace (Utilisation and Regulation of Land) Bill will help Karnataka government bypass Supreme Court ruling



Even as the opposition BJP and Janata Dal (Secular) vociferously opposed it and called it an act of "political vendetta", the Karnataka Legislative Assembly passed the Bangalore Palace (Utilisation and Regulation of Land) Bill, 2025, on March 6. It was passed in the Legislative Council on March 10. The legislation arises out of the nearly a decade-old contempt case over the Bangalore Palace Grounds, which the Karnataka government has been fighting with the erstwhile royal family of Mysuru in the Supreme Court. Replacing an Ordinance that was passed earlier, the Bill reserves the Karnataka government's right to acquire or not acquire the Palace Grounds land for the widening of the traffic-choked Ballari Road and Jayamahal Road.

Apart from helping the State government address the contempt petition, the Bill is seen as a move to circumvent the top court's order that had earlier directed the government to compensate the Mysuru royal family with Transferable Development Rights (TDR) worth ₹3,400 crore for taking over the land.

The Bangalore Palace (Utilisation and Regulation of Land) Bill, 2025, empowers the State Government to utilise any portion of the Bangalore Palace for an infrastructure project, and to decide whether to go ahead with it, in whole or in part. If the government proceeds with the project, it will pay the required compensation to the claimants for the portion of palace land utilised. The Bill defines "claimants" as those who have a right, title, or interest in the Bangalore Palace or the open space around it. However, if the State decides to drop the project, it holds the right to restore possession of the part of the Bangalore Palace land which was sought. While it will bear the entire expenditure for this, it will not compensate the claimants.

The Bill states that for the purpose of compensation, the guidance value will be calculated as of November 21, 1996, according to section 8 and section 9 of the Bangalore

Palace (Acquisition and Transfer) Act, 1996. This is in direct contradiction to the apex court's directions to calculate the compensation according to the guidance value of Stamps and Registration Department, revised in 2023-24, under undersection 45B of the Karnataka Stamp Act, 1957. The Bill says that the compensation paid to the claimants will be proportionate to the extent of the land used and will include TDR. Granting the government absolute authority, the Bill states that whatever compensation is prescribed under it is final, and the claimants have no other right to compensation.

In the event of a dispute over compensation between claimants, the Bill gives power to the State government to deposit the compensation before the Commissioner, who will be appointed by the government. None of the claimants can withdraw any part of this compensation without furnishing a copy of the final order from a civil court to the Commissioner. In all matters of release of compensation to the rightful recipient among the legally embattled claimants, the decision of the Commissioner is absolute. In another measure that seeks to give the government full control over the property, the Bill protects officers of the State Government or its instrumentalities (such as BDA and BBMP) from proceedings, civil or criminal, or any punishment for an "action taken in good faith".

Why was the land acquired?

The Bangalore Palace Grounds, located in the heart of Bengaluru city, is spread across 472 acres and 16 guntas of expansive land. In 2009, the Karnataka government decided to notify 15 acres and 17.5 guntas (62,475 square metres) for widening stretches on the traffic-choked Ballari Road and Jayamahal Road. While the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) calculated the TDR value, Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) issued a notice to provide TDR compensation of ₹1 crore to the property owners — the erstwhile royal family of Mysuru. In July, 2024, the BDA took possession of the palace grounds and handed it over to the BBMP.

How was the valuation done?

Amid confusions that the TDR compensation would be 1,400 crore, the BBMP had clarified that the calculation was done based on the provisions under the Bangalore Palace (Acquisition and Transfer) Act, 1996, passed for the sole purpose of acquisition and transfer of the palace property. With the BDA fixing a rate of ₹120.68 per square metre (based on the 1996 value of the land), officials said that 472 acres of palace land would be worth 11 crore, and 15 acres would be valued at ₹60 lakh, and 1.5 times the

sum would come to around 1 crore. However, the erstwhile royal family decided to contest this "measly valuation" of the sprawling palace land, whose current market value is estimated to be around 100 crore per acre. Moreover, in June 2023, when the BBMP issued a notification for acquisition of a portion of palace land for widening of Jayamahal Road from Mehkri Circle to Cantonment Railway Station, it had mentioned the "market value of the land" and had not invoked the value of land as per the Palace Acquisition Act.

What were the Supreme Court's directions?

On December 10, 2024, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Mysuru royals, ordering Karnataka government to issue fresh TDR as per the guidance value of adjoining lands, this time in line with the Karnataka Stamps Act, 1957.

The Supreme Court fixed the value of TDR for Ballari Road at ₹2,83,500/sqm and ₹2,04,000/sqm for Jayamahal Road as per the prevailing guidance value under Section 45B of Karnataka Stamp Act, 1957. Under the TDR, the compensation is to be 1.5 times the market value or the guidance value, whichever is higher. This took the total value of the TDR to an estimated 3,011.66 crore.

What is the State government's stand?

Following the setback, the Karnataka government initially decided to drop the proposal to acquire the palace land, arguing that the TDR value fixed by the apex court had made the acquisition financially unviable. "The Supreme Court rate for the TDR to be given for land acquisition is expected to cause financial burden on the State exchequer and will have adverse impact on financial discipline," a Karnataka Cabinet note said. The Cabinet also felt that financially unviable projects are against public interest and public policy. Six weeks later, on January, 2025, the State government promulgated the Bangalore Palace (Utilisation and Regulation of Land) Ordinance, 2025. Taking a stern view of the State government's changing stands, the Supreme Court on February 27 yet again asked the Karnataka government to deposit with it the TDR certificates of over ₹3,000 crore within 10 days. Days later, even as the Bangalore Palace (Utilisation and Regulation of Land) Bill was tabled and later passed in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly during the Budget session, the Karnataka Cabinet also decided to deposit TDR certificates worth ₹3,400 crore with the Supreme Court. However, sources said, it will be done with a request to the Supreme Court to keep the TDR certificates with it for now and take a call on whether to pay this to the royal family, based on the outcome of the petition filed before it over ownership of Bengaluru Palace Grounds.

## Two of three Indian nationals executed in UAE buried, says MEA

The two Indian nationals executed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in February for murder were buried in Abu Dhabi on Thursday (March 6, 2025). A third Indian national was also executed the same month, the UAE has informed India. Officials of the Indian Embassy in the UAE were present at the burial of Shahzadi Khan of Uttar Pradesh and Mohammed Rinash Arangilottu of Kerala. The third Indian, Muraleedharan Perumthatta Valapppil, also from Kerala, was convicted of murdering an Indian national. His last rites are awaited.

Shahzadi Khan's family members could not attend her burial but "authorised representatives" of the family were present, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. Arangilottu's family members were present, it added. While Khan was executed after being accused of murdering a child, Arangilottu was convicted of killing an Emirati national. Earlier on Monday (March 3, 2025), the MEA informed the Delhi High Court that 33-year-old Khan was executed on February 15, which the UAE authorities conveyed to the Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi on February 28. The family of Khan was subsequently informed by the MEA about the execution. Her case drew attention because of the nature of the crime that she was accused of. Sources said she was accused of murdering the infant of an Indian couple, Nazia and Faiz, who were also her employers. The Hindu reported on Thursday (March 6, 2025) that her family had written to the MEA seeking details of the legal options that were explored to save her from being executed. In response to The Hindu, official sources said the Indian Embassy had reached out to Khan and tried "all options within the legal framework of the UAE" to get a mercy petition for Khan. This did not succeed as her employer had refused to support such a plea. The execution of three Indians within a month is being considered a rare occurrence in the Gulf where a large number of Indian nationals are employed both as white-collar and blue-collar workers. The incidents in the UAE have come weeks after the case of Nimisha Priya of Kerala hit the headlines. Nimisha Priya is on death row in Yemen after being convicted of murdering and dismembering her abusive employer. The death sentence in her case has not been carried out till now as there are doubts over which one of the contesting governments in the war-torn country passed the sentence. On January 1, the Embassy of Yemen in Delhi said the case was being handled by the Houthi militia and that the Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council of the Republic of Yemen Rashad Al-Alimi had not "ratified" the death sentence.

## India, Mauritius and a visit to deepen long-standing ties

In our current era of geopolitical churn and uncertainty, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Mauritius (March 11-12, 2025), will be a celebration of the deep and long-standing ties between the two countries. Mr. Modi had last visited the island country in 2015, but on this occasion, he will be the guest of honour at its Independence Day celebrations on March 12. India-Mauritius relations have enjoyed political consensus, irrespective of the party in power in either country. Mauritius has a new government in power led by Navinchandra Ramgoolam of the Labour Party, whose coalition won a landslide victory in the elections held in November last year. While India-Mauritius relations will continue to be positive and stable, the visit provides an opportunity for Mr. Modi to establish a personal connect with Mr. Ramgoolam and reassure him of India's continuing support to the island's security and prosperity. It was during the latter half of my tenure as India's High Commissioner to Mauritius (1992-97) that Mr. Ramgoolam was Prime Minister. India-Mauritius relations saw significant growth under his leadership and he was particularly sensitive to India's security concerns. I have no doubt that he will prove to be a trusted partner for India and will open new vistas for our cooperation.

Mr. Ramgoolam's father, Sir Seewosagur Ramgoolam, had led the struggle for his country's independence and was its first Prime Minister. Not many people know that Sir Seewosagur worked closely with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose during Bose's stay in Britain between 1919-21. They were part of the Indian students' movement in London working for Indian independence. Ramgoolam did the proof-reading for Bose's famous work, The Indian Struggle, and received an autographed copy in appreciation.

There are strong people-to-people ties between the two countries. Nearly 70% of the population of Mauritius is of Indian origin, being the descendants of Indian indentured labour who were brought by the colonial rulers to work on sugar plantations. About 50% trace their ancestry to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and still speak the Bhojपुरi dialect. There are smaller communities of Tamil-, Telugu-, and Marathi-speaking communities who have preserved their languages and traditional culture. Mauritius appears like a microcosm of India. However, the country is home to other ethnic groups including African and mixed populations, which create its proud rainbow culture. Though only 2% of the population, the island's French population is wealthy and influential, still owning its large sugar plantations, dominating its banking and financial sector and other commercial business. The challenge for India's diplomats lies in maintaining links with all segments of the Mauritian population, even while celebrating the kinship and cultural ties that exist with its India-origin population. India has done much to nourish the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Indian-origin population. In 1976, it inaugurated the Mahatma Gandhi Institute as a premier institution for promoting Indian languages and culture. The Indian Cultural Centre in Mauritius is the largest of anywhere in the world and is one of the most active. The island hosts the World Hindi Secretariat that is supported by India. India-Mauritius bilateral trade has expanded rapidly over the past few years, reaching \$554 million in 2022-23. Mauritius is a part of the African Union and has preferential trade agreements with African countries. It is bilingual, with most of its citizens being fluent in English and French. With its well-developed finance and banking sector and reliable laws and regulations, Mauritius has become a preferred platform for doing business with Africa particularly Francophone Africa. Thanks to a favourable Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with India, Mauritius is also a major channel for foreign investment into India. Mauritius has emerged as a successful international financial centre, mainly on the back of the DTAA. Mauritius is the sentinel of the western Indian Ocean and maritime security cooperation between our two countries is critical to enhancing India's maritime security. The Colombo Security Conclave brings together India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Mauritius and Bangladesh to work together to make this ocean space safe and secure.

## Study finds high rates of polypharmacy, self-medication among older adults in India

A cross-sectional study conducted among 600 older adults across six Indian cities has found that the prevalence of polypharmacy and unsafe self-medication is high in this population. Polypharmacy refers to the intake of five or more medications per day. Among those who self-medicated, a majority lacked knowledge about self-medication, and did not understand the risks associated with it, the study found. In the study - "Polypharmacy and self-medication among older adults in Indian urban communities - a cross-sectional study" - published in Scientific Reports, researchers Das, S., Gnanavel, P., Smanla, S. et al. from the Department of Global Public Health, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden, the Indian Council of Medical Research - Centre for Aging and Mental Health, Kolkata and a number of medical institutions including the Department of Community Medicine, Government Medical College, Omandurar Government Estate, Chennai, have taken a close look at the medication usage and self-medication practices among older adults in New Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Ujjain, Patna and Guwahati.

A total of 100 older adults were recruited in each city. Of the 600, 477 were aged 60 to 80 years and 123 were the age of 80. More than half of them (353), were women. There were three or more co-morbid conditions in 423 of these individuals. The researchers used an updated screening tool, the Older Persons' Prescriptions and Screening Tool to Alert to Right Treatment (STOPP-START) criteria to identify potentially inappropriate medications (PIM) and potential prescribing omissions (PPO) respectively.

The study found that the prevalence of polypharmacy was 33.7% with significant associations to multiple comorbidities, recent transition of care and recent hospitalisation. A total of 314 individuals were taking one to four oral allopathic medicines (solid formulations) daily. The highest prevalence of polypharmacy was found in Guwahati (57%), while Ujjain had the lowest prevalence (11.7%). A total of 2,741 medicines were prescribed to all individuals. The most common were antihypertensive medicines followed by antidiabetic medicines, hypolipidemic medicines, calcium supplements and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, the study said. The study found that 25.2% of the individuals used at least one fixed-drug combination (solid oral formulations). The most common combinations were antihypertensive and antidiabetic fixed-drug combinations.

## Are unique electoral ID numbers being duplicated? | Explained

The story so far: On February 27, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged that the ruling BJP was "with the blessings of Election Commission of India [EC]" including voters from other States in the West Bengal voters' list. She cited multiple voters with the same Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) numbers. The EC responded that irrespective of the EPIC number, a person can cast a vote only at their designated polling stations in their respective States or UTs. The poll body said it would remove these duplications. The Trinamool Congress rejected the clarification stating that it was a "cover-up".

What is an EPIC card?

The EPIC number is a 10-digit voter ID card number issued by the EC to each voter. The number is a unique alphanumeric code assigned to each registered elector to prevent impersonation. It was introduced in 1993 under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, to enhance electoral transparency. It is assigned via the ERONET digital platform when a new voter registers, after which it is linked to State and constituency data to ensure regional uniqueness. The ERONET is a web-based platform which was developed for election officials, in multiple languages and scripts, to handle all processes pertaining to registration, migration, and deletion of names from electoral rolls. The platform automates the process of electoral roll management.



The researchers found the proportion of prescriptions with PIM and PPO were 28.8% and 20.3% respectively. The highest prevalence of PIM use - 46.2% - was attributed to medications prescribed without evidence-based clinical indications and those prescribed beyond the recommended duration. A total of 164 persons were using concomitant traditional and complementary medicines mostly for chronic conditions. Of these, 80 persons used certain traditional and complementary solid oral formulations without names or labels. In fact, the authors observed that the presence of unlabelled solid oral formulations among traditional medications raised concerns regarding patient safety and undermined the importance of regulatory oversight and adherence to quality standards in healthcare delivery. The prevalence of self-medication was 19.7%, associated with factors, such as staying alone, multiple comorbidities and recent hospitalisations. The most common medicines that were self-medicated were nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (59%) followed by paracetamol (42.4%) and antibiotics for upper respiratory tract infection and diarrhoea (33.9%).

A lack of awareness and unsafe practices were found among self-medicking individuals. Among those who self-medicated, 65.3% lacked knowledge of self-medication, 50% did not comprehend the risks and 40.7% reported unsafe self-medication practices. These findings emphasise the necessity for interventions to promote safe medication use in older adults, the authors said, stressing the need to address the issue by raising awareness and establishing services for medication reconciliation, review and feedback to improve medication safety and management in them.

What was the EC's response?

The Commission said that the allotment of identical EPIC numbers to some voters from different States or UTs was due to the decentralised and manual mechanism being followed prior to shifting the electoral roll database of all States/UTs to the ERONET platform. "

This resulted in certain State/UT CEO offices using the same EPIC alphanumeric series and leaving a scope for the possibility of duplicate EPIC numbers being allotted to electors in different Assembly Constituencies in different States/UTs. However, it clarified that while EPIC numbers of some of the electors may be identical, the other details including demographic details, constituency and polling booth are different for voters with the same EPIC number.

It said that irrespective of the EPIC number, an elector can cast a vote only at their designated polling station in their respective constituency in their State/UT where they are enrolled in the electoral roll and nowhere else. In order to allay any apprehensions, the EC said that it would ensure allotment of unique EPIC numbers to registered electors. "Any case of duplicate EPIC number will be rectified by allotting a unique EPIC number. The ERONET 2.0 platform will be updated to aid and assist in this process".

## The legacy of Begum Rokeya and Sakhawat Memorial Girls School in Kolkata

Nestled in an upscale Kolkata neighbourhood, Lord Sinha Road; off Park Street is the school of Begum Rokeya's dreams. Sakhawat Memorial Girls School stands out in a neighbourhood famous for premium private schools such as La Martiniere, Shri Shikshayatan, Birla High School and St. Xaviers. This government school that charges fees of ₹250/month for primary sections and ₹290/month for secondary sections stands tall on its founder's vision to empower women through education so they can participate in society as full citizens.

Begum Rokeya is a 20th century pioneer in education and emancipation of Muslim women in the subcontinent and the writer of the much revered and pathbreaking feminist novel- Sultana's Dream (1905). Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain was born in 1880 in Rangpur (now in Bangladesh) to a well off but orthodox Bengali Muslim family. The societal norms of the era allowed girls to have religious education via learning only Arabic and Persian. It deprived girls of basic formal education. Rokeya was helped by her sister Karimunnesa and brother Ibrahim Saber who taught her English and Bengali. She was married at the age of 16 to a much older man named Khan Bahadur Sakhawat Hossain who was supportive of furthering her studies. He passed away 10 years into their marriage but he did leave behind a substantial amount of funds for Rokeya to pursue her dream of opening a girls school.

Five months after the death of her husband, Rokeya started a high school in Bhagalpur. She named it after him - Sakhawat Memorial Girls High School. Disputes with her in-laws made her shift the school to Kolkata. The school had a rocky start with few willing to take admission in it. Rokeya started a door-to-door campaign to encourage students to join her school but was met with a lot of opposition and reluctance. However, after much persuasion, the first batch commenced with nine girls. Rokeya Begum ran the school for some 24 years until she passed away. Despite the initial hesitation of parents and several other obstacles, the school has been providing education to girls for more than 100 years. The school has grown to be amongst the best girls schools in the region. It has some 1,300 students now, from Kindergarten to Class 12.

The school offers admission into its Pre-Primary section from the age of 6 and has Class 1-12. Its curriculum is affiliated to WBSE (West Bengal Board of Secondary Education) and WBCHSE (West Bengal Council for Higher Secondary Education). Two mediums of instruction are offered in parallel: Bengali and Urdu running parallel from Pre-Primary to the Secondary level. The school has two mediums of instruction in the Higher Secondary level as well. Science subjects are taught in both Bengali and English medium in the H.S level. The Bengali/Urdu student ratio is 70 to 30. In accordance with the vision and rich literary background of Begum Rokeya, the school houses a well stacked library adorned with more than 2,000 books and journals. Two large buildings and a small but lush playground are the school's hallmarks. The classrooms are clean and airy; there are a few extra rooms for co-curricular activities and workshops. Begum Rokeya is a 20th century pioneer in education and emancipation of Muslim women in the subcontinent and the writer of the much revered and pathbreaking feminist novel- Sultana's Dream (1905). Begum Rokeya is a 20th century pioneer in education and emancipation of Muslim women in the subcontinent and the writer of the much revered and pathbreaking feminist novel- Sultana's Dream (1905). To motivate students to take part in community service the school runs an Eco club and a Consumer club. A Career Hub and a yearly career fair are some features. Being a state government school, its students are beneficiaries of all state sponsored programmes i.e Mid Day Meals, Free books and uniform. Sakhawat Memorial Government Girls' High School has been registered under "Global Schools" — a part of the UK-India Educational Research Initiative programme (UKIERI), launched by The British Council of India, in collaboration with the government of India and the UK government.



## Over six lakh cases identified under 100-day TB control campaign: Health Ministry data



X-ray screening to high-risk populations, such as individuals with diabetes, smokers, and people living with HIV. By deploying ultraportable hand-held X-ray units and conducting door-to-door screenings in congregate settings, both symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals were tested. Positive X-ray results were then confirmed with NAAT (an advanced diagnostic test), leading to the identification of multiple asymptomatic TB patients," explained a senior Health Ministry official.

India has the world's largest TB epidemic and continues to be a major public health problem. According to World Health Organization (WHO), the country's TB incidence has declined by 17.7% from 2015 to 2023. This is more than double the global average decline of 8.3%. India's TB mortality rate has also declined by 18% during the same period. TB is a communicable disease that is a major cause of mortality and morbidity. It is transmitted from person to person via droplets from the throat and lungs of people with the active respiratory disease. Speaking about the nutritional support given to TB patients, the official said that India is one of the few countries to have universal social support systems for TB patients and under the Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana, ₹3,697 crore have been disbursed to 1.24 crore TB patients since April 2018. The programme is a monthly nutrition support scheme each notified TB patient is entitled to. In October 2024, recognising the role nutrition plays in reducing mortality and improving treatment outcomes, the Government of India doubled monthly disbursements under the Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana from ₹500 to ₹1,000 per month. The ambit of the Ni-kshay Mitra scheme (a voluntary programme that allows individuals and organisations to provide additional nutrition support during TB treatment) was expanded to cover not just TB patients, but their family members as well.

Speaking about the nutritional support given to TB patients, a Health Ministry official said that India is one of the few countries to have universal social support systems for TB patients and under the Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana, ₹3,697 crore have been disbursed to 1.24 crore TB patients since April 2018. File picture for representation. Speaking about the nutritional support given to TB patients, a Health Ministry official said that India is one of the few countries to have universal social support systems for TB patients and under the Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana, ₹3,697 crore have been disbursed to 1.24 crore TB patients since April 2018. File picture for representation.

Over 6.1 lakh tuberculosis patients across the country have been notified of which 4.3 lakh patients were diagnosed from the 455 intervention districts as part of Union Health Ministry's 100-day intensified TB elimination campaign launched on December 7, last year in 33 States and Union Territories to screen and test for TB among people belonging to the vulnerable or high-risk groups. "The 100-day intensified TB-Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan is an outcome of a new strategy for early TB identification involving offering

## Flawed food regulations fuel the obesity crisis

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to tackle obesity and the 2025 Economic Survey's recommendation of imposing a 'health tax' on ultra-processed foods (UPFs) to curb their consumption are both laudable. But these efforts risk being derailed by India's ambiguous, industry-friendly, and subjective food marketing regulations. In India, one in four adult men and women are obese and one in four adults are either diabetic or pre-diabetic (National Family Health Survey-5). This underlines the urgency of the problem. Right to Information responses and official communications expose how various Ministries and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) have not been able to implement the labelling or advertising regulations planned in 2017 and continue to rely on regulations that are ambiguous and subjective in nature. No wonder there are so many advertisements of UPFs, and no front-of-pack labels yet.

In September 2022, the FSSAI proposed the Indian Nutrition Rating, a 'health star' labelling system modelled on Australia's not-so-successful framework, which was developed by a food industry technologist. In this system, a four star means that the food is 'least healthy' and 5 stars means that it qualifies as 'healthiest'. Right to Information responses confirm that the FSSAI relied on an IIM Ahmedabad study to justify the rating system — a study it never critically evaluated. Worse, food industry representatives dominated key stakeholder meetings and members of the scientific panel were sidelined. The whole process sided with industry, as a member of the stakeholder group pointed out. Moreover, the FSSAI ignored its own 2021 draft regulations indicating 'traffic light' colour-coded and mandatory warning labels and instead bowed down to industry lobbying.

The Indian Nutrition Rating system is flawed because the stars, at best, can mislead consumers by creating a health halo on all pre-packaged unhealthy food products. The system allows foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) and UPFs, such as biscuits, flaunt two stars on the packet when they might otherwise have four warning signals. Similarly, a soft drink that should have a high warning in sugar instead gets two stars. Corn flakes, which is high in sugar and sodium, gets 3 stars. This means that the system allows all these foods to be some level of healthy. Globally, warning labels that say the product is high in sugar/salt or bad fats allow consumers to know the true nature of the product and make a choice. Most of the front-of-pack labels in use today are warning labels. For instance, Chile's black 'high in' labels reduced consumption of UPFs by 24%. The fix is therefore to ensure that front-of-pack labels are notified soon and replace stars with mandatory 'high in' warnings on HFSS foods and UPFs, based on the World Health Organization's guidelines or the National Institute of Nutrition's Dietary Guideline for Indians. India has four laws to curb misleading advertising for HFSS/UPFs but none of them is effective, according to reports and data. The National Multisectoral Action Plan, 2017, called for an amendment to these laws to include restrictions on advertisements on HFSS foods, but no regulatory action has been taken so



far.

Existing regulations are ambiguous and subjective. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, defines as 'misleading' any product or service that deliberately conceals important information. If we interpret important information to be about fat/sugar or salt, FSSAI does not agree. FSS regulations nowhere specify that nutritional information of a food product must be provided in the advertisement. This means that a cola drink can target people, especially children and youth, without disclosing that the drink contains 9-10 teaspoons of sugar per bottle. FSS regulations are yet to provide a definition of HFSS or UPFs and thresholds beyond which these will be regulated. The result is continued freedom to advertise unhealthy addictive food products across media. This puts people at risk of obesity and diabetes. Studies show that if regulations banning junk foods are implemented, it would cut the rate of childhood obesity significantly.

The path forwardThe Economic Survey rightly demands stringent front-of-pack labels and stricter marketing curbs. To achieve this, India needs to take the following steps. First, it needs to scrap the Indian Nutrition Rating system and adopt warning labels. Second, there must be clear sugar/salt/fat limits for HFSS foods. The World Health Organization's SEARO guidelines and the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Nutrition guidelines offer a template. Third, advertising loopholes need to be closed through the amendment of existing laws or the enactment of a new one harmonising all laws under a unified UPF/HFSS advertisement ban. Fourth, the government could consider launching a campaign on the risks of UPFs in all languages. India's obesity crisis is not a public failure but a policy failure. The Economic Survey offers a road map to rectify this. Without urgent action, the plan to halt obesity by 2025 will not be successful. The Prime Minister's vision of a healthy India demands more than rhetoric; India needs a regulatory approach that does not sacrifice children's health for corporate profit. The suggestions in the Economic Survey can break the cycle to achieve the Prime Minister's vision. It is for the policy makers to show urgency and will. Dr. Arun Gupta, paediatrician, public health expert, and convenor of the Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest. He is a former member of the PM's Council on India's Nutritional Challenges

## Telangana facing a low birth weight epidemic, says expert

Telangana is grappling with a 'low birth weight epidemic', a crisis that places children at a severe disadvantage from the moment they are born, UNICEF's Chief of Field Office for Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, Zelalem Taffesse, said. Speaking at the fifth annual day celebration of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Bibingar he highlighted the alarming levels of childhood malnutrition and stunting in the State, despite its overall economic progress.

"One out of three children under five in Telangana is stunted. That is a significant burden of malnutrition. Worse still, severe acute malnutrition is prevalent even among infants under



six months," Mr. Taffesse said, addressing an audience largely composed of medical professionals. The high incidence of low birth weight, he stressed, means that many children are starting life at a disadvantage, with increased risks of se-

vere malnutrition and associated health complications.

Mr. Taffesse underscored the stark disparities within the State, stating: "Telangana is not Hyderabad, and Hyderabad is not Telangana. Within affluence, there are pockets

where communities do not have the same access." While Hyderabad represents rapid urbanisation and economic growth, many rural and marginalised communities remain deprived of essential healthcare, nutrition, and sanitation services.

## Sun Pharma to acquire Nasdaq-listed oncology firm Checkpoint Therapeutics for \$335 million



Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd and Nasdaq-listed Checkpoint Therapeutics, Inc. have announced that they have entered into an agreement by which Sun Pharma will acquire Checkpoint, an immunotherapy and targeted oncology company. Checkpoint is a commercial-stage company focused on developing novel treatments for patients with solid tumor cancers.

It has received approval from the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) for UNLOXCYT™ (cosibelimab-ipd) for the treatment of adults with metastatic cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma (cSCC) or locally advanced cSCC who are not candidates for curative surgery or curative radiation. Dilip Shanghvi, Chairman & Managing Director of Sun Pharma, said, "Combining UNLOXCYT, an FDA-approved anti-PD-L1 treatment for advanced cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma, with Sun Pharma's global presence means patients with cSCC may soon have access to an important, new treatment option." "The acquisition further bolsters our innovative portfolio in onco-derm therapy."

"I am proud of the dedication and passion of our team at Checkpoint that allowed us to achieve the first and only FDA-approved anti-PD-L1 treatment for patients with advanced cSCC, and we are excited to enter this transaction with Sun Pharma as the next step to bringing UNLOXCYT to cSCC patients in need of a differentiated immunotherapy treatment option," said James Oliviero, President and Chief

Executive Officer of Checkpoint in a statement. "Sun Pharma is aligned with Checkpoint's commitment to improving the lives of skin cancer patients, and I believe this transaction will maximize value for our stockholders and provide accelerated access to UNLOXCYT in the United States, Europe and other markets worldwide," he said. Upon completion of the transaction, Sun Pharma will acquire all outstanding shares of Checkpoint and Checkpoint stockholders will receive, for each share of common stock they hold, an upfront cash payment of \$4.10, without interest, and a non-transferable contingent value right (CVR) entitling the stockholder to receive up to an additional \$0.70 in cash, without interest, if cosibelimab is approved prior to certain deadlines in the European Union pursuant to the centralized approval procedure or in Germany, France, Italy, Spain or the United Kingdom, subject to the terms and conditions in the contingent value rights agreement. The upfront cash payment of \$4.10 per share of common stock represents a premium of approximately 66.0% to Checkpoint's closing share price on March 7, 2025, the last trading day prior to today's announcement, the companies said in a joint statement.

In connection with the transaction, Checkpoint, Sun Pharma and Fortress Biotech, Inc., Checkpoint's controlling stockholder have entered into a royalty agreement, under which following the closing of the transaction Fortress would be entitled to receive royalty payments based on future sales of cosibelimab during a specified term, in lieu of royalty rights that were granted to Fortress in connection with its founding of Checkpoint. The transaction is expected to be completed in the second calendar quarter of 2025. For the nine-month period ending September 2024, Checkpoint reported \$0.04 million in revenue and a net loss of \$27.3 million. The R&D expense for the nine-month period was \$19.3 million. As of September 30, 2024, Checkpoint had a cash balance of \$4.7 million, outstanding accounts payable and accrued expenses of \$15.6 million, and outstanding accounts payable and accrued expenses related party of \$2.0 million.

## Here's what happens if you combine apple cider vinegar with diabetes medication

Apple Cider Vinegar (ACV) is often hailed for its potential to help lose weight. Many also claim that it can regulate blood sugar levels, making it an attractive option for individuals with diabetes. However, experts state that its use alongside diabetes medications should be approached with caution due to possible interactions. ACV is made by fermenting apple juice. "The fermentation process converts the sugars in the apple juice into alcohol, and then further fermentation transforms the alcohol into acetic acid, the main active component in vinegar," said Dr Swatee Sandhan, senior dietician, Jupiter Hospital Baner, Pune, adding that it is "rich in minerals, vitamins and beneficial compounds like polyphenols and antioxidants."

Dr Hiran S. Reddy, consultant physician, diabetologist and critical care specialist, Gleneagles Hospital, Lakdi ka Pul, Hyderabad, mentioned that studies suggest ACV may enhance insulin sensitivity and reduce post-meal blood sugar spikes. "While this can be beneficial, combining ACV with diabetes medications, such as insulin or oral hypoglycemics, can increase the risk of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), which is a potentially dangerous condition that can cause dizziness, confusion, or fainting," Dr Reddy told indianexpress.com. Furthermore, Dr Reddy said that excessive consumption of ACV can lead to gastrointestinal issues, such as nausea or delayed gastric emptying, which might impact how quickly glucose enters the bloodstream.



"This can affect the timing and efficacy of diabetes medications," said Dr Reddy. For individuals considering ACV, it is crucial to maintain moderation—typically, one to two teaspoons diluted in water daily—and consult a healthcare provider before incorporating it into their regimen. "A doctor can provide personalised advice, considering the specific medications being used and the individual's overall health profile," said Dr Reddy. Stressing that there is little scientific evidence to support its benefits, Sandhan said: "ACV won't cure diabetes, but it may moderately lower blood glucose levels. It won't take the place of any medications for diabetes." While ACV has its benefits, managing diabetes effectively requires a holistic approach, including a balanced diet, regular exercise, and medical supervision.

## How regular bedtime habits are reshaping sleep quality in India

In the hustle of modern Indian life, a silent epidemic of sleep disturbance is taking its toll — but new research suggests a solution might be simpler than we think. According to a recent YouGov and Amazon Alexa study released just ahead of World Sleep Day (March 14), more than half of Indians experience sleep-related issues when they don't follow consistent bedtime routines.

The survey shows 53% of respondents experience sleep-related issues when not following a consistent bedtime routine. It indicates that adults actively follow bedtime routines — with 54% of respondents having seen a noticeable improvement in sleep when following a regular sleep routine. According to the findings, 52% of surveyed respondents follow a consistent bedtime and pre-sleep habits. The survey shows that 86% of those surveyed start their bedtime routine 8 PM onwards every day, with 53% choosing to begin their routine after 10:30pm.

The most common activities that form part of bedtime routines include watching video content (63%), connecting with family and friends (59%), listening to podcasts, music, or audiobooks (58%), and scrolling through social media apps (57%). Households with only couples rank highest in following these activities as part of their bedtime routine, amongst all other household types. Significantly, one in two respondents use voice assistants to set up their sleep routines — with more people between 35-45 years using voice assistants than those aged between 25-34 years.

Voice assistants becoming key to bedtime routines "Sleep routines are gaining popularity, and what's noteworthy is that smart technologies, especially voice assistants like Alexa, are increasingly becoming valuable in helping people follow their bedtime routines. Personalised voice AI experiences are emerging as practical alternatives to handheld screen devices before bedtime. Whether playing meditation sessions or relaxing sounds, listening to audiobooks or music, setting reminders and alarms, or controlling smart devices to adjust the room's sleep environment, people are finding innovative ways to use Alexa as part of their bedtime routines. Alexa users can easily set up their bedtime routine through the Alexa app, customising it to their specific needs and preferences," says Teena Sidana, country manager, Alexa India.

Families with children lead this trend, with households containing couples and kids ranking highest in voice assistant adoption for bedtime routines. Across all demographics, 45% use voice interfaces for accessing relaxing content like music and podcasts, 23% for setting reminders and alarms, and 22% for controlling smart home devices like bedroom lighting, automated curtains and AC temperature. Growing interest in wellness activities before

While digital consumption dominates bedtime



In the hustle of modern Indian life, a silent epidemic of sleep disturbance is taking its toll — but new research suggests a solution might be simpler than we think. According to a recent YouGov and Amazon Alexa study released just ahead of World Sleep Day (March 14), more than half of Indians experience sleep-related issues when they don't follow consistent bedtime routines.

behaviour, the study reveals evolving aspirations toward more wellness-focused activities. Over half of respondents expressed interest in incorporating meditation, journaling, light exercise, and skincare routines into their pre-sleep regimens. Couples with and without children showed particular enthusiasm for mindfulness practices, with 32% wanting to add meditation and journaling to their nighttime rituals. Meanwhile, 34% of respondents indicated interest in enjoying relaxing beverages or light snacks before bed — though sleep experts generally caution against heavy consumption too close to bedtime. Changing preferences in pre-sleep activities The study also notes that about 21% currently prefer eating and snacking before bedtime. Respondents are becoming more interested in this habit, with 34% wanting to have a relaxing beverage or snack before bedtime. Other activities on sleep routine wish lists include brain games, puzzles, and reading as alternatives to phone use, as well as unwinding with music, podcasts, and news updates. Interestingly, a segment of 11% who were contrarian stated they would prefer "doing nothing" over following any structured sleep routine. For those struggling with sleep issues, the message from this research seems clear: consistency matters, and finding the right set of wind-down activities — whether tech-focused or unplugged — could be the key to more restful nights.

## Kisan Credit Card bad loans rise by 42% in four years



attribute the rise in defaults in the KCC segment of scheduled commercial banks to various factors including inability of farmers to repay loans due to weather-related damages to crops, lack of awareness among farmers about repayment timelines, delay in payments due to exigencies related to personal household requirement, and weak loan recovery mechanism for banks. "NPAs (amount wise) are high (in KCC loans). Among all other agriculture loans offered by banks, such as tractor or food and agri-processing loans, the highest amount of delinquencies are seen in the KCC segment," said a banker.

Defaults are higher in the KCC segment where the amount borrowed is much lower compared to other agricultural loans, and so, repayment becomes the last priority for a farmer. Since agriculture is subject to the vagaries of weather, any natural calamity can affect crops. In such cases, inadequate crop insurance or no crop insurance, owing to higher premium, also impacts farmers' loan repayment capabilities. Besides, expectations of farm loan waiver ahead of any state election often distorts the repayment behaviour of farmers in hope of some relief from the government, bankers said. When it comes to recovery of agricultural loans, even banks go slow as any harsh step could stir up a hornet's nest, since it becomes a political subject. "The recovery measures which banks can adopt (in KCC loans) are also limited compared to other retail loans. In case of a housing or an SME loan, the moment it becomes an NPA, banks can recover loans by selling the property taken as collateral. This kind of mechanism is not possible in an agricultural loan," said a former banker.

Farmers' suicides further deter lenders from taking aggressive recovery steps in case of defaults. Under the KCC scheme, farmers can draw the credit limit using various delivery channels such as ATM/debit card and business correspondents. The card is valid for five years. The Centre, under Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS), provides interest subvention of 1.5 per cent to banks for providing short-term agriculture loans through KCC up to Rs 3 lakh at a concessional interest rate of 7 per cent per annum. An additional prompt repayment incentive of 3 per cent is provided to farmers on timely repayment of loans, which effectively reduces the rate of interest to 4 per cent for farmers. In the Budget 2025-26, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced to increase the loan limit under the MISS from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 5 lakh. Loans up to Rs 2 lakh are extended on a collateral-free basis, ensuring hassle-free access to credit for small and marginal farmers. In terms of states, Uttar Pradesh had the maximum outstanding amount under the KCC scheme across all banks (SCBs, cooperative banks and regional rural banks), in 2024, at Rs 1.38 lakh crore, as per the RBI data. This was followed by Rajasthan (Rs 1.08 lakh crore), Madhya Pradesh (Rs 84,523 crore), Maharashtra (Rs 78,018 crore), Gujarat (Rs 71,132 crore) and Karnataka (Rs 62,794 crore). A 2019 report of an RBI working group to 'Re-vitalize Agriculture Credit' had said that loan waivers do impact the credit flow to agriculture due to moral hazard among both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the bailout. This impact could be both in loan performance, as borrowers choose to default strategically in anticipation of future bailouts, and in credit allocation, as banks reallocate lending to lower risk borrower segments.

In a sign of stress in the agriculture sector, scheduled commercial banks, excluding regional rural banks (RRBs), have seen a sharp increase of 42 per cent in bad loans Kisan Credit Card (KCC) accounts, a revolving cash credit facility offered to farmers, in the last four years. The outstanding NPA amount in the segment surged to Rs 97,543 crore as at end of December 2024, compared to Rs 68,547 crore at end of March 2021, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its reply to the Right to Information. The NPA amounts in the KCC segment stood at Rs 84,637 crore in FY2022, which rose to Rs 90,832 crore in FY2023 and to Rs 93,370 crore in FY2024. The amount of NPAs in the KCC scheme stood at Rs 95,616 crore in the first quarter of the fiscal 2025, and Rs 96,918 in July-September 2025 quarter. The NPA classification in the KCC segment is different from other retail loans, where an account becomes an NPA if interest and instalment of principal remain overdue for more than 90 days. The repayment period for KCC loans is as per the crop season (short or long) and marketing period for the crop. The crop season for states is decided by the respective State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC). For short duration crops, the crop season is 12 months and for long duration crops it is 18 months in most states.

Bankers said if a KCC loan is not paid within three years of disbursement, it will be classified as NPA. In the period between the end of FY2021 and the end of December 2024 quarter, the outstanding loan amount in operative KCC accounts of banks has also grown by nearly 30 per cent. The outstanding amount in operative KCC accounts surged to Rs 5.91 lakh crore as of December 2024 from Rs 4.57 lakh crore as at the end of March 2021. The amount outstanding in operative KCC accounts of banks stood at Rs 4.76 lakh crore in FY2022, Rs 5.18 lakh crore in FY2023 and Rs 5.75 lakh crore in FY2024. In the first quarter of FY2025, the total amount outstanding in operative KCC accounts stood at Rs 5.71 lakh crore, which slightly rose to Rs 5.87 lakh crore in Q2 FY2025.

The figures for NPA amounts and the outstanding amount in operative KCC accounts for the first three quarters of the current fiscal (FY2025) are provisional, the RBI said. Introduced in 1998, the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme provides adequate and timely access to credit to farmers for agricultural and other allied activities. KCC offers a revolving cash credit facility to farmers, without any restrictions on the number of debit or credits. KCC loans are part of the overall agriculture loan book of banks, which comes under the priority sector lending (PSL) book of banks. Of the overall PSL target of 40 per cent, banks are mandated to achieve an agriculture target of 18 per cent. Experts

## How continuing fall in the secondary market is impacting IPO activity

The domestic stock market has been reeling under heavy selling pressure for the past few months. Benchmark indices, Sensex and Nifty, have lost nearly 13 per cent from their peaks touched in September last year, eroding nearly Rs 79 lakh crore of investors' wealth. A sharp correction in the secondary market has impacted the initial public offering (IPO) fundraising plans of companies. Over two dozen companies that received IPO approval from the market regulator, SEBI, have yet to launch their offerings. These companies are waiting for the market to stabilise before they proceed with their IPO fundraising plans. A slump in the secondary market also lowers retail investors' interest in the primary market.

According to data obtained from Prime Database, 26 domestic companies received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) between April-December 2024 and are yet to hit the primary market. These companies have plans to raise Rs 42,390 crore through IPOs. A company has a 12-month period to launch its IPO after receiving approval from the market regulator. The prolonged delay by companies in launching their IPOs can be attributed to the current market volatility, characterised by weakening investor confidence due to concerns over tariff wars and lacklustre corporate earnings with incessant selling by foreign investors adding to the market woes. "Companies that received approval from October 2024 onwards, which is when the selloff started, till December 2024 are perhaps hoping that market conditions will improve for them to launch their IPO," said Pranav Haldea, Managing Director, PRIME Database Group.

Some of the big IPOs that have received SEBI's nod between October and December 2024 and are yet to launch the offer are Schloss Bangalore Ltd (Rs 5,000 crore), Ather Energy Ltd (Rs 4,500 crore), Avanse Financial Services Ltd (Rs 3,500 crore), Manjushree Technopack Ltd (Rs 3,000 crore) and Ecom Express Ltd (Rs 2,600 crore). Besides, there are a few companies that have received regulatory approval between April-September 2024 and still have valid approvals include National Securities Depository Ltd (Rs 3,000 crore), S K Finance (Rs 2,200 crore), Kalpataru Ltd (Rs 1,590 crore), Asirvad Micro Finance Ltd (Rs 1,500 crore) and Belstar Microfinance Ltd (Rs 1,300 crore). The sluggish IPO activity follows a robust IPO fundraising by companies in 2024. In the last calendar year, 91 companies raised Rs 1.6 lakh crore through IPOs. The number of small and medium enterprises (SME) IPOs touched a high of 240 compared to 182 in 2023, as per Prime Database. Secondary market correction

After touching record highs in September 2024, the Sensex and the Nifty have lost nearly 13 per cent, so far. The BSE's 30-share Sensex has plunged 11,503.54 points, or 13.4 per cent from its all-time high of 85,836.12. The broader Nifty 50 has corrected 3,663.55 points, or 13.97 per cent, from its peak of 26,216.05. Even the broader market has witnessed a massive sell-off, with BSE Smallcap crashing 21 per cent and BSE Midcap falling 20 per cent from their record highs. This fall in domestic equity benchmarks has primarily been led by a massive sell-off by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) who dumped over Rs 2.12 lakh crore worth of equities since October 2024. Investors' sell-off is also driven by concerns over tariff wars, overvalued domestic stocks and subdued quarterly earnings of corporates.

Analysts said a correction in the secondary market



has a significant impact on the IPO market. The current fall in the stock market has led to a decline in monthly IPOs in 2025. While in January only six companies launched IPOs, February saw only three primary market offerings. This is much lower than the number of IPOs seen in September (12), October (6), November (8) and December (15). In a falling market, companies also do not want to launch IPOs as they may struggle to raise the targeted funds, analysts said. "Promoters do not want to offload their stake in a bad market. In a declining market, they do not get the valuation, and subscription (to the IPO) is also not very good," said Ashish Nanda, Chief Digital Business Officer, Kotak Securities. When a retail investor incurs losses in the secondary market, his interest in the IPO market also reduces. In the past also there have been many companies that have chosen not to launch their IPOs even after receiving regulatory approval, due to unfavourable market conditions. "Since 2019, 94 companies looking to raise roughly Rs 1.35 lakh crore, allowed their IPO approval to lapse. IPO is a once-in-a-lifetime event for a company and when markets are volatile or bearish, companies prefer to let their approval lapse," Haldea said.

## Hyundai Motor plans to build 1st local hydrogen fuel cell plant

Seoul: Hyundai Motor plans to build its first hydrogen fuel cell systems plant in South Korea for the start of operations in 2028, the company's labour union claimed on Tuesday. Hyundai Motor currently operates a hydrogen fuel cell systems plant in China. If built, the domestic facility will be the carmaker's second such plant globally. The company will begin the plant's construction within the year at its mainstay car manufacturing plant in Ulsan, about 305 kilometers southeast of Seoul, according to the union website, reports Yonhap news agency. "To push ahead with the plan, there should be consultations between the company and the union," a company spokesperson said, without elaborating. If confirmed, Hydrogen fuel cell systems produced at the new plant may be used in the Nexa hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle (EV), hydrogen-powered Elec City bus and hydrogen trucks. The first plant in Guangzhou began operations in 2023. It is capable of manufacturing hydrogen fuel cell systems that can power 6,500 hydrogen commercial vehicles. Meanwhile, the government will spend 129.3 billion won (\$88.6 million) this year to support projects aimed at developing technologies that will help achieve carbon neutrality and ensure a stable supply of energy.

## An American recession: Donald Trump's tariffs have rekindled possibilities of a US economic downturn



Shares on Wall Street slumped on Monday to record one of the worst trading days since 2022, driven by concerns about the impact of President Donald Trump's trade policies on the US economy. Investors are now worried that a trade war could push the world's biggest economy into a possible recession, with Trump appearing not to rule out that possibility. Speaking to Fox News on Sunday, Trump parried a question on whether the US is headed into a recession with an uncharacteristically ambivalent response: "I hate to predict things like that. There is a period of transition, because what we're doing is very big. We're bringing wealth back to America, that's a big thing. And there are always periods (where) it takes a little time." This came days after Trump said his measures could lead to some pain in the "short term". This seems to be a markedly different outlook from Trump in his first term, where he was much more responsive to stock market patterns. Incidentally, in Monday's selloff, while the tech-heavy NASDAQ was down over 4 per cent, Elon Musk-promoted Tesla was one of the stocks that fell the most, down more than 10 per cent and sharply lower than its peak back in December.

There are three issues that analysts are pointing to amid the renewed "recession" talk. One, that Wall Street is perhaps now overreacting to the fact that it did not really believe Trump would follow through on this threat of tariffs that he made throughout his election campaign. So, when last week, the tariffs came into effect on Canada, Mexico and China, and more tariffs are likely on steel and aluminum products, the stock markets are perhaps responding to the fact that Trump is now walking his talk. There is also the broader uncertainty that this rapid back-and-forth on tariffs by his administration has triggered. Secondly, bond yields — or the return a bond investor expects to receive each year over its term to maturity — are perhaps a better indicator of whether a recession is in the making. The American 10-year bond yield eased by 11 basis points Monday as demand for safe-haven assets increased after Trump declined to rule out a recession as a result of his tariff policies. When bond yields are going down, it means that the return an investor can expect from holding a bond is decreasing, which is typically caused by the price of the bond rising in the market (yields and prices of bonds have an inverse relationship). Lower yields potentially indicates a shift towards a more risk-averse sentiment among investors, often associated with economic uncertainty.

Thirdly, though the broader economic data at this time is not indicating an impending American recession, there are some clear pointers to a growth slowdown. Job market data is holding up so far based on the February jobs report that came out Friday, but consumer confidence is down, and business surveys cite uncertainty as a reason for being cautious about capital investment. Fourth-quarter US gross domestic (GDP) growth for 2024 came in at a strong 2.3 per cent, driven primarily by consumer spending. However, the early data for this year suggest a slowdown could be on the cards. The various Federal Reserve Bank surveys have shown more caution among businesses, with the Philadelphia Federal Reserve's Manufacturing Business Outlook Survey results showing that new orders and hiring are down, while prices are up. Comments from businesses across the country focus on the uncertainty surrounding tariffs and the potential negative impact on orders, adding to the pessimism. But Trump has, so far, shown that his administration is willing to tolerate this to achieve his broader

ambitions, including rebalancing trade, his plans for deregulation, including promised tax cuts later in the year.

And while Trump appears to be equivocal on the recession prospects, his commerce secretary Howard Lutnick, and the main cheerleader of reciprocal tariffs within the new administration, was a lot less ambivalent at a press briefing. "There's going to be no recession in America. What there's going to be is global tariffs are going to come down because President Trump has said, you want to charge you 100 per cent, we're going to charge you 100 per cent! You know what they say? They say, No, no... don't charge you 100 per cent, we'll bring ours down... We'll unleash America out to the world, grow our economy in a way we've never grown before. You are going to see, over the next two years, the greatest set of growth coming from America... I would never bet on recession. No chance." Lutnick's bluster aside, there is a reason why the high tariff threats by the US are not likely to sustain. The structural issues with the American economy is one key reason. The US economy relies heavily on trade, and that's part of its structural construct in the post-World War-II era. This is because the American economy consumes more goods than it produces domestically at full employment. As a result, its imports are almost always higher than its exports, resulting in a trade deficit.

This trade deficit is a point of contention for Trump, which he's used as the trigger for the imposition of tariffs on countries around the world. But what this simplistic assumption glosses over is the fact that till the time America consumes more than it produces, it will have a deficit with a lot of countries. This is also triggered by the fact that the labour costs in America are high, and so it does not merit economic logic for US workers to be producing this efficiently in the country, like say garments or low-end consumer goods. So, other countries that have relative efficiencies in these sectors, primarily due to labour or raw material advantages, are more effective at producing these goods and shipping them to the US. The evolving labour productivity issue, and a shift of comparative advantage to developing nations explain the loss in manufacturing jobs in the US, and tariffs are unlikely to fix that fundamental issue. Also, Trump has consistently insisted that tariffs are paid for by foreign countries. This hardsell, has resonated within his base, but is blatantly false. It is, in fact, US importers — American companies or representatives of foreign companies in the US — that end up paying tariffs when these goods come in, and this money goes to the American Treasury. These companies, in turn, generally pass their higher costs on to their customers in the form of higher retail prices. A study by economists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University, the University of Zurich and the World Bank concluded that Trump's tariffs in his last term neither raised or lowered US employment. Despite Trump's 2018 taxes on imported steel, for instance, the number of jobs at American steel plants was barely impacted. On the other hand, the retaliatory taxes imposed by China and other nations on US goods had "negative employment impacts," especially for farmers, the study found. These retaliatory tariffs were only partly offset by government aid that Trump was forced to dole out to farmers, partly funded by the incremental revenues raised by the tariffs. The radical economic outlook presented by Trump prior to the elections includes plans to impose a 20 per cent tariff on all imports and more than 200 per cent duty on cars; a proposal to deport millions of irregular immigrants; and to extend tax cuts at a time when the US budget deficit is at record high. Trump, however, realises that he came to power on account of unrest among a section of American consumers about high inflation and their standard of living not having gone up as per expectations. His tariff war could only fuel this fire. In quantum terms, a 10-20 per cent tariff is really high for a country that has a weighted average tariff of only about 2.2 per cent. Higher tariffs and a trade war would most certainly lead to higher inflation in the US. This, combined with runaway deficits are likely to force the US Federal Reserve — the American central bank — to end its rate-cutting cycle prematurely.

## After RBI and Sebi, govt kicks off search for new IRDAI chief

The government has advertised for a new chairman for Hyderabad-based IRDAI, just four days before the end of the tenure of the current Chairman.

IRDAIs in the case of the RBI and capital market regulator Sebi, the government is likely to consider one of the serving top bureaucrats or a retired person for the IRDAI chairmanship. After appointing a new Governor at the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the government is searching for a new Chairman for the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

The government has advertised for a new chairman for Hyderabad-based IRDAI, just four days before the end of the tenure of the current Chairman. There were expectations that the government will give current IRDAI Chairman Debasish Panda an extension on March 14, the day he will be completing his three-year term at the regulatory body. However, the government is now going ahead with its plan for a new chairman. As in the case of the RBI and capital market regulator Sebi, the government is likely to consider one of the serving top bureaucrats or a retired person for the IRDAI chairmanship.

The names of Giridhar Aramane, former Defense Secretary, Ajay Seth, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Pankaj Jain, secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and others are already doing rounds in the Delhi power corridor for the IRDAI top post. However, insurance sources are doubtful whether the process to appoint a new chairman at the IRDAI will complete by March 14.

The new IRDAI Chairman will assume charge at a time when health insurance premium is rising sharply in the wake of higher medical inflation and claims. Further, the government is also planning to go for major reforms in the insurance sector and IRDAI has appointed a committee to examine the reforms in the sector. The government has already announced a hike in FDI in insurance from 74 per cent to 100 per cent. While all the selections for the top posts of regulatory bodies are supposed to be done by the Financial Sector Regulatory Appointment Search Committee (FSRASC), headed by the Cabinet Secretary, both the recent appointments — RBI Governor and SEBI Chairman —

were done directly by the government without holding any interviews. The applicant for IRDAI chairman should have a minimum of two years of residual service as on the date of vacancy — March 14, 2025. This means the applicant's age should not exceed 63 years on the said date, according to the advertisement issued by the Department of Financial Services. The applicants should preferably have at least 30 years of relevant work experience, should have worked as Secretary to Government of India or its equivalent level in Government of India or State Government or other institutions, and should have had a proven track record of leadership and authority in decision-making. Applicants from private sector should have worked as CEO or equivalent of a large financial institution. The appointment will be made by the Central Government on the recommendation of the Financial Sector Regulatory Appointment Search Committee. The committee is also free to identify and recommend, based on merit, any person other than those who have applied for the office. In respect of outstanding candidates, the committee may also recommend relaxation in eligibility, qualifications and experience criteria. The term of office of the Chairperson will be in accordance with the relevant provisions under the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999 and the decision of the appointing authority in this regard, provided that no person can hold office as Chairperson after attaining the age of 65 years. Consolidated pay and allowances of the Chairperson shall be Rs 562,500 per month, without the facility of house and car.



# Government lifts Wrestling Federation of India suspension; Brij Bhushan aide Sanjay Singh to have complete control



GNS News Agency, March 12

The sports ministry on Tuesday has lifted Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) suspension. The government has also given the complete control to WFI president Sanjay Singh – a close aide of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, the BJP MP accused of sexually harassing women athlete.

Through an order dated December 24, 2023, the ministry had suspended the WFI and asked the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to form an ad-hoc committee to run the day-to-day affairs of the national sport federation. "In view of the findings of the Spot Verification Committee, the compliance measures undertaken by the WFI, and in the larger

interest of Indian sports and athletes, the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports hereby revokes the suspension of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) issued vide order of even number dated 24.12.2023 and restores its recognition as the National Sports Federation (NSF) for wrestling with immediate effect with following directions," read the letter from the Ministry. "The WFI must revert the amendments carried out during the suspension period and have a balance of power among the designated office bearers and provide checks and balance in the decision making process and this process should be completed in 4 weeks. "Any person who is not elected as an office bearer, as also the suspended/terminated salaried officials of the WFI must remain completely disassociated from the Federation and its affiliate units. The EC of WFI must give an undertaking in this regard within 4 weeks. Any violation of the undertaking will invite appropriate legal action, including the action under the Sports Code. "The WFI must ensure that selection for all international events should be done in a free, fair and transparent manner as per the extant provisions of the Sports Code and the other latest instructions issued in this regard along with regulations issued from time-to-time by the UWW." The letter further says, "The WFI shall ensure adherence to the Sports Code, principles of good governance, and athlete welfare policies."

# Who is Minoru Yoneyama after whom one court at All England is always named?

GNS News Agency, March 12

Minoru Yoneyama with current BWF president and 1996 Atlanta Olympics gold medalist Poul Erik Hoyer Larsen. (Photo: Yonex) Minoru Yoneyama with current BWF president and 1996 Atlanta Olympics gold medalist Poul Erik Hoyer Larsen. (Name court at the All England in Birmingham is always named after Minoru Yoneyama, founder of the equipment major, Yonex, who passed away in 2019 at age 95, after setting up a thriving badminton racquets and shuttles business. His story arc gets remembered each year at the hallowed All England.

The 1924-born from Niigata is said to have served in the Imperial Army during the terrible World War 2, and according to Nikkei Asian Review belonged to a 'suicide unit tasked with ramming boats filled with explosives into American ships'. However, he was imprisoned before heading out on any mission, and endured confinement at the notorious Okinawa camp. After his release in 1946, he started making wooden floats for recreational fishing. A meticulous master of woodwork, Yoneyama suffered business collapses as plastic floats flooded markets, before starting to make badminton racquets in 1957. Frustrated by being pushed aside by advancing technology, he vowed to never be technologically left behind and committed to constant innovation, Yonex writes. He took up manufacturing under the Sanbata umbrella, but after his own factory burned down in 1963, Yoneyama put the facility back up in 3 days and took the destruction as a sign of expansion. In 1965, Yoneyama started making shuttlecocks, which remain the birds in use at all major badminton events. Yonex became the title sponsor of All England in 1984.

Some iconic advancements have taken place because Yoneyama insisted

\* The T-joint on the aluminium racquet that joins the shaft to the frame in 1968.

\* Tennis racquets started rolling out in 1969.

\* The first badminton racquets weighing under 100 gm were released in 1978

\* The square-shaped isometric tennis frame debuted in 1980



\* Isometric badminton racquets followed in 1995.

\* Graphite golf clubs and snowboards joined the repertoire. The Big YY names a host of badminton's biggest names are under the Yonex umbrella, though Li Ning and Victor have snared some worthy stars and not quite allowed a monopoly. Still, badminton legend Rudy Hartono started using Yonex in 1978. Tennis boasted of Tony Roche around the same time, though the women brought real firepower to the brand – Billie Jean King, Martina Navratilova, Monica Seles, Martina Hingis. The big heist of course was when Yonex struck a deal with the Chinese national team ahead of the last Olympics.

Badminton courts are temporarily carved into indoor stadia and nets erected, but the Minoru at Birmingham is a show court of sorts. Nothing brought alive Yoneyama's indefatigable spirit like a 2023 second-set rally between mixed doubles legends Zheng and Huang against little-known Indonesians Kusumawati and Kusharjanto. Their defeat was imminent, but in some complete mental retrieving by Lisa Ayu Kusumawati, she was peppered by the Chinese, while having stumbled on the floor and parried off 6 straight shelling returns raining down on her sitting duck position at incredible speed, before losing the rally. The 'Madness at Minoru' is a Youtube favourite from the All England since, celebrated for persistence, just like that of the man the court space gets named after.

# Hans Niemann warns US chess, compares it with Indian ecosystem: 'American chess will fade into obscurity'

GNS News Agency, March 12

The exponential rise of Indian chess talents is a result of solid 'structural support, good mentors and backing from the country' which the United States of America lacks and it'll lead their chess scene to nowhere as is what the American Grandmaster Hans Niemann believes. Praising the Indian chess ecosystem, while also pointing out the obvious flaws in American chess, Neimann wrote on X (Twitter), "The rise of Indian chess talents is largely due to structural support. Anand mentors all of the top players, large companies and the government support them financially. America has no infrastructure, all of the most talented players go to Ivy leagues and quit chess. If we want to dominate the chess world, we need to support young talents instead of buying players from other countries like mercenaries. If things continue this way, American chess will fade into obscurity."

India, who have the current world champion in D. Gukesh, are also the defending champion of the Olympiad in both open and women's sections. Earlier, Another US GM, world No. 2, Hikaru Nakamura echoed the same opinion about the ecosystem which is helping the Indian chess grow. "When I look at chess, there's one country that's do-



ing very, very well, where the whole ecosystem is developed the way that I wish it were say in the US. That country is obviously India where there is no great imbalance," Nakamura had said during the Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour event in Weissenhaus, Germany. "I think that it's really great to see is when you look at chess, I think the Indian model right now is very clearly the best," he added. Nakamura also said the sponsorship has done wonders for Indian chess. Recently, India's Pranav Venkatesh won the world junior championship, while 25-year-old Aravindh Chithambaram won the Prague Masters 2025.

# Championship Trophy Issue: Pakistan Cricket Board seeks explanation from ICC



GNS News Agency, March 12

Dubai: Apparently stung by the criticism of its own former cricketering greats like Wasim Akram, and Waqar Younus, the Pakistan Cricket Board seemed to have started facing-saving measures to wriggle out of the mess with re-

gard to none of its representatives being present at the ICC Champions Trophy presentation ceremony here on Sunday. According to reports, the PCB, which was the official host of the championship, has formally sought an explanation from the ICC, the international governing body of the sport, as to why the tournament director Sumair Ahmed was not included in the post-final presentation ceremony. It may be mentioned here that Sumair, who is also the chief operating officer of the PCB, was in Dubai for the final in his capacity as tournament director and Pakistan's representative at the final. Pakistan was the official host of the Champions Trophy. Interestingly, the PCB was expecting the ICC to search for a replacement for PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi, who was scheduled to attend but had to cancel the visit to attend some high-level security meetings back in Pakistan. In a way, the PCB waited for the ICC to make the first move which obviously didn't happen.

# Pant credits 'MS Bhai' for his unconventional strokes



GNS News Agency, March 12

HYDERABAD: Mahi Bhai (MS Dhoni) was one of those players who inspired to play unconventional shots, says Rishabh Pant, wicket-keeper batter and most expensive player in IPL history, as he prepares to spearhead Lucknow Super Giants' challenge in the IPL commencing on March 22. "Earlier, quite a few players played these shots. I have seen old videos of Mahi bhai (MS Dhoni), and he, too, has played the lap shot. But percentage-wise, I think they used to do it less. The game is changing now—field placements are different, and players are adapting. Some might feel it's necessary for their game, while others may not. At the end of the day, how you read the game determines how you play it," he explained in a chat with JioHotstar.

"Since childhood, I had only one dream—to play for

India. I never even thought about playing in the IPL. I think today, people are more focused on the IPL. Of course, it's a great platform, but I believe that if your goal is to play for your country, everything else—including the IPL—will eventually fall into place," the 27-year-old Pant said. "If you have that bigger mindset, success will follow. I always believed that I would play for India one day, and God has been kind. At 18, I got the opportunity to make my debut, and I am grateful for that," said Pant, who was signed for a record Rs 27 crore deal by LSG.

On his flexibility and acrobatic style, Pant said he used to be a gymnast as a kid. "My gymnastics coach always told me that it would come in handy in life. Basu Sir, our Indian team trainer, once told me in 2018-19," he said. "I think it mostly happens because I hold my bottom hand very lightly. I mainly try to use my bottom hand for support because, at times, it starts dominating. So, I focus on gripping my top hand tightly. But when I overreach—especially when the ball is too wide or too short—it's not always in the ideal hitting zone," Pant said about his bat slipping off his hands regularly. "When I started playing after moving from Roorkee, I mostly played lofted shots—almost 80% of the time. I didn't think about playing along the ground because I used to open the innings. My father always said that playing against your age group is normal, but if you want to improve in cricket, you must compete with older players," Pant recalled.

"So, from a young age, he pushed me to participate in senior tournaments. Even when I was 10 or 11, I played in open tournaments. When I joined Tarak Sir, he used to get really angry. He had one rule—'You must learn defence first. If you master defence, you'll master everything else' was his advice." Tarak Sir believed I already knew how to hit big shots, so he wanted me to learn how to defend. I used to keep an eye on him while batting. If he was watching, I'd play proper defence, playing drives and textbook shots. But the moment I saw him looking away, I would go back to playing my natural attacking game," Pant concluded.

# Historic 150th Anniversary Test to be played under lights

GNS News Agency, March 12

Hyderabad: History will be made when Australia takes on England in a day-night Test at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Test cricket exactly two years from today. The 150th Anniversary Test from March 11-15, 2027, will be the first time the Australian men have played a Test under lights at the MCG, the scene of the first Test match in 1877 and the Centenary Test in 1977 – remarkably, both won by Australia by 45 runs. This follows the historic first day-night Test at the MCG earlier this year where Australia's women completed an Ashes clean-sweep.

A day-night Test will enable more people to attend and watch the 150th Anniversary Test given it will be played outside the school holiday period. The Victorian Government is providing key support for this event. "The 150th Anniversary Test at the MCG will be one of the great cricket events and playing under lights will be a fantastic way to celebrate both our game's rich heritage and Test cricket's modern evolution," said Todd Greenberg, Cricket Australia CEO. "It will also help ensure more people are able to attend and watch what will be a fantastic occasion. The Centenary Test created many iconic performances including David Hookes' five consecutive boundaries off Tony Greig, Rick McCosker batting with a broken jaw and Derek Randall's defiant century, and I'm sure the 150th Test will



create its own lifelong memories," he said. "This season's Ashes Series will whet the appetite for this clash in exactly two years, and we look forward to celebrating this historic occasion further as it draws nearer," the top CA official said. "We are thankful to the Victorian Government and the Melbourne Cricket Club for their incredible support to host this momentous Test match." "With the now complex international schedule it takes significant planning and support to conduct an event such as this and we are thankful to everyone including the Melbourne Cricket Club and the Victorian Government for their enthusiasm to host this momentous Test match," said Peter Roach, CA Head of Cricket Operations and Scheduling.

# Rohit Sharma changed the batting landscape of India in white-ball cricket

GNS News Agency, March 12

India's captain Rohit Sharma poses with the winners trophy after defeating New Zealand in the final cricket match of the ICC Champions Trophy at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. (AP) India's captain Rohit Sharma poses with the winners trophy after defeating New Zealand in the final cricket match of the ICC Champions Trophy at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. (AP) R Ashwin said captain Rohit Sharma has changed the batting landscape of India's white-ball with his intent. Rohit Sharma led the chase with 76 runs off 83 balls and KL Rahul's unbeaten 34 helped India cross the finish line on 254 for 6 in 49 overs to win the Champions Trophy for the third time. "Against New Zealand Rohit Sharma has played a measured knock. It was not like Ahmedabad," Ashwin said on his Hindi YouTube channel "Ash Ki Baat."



Rohit Sharma has changed that mindset as a captain with the way he is playing and is asking his players to play the same way. May god be with him, he has been an absolute superstar for the Indian team," he said.

"The way he attacked Nathan Smith. He never let him come back into the game. His intent was so good," he said. Ashwin jogged back the memory lane and revealed how Rohit led by example after India were hammered by England in the semifinal of the 2022 T20 World Cup. Rohit Sharma future Champions Trophy 2027 World Cup India's captain Rohit Sharma poses with the winners trophy after defeating New Zealand in the final cricket match of the ICC Champions Trophy at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. "He has led by example since that 2022 T20 World Cup semifinal loss against England. If a captain is willing to risk his wicket in the middle, the players know that's how they will have to play. "Rohit's biggest legacy is not about winning the tournaments. He has won five IPL titles with Mumbai Indians. He has now led India to back-to-back ICC titles. That's not his legacy. Rohit Sharma has changed the batting frontier of Indian white-ball cricket. That is his biggest legacy," he said. "He is a stalwart in ODI cricket. Actually he changed out cricketering thought process in the white-ball when it comes to the batting.

"Earlier it was to score big runs, remain not out. Please note this. In India the batting landscape was like this only, the top three batters will score big runs, they will improve their average. India's captain Rohit Sharma poses with the winners trophy after defeating New Zealand in the final cricket match of the ICC Champions Trophy at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Sunday, March 9, 2025. (AP Photo) India's captain Rohit Sharma poses with the winners trophy after defeating New Zealand in the final of the ICC Champions Trophy. The mindset is same even in the junior age-group, you stay not out and score big. "I feel as a batter now in the ODIs and in the T20s, you must play selfless cricket." With that regards

# Sports Ministry revokes ban on Wrestling Federation of India

New Delhi: In view of the findings of the Spot Verification Committee, the compliance measures undertaken by the Wrestling Federation of India and in the larger interest of Indian sports and athletes, the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports revoked the suspension of the WFI issued vide order of even number dated Dec 24, 2023 and restores its recognition as the National Sports Federation (NSF) for wrestling with immediate effect with following directions.

The WFI must revert the amendments carried out during the suspension period have a balance of power among the designated office bearers and provide checks and balances in the decision making process and this process should be completed in four weeks.

Any person who is not elected as an office bearer, as also the suspended/terminated salaried officials of the WFI must remain completely disassociated from the Federation and its affiliate units. The EC of WFI must give an undertaking in this regard within four weeks. Any violation of the undertaking will invite appropriate legal action, including the action under the Sports Code.

The WFI must ensure that selection for all international events should be done in a free, fair and transparent manner as per the extant provisions of the Sports Code and the other latest instructions issued in this regard along with regulations issued from time to time by the UWW. The WFI shall ensure adherence to the Sports Code, principles of good governance, and athlete welfare policies.

## Mohanlal felt he didn't fit conventional hero's image; was certain he wouldn't be as accepted in other film industries: 'Why should I look elsewhere for work then?'



Awards for Best Actor, cementing their status as powerhouse thespians. Yet, Mohanlal once admitted that he might not have attained the same level of fame, success and opportunities had he been part of any other film industry. He also credited the Malayalam audience for their discerning taste and willingness to embrace quality cinema, which, he opined, played a key role in shaping the industry's content. **Cinema Anatomy | Sreenivasan:** The star Malayalam actor-screenwriter whose movies propelled legends like Mohanlal and Priyadarshan to greater heights. In a 1992 interview on DD Malayalam (formerly DD4), legendary actor Nedumudi Venu asked Mohanlal whether he believed that, despite not having the conventional looks of a hero, he achieved recognition and meaty roles purely because he was born in Kerala and became part of the Malayalam film industry. Mohanlal agreed without hesitation, saying: "Actors like you, me, Sreenivasan and Bharath Gopi don't fit the conventional hero's image. I believe we were all accepted because we belong to the Malayalam industry."

Mohanlal once admitted that he might not have attained the same level of fame, success and opportunities had he been part of any other film industry. Explaining the rationale behind his decision to work primarily in Malayalam cinema, Mohanlal clarified that it wasn't due to a lack of offers from other languages.

Becoming a film superstar is no easy feat, but if there's anything harder, it's sustaining that superstardom. This is precisely why Mohanlal and Mammooty are regarded as the GOATs, given that they have dominated Malayalam cinema for the past four and a half decades — with no real competition in sight even now. While director Thampi Kannanthanam's gangster film *Rajavinte Makan* (1986) propelled Mohanlal to superstardom, it was Joshiy's action thriller *New Delhi* (1987) that did the same for Mammooty.

What makes their journeys even more fascinating is that, beyond commercial success, both have also earned numerous accolades, including multiple National Film

Explaining the rationale behind his decision to work primarily in Malayalam cinema rather than actively pursuing opportunities in other languages, Mohanlal clarified that it wasn't due to a lack of offers. "You (Venu) recently mentioned that Malayalam cinema produces the best films and has the finest technicians. Being part of such an industry, why should I look elsewhere for work?"

He also praised Malayalam audiences, stating that their open-mindedness and appreciation for good cinema are the reasons why high-quality films continue to be made here. Mohanlal backed his opinion by pointing out the reluctance of other industries to produce films with artistic and narrative depth which, he opined, might be the result of the lack of similar reception among their viewers. "That might be why other industries are hesitant to produce films like *His Highness Abdullah*, *Bharatham* and *Sadayam*. However, this (the culture of watching and appreciating quality films in Malayalam cinema) did not happen overnight. It evolved over time and the many many great films they watched might have also played a key role," he explained.

## Udit Narayan takes a dig at his kissing controversy during Pintu Ki Pappi event: 'Bahut khoobsurat title hai aapka'

Udit Narayan took a shot at his kissing controversy at a recent event. Udit Narayan took a dig at his kissing controversy at a recent event. Udit Narayan's kissing controversy may have invited the ire of the internet, but he seems to be taking the incident with a pinch of salt. Weeks after a video of him kissing female fans during a concert surfaced online, Udit took a dig at the same during a recent event. He was invited to attend a promotional event of Shiv Hare's upcoming film *Pintu Ki Pappi*, starring choreographer Ganesh Acharya.

A paparazzo has shared a video from the event, in which Udit is addressing the link between his kissing controversy and the film's title. He tells Ganesh on stage, "Title toh change kar dena chahiye aapko. Pappi toh theek hai. Bahut khoobsurat title hai aapka, Pintu Ki Pappi. 'Udit ki Pappi' toh nahi? Ye bhi ek ittefaq hai ki abhi ye release hona tha ye. Waise toh do saal pehle ka video hai wo, Australia mein, jo aap dekh rahe hain (You should change the title. 'Pappi' is fine. It's a very beautiful title, Pintu Ki Pappi. Or is that, 'Udit ki Pappi'? It's a coincidence that the kissing video was released now. Otherwise it's a two-year-old video from Australia.)"

After his kissing controversy erupted last month, Udit Narayan had defended his actions. "Have I (ever) done anything to bring shame to myself, my family or my country? Then why would I do something now at this stage of my life when I have achieved it all? There is a deep pure and unbreakable bond between my fans and I. What you saw in the so-called scandalous video was a manifestation of the love between my fans and I. They love me. I love them back even more," he told *Bollywood Hungama*. When asked if he's ashamed, Udit responded, "No, not at all! Why should I be? Do you hear any regret or sorrow in my voice? In fact, I am laughing as I talk to you. It is not something sleazy or secret. It is there in the public domain. My heart is pure. If some people want to see something dirty in my act of pure affection, then I feel sorry for them. I also want to thank them. Because now they've made me even more



famous than I already was." His fellow singer and actor Kunickaa Sadanand recently defended Udit Narayan and said in a podcast on *Hindi Rush*, "Udit Narayan ji ne kiss kia wo toh theek kia, lekin galat jagah par kiya. Gaal par kar deta lekin ab... (Udit Narayan kissed, that's alright, but he kissed on the wrong place. He should've kissed on the cheek)." Kunickaa said, adding, "I don't blame anybody. Ab ladki bhi toh aayi hai saamne. Aapne aadmi pe kyu daal diya, ki tumne kyu kiss kiya? Ab aapki thali mein laddoo saj ke aayenge toh fir kya aap khayenge nahi unko? (The girl also came forward for the kiss. Why have you put the blame only on the man? If sweets are served on your plate, wouldn't you eat them?). That's not fair. Just because he's Udit Narayan, you're saying why did you kiss her?" She also claimed, like Udit, that the video is from two years ago. She argued that it was planted now because Udit Narayan's competitors don't want him to get the *Padma Bhushan*, which he was being considered for.

## Aamir Khan got 400 offers after QSQT's success, cried at home every day after his films started flopping: 'I was a one-hit wonder'

Although he has never been entirely on board with the sobriquet, if there is any Bollywood superstar worthy of being called "Mr Perfectionist," it is Aamir Khan. With a repertoire filled with widely recognised titles and diverse characters, all of which have earned him significant acclaim, Aamir Khan ranks among the finest and most successful actors in Bollywood. However, his rise to the top did not happen overnight and it was the result of years of perseverance and hard work. Recently, Aamir himself opened up about his journey, revealing that he was initially unimpressed with his film choices and often heartbroken. The Bollywood icon also shared that after the blockbuster success of *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (QSQT), which marked his first major role as a lead actor, he received around 300 to 400 film offers in no time, leaving him confused as to what to choose.

"I had worked only with Mansoor Khan and Nasir Hussain as an assistant till then. But once my first film succeeded, I started getting a lot of offers. To be honest, I got about 300-400 film offers. Producers were coming to meet me from various places. Since I was a newcomer, I didn't realise that signing even one film was a huge responsibility.



I had no idea," he said during a recent conversation with legendary screenwriter-lyricist Javed Akhtar at the launch of Aamir Khan: *Cinema Ka Jadugar*, a special film festival by PVR INOX. While producer-director Nasir Hussain was Aamir's uncle, Mansoor was Nasir's son and directed films such as QSQT, *Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar*, *Akele Hum Akele Tum* and *Josh*.

## Ibrahim Ali Khan re-posts 4.5/10 Nadaaniyan IMDb rating after fan crops all the one-star reviews



Actor Ibrahim Ali Khan made his starring debut in the recently-released Netflix film *Nadaaniyan*, also featuring Khushi Kapoor. Produced by Dharmatic Entertainment, the romantic drama opened to poor reviews, but that didn't stop Ibrahim's fans from showering him with support. On Monday, Ibrahim re-posted a fan's story on Instagram, which showcased the sub-standard IMDb rat-

ing for *Nadaaniyan*. The screenshot showed a 4.5/10 rating and the percentage of users who had given the movie a rating between 6-10. Interestingly all the ratings below 6/10 were not included in the fan's screenshot. A user @ibrahimishiq posted a screenshot of the IMDb ratings, and wrote "almost 75% gave it 10 stars on IMDB." Ibrahim Ali Khan re-posted the story on Instagram. While Ibrahim's post has now disappeared, the original story can still be viewed in the highlights section of the fan page, under the highlight title 'Ibrahim noticed'.

This post found its way to Reddit, and many users wondered why Ibrahim had spotlighted his debut film's poor score. One user wrote, "If 75% gave it 10, how is the rating 4.5?" Another user commented, "How did 4.5 become a high rating on that app?" Ibrahim is the son of actors Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh. His sister, Sara Ali Khan, is also an actor. Also featuring Suniel Shetty, Mahima Chaudhry, Dia Mirza and Jugal Hansraj, *Nadaaniyan* was released on March 7, amid controversy surrounded the promotion of star-kids in Bollywood. The film currently has a Rotten Tomatoes score of just 18%, while the IMDb score currently sits at 4.8/10. Ibrahim is currently working on his next film *Diler*.

## 'Can't say Vineeta Singh was threatened by me,' says Ruby's Cosmetics' Rubeina Karachiwalla after Shark Tank India experience: 'Knew there would be friction'

Entrepreneur Rubeina Karachiwalla, founder of the organic beauty brand Ruby's Organics, recently pitched her company on *Shark Tank India* Season 4. Given that one of the sharks, Vineeta Singh, is the CEO and co-founder of Sugar Cosmetics, a competing beauty brand, there were expectations of a potential conflict of interest. However, in a recent interaction with *Etimes*, Rubeina spoke about her experience on the show, particularly with Vineeta, and shared surprising insights. While many assumed that Vineeta would refrain from investing in Ruby's Organics, Rubeina revealed that despite being a competitor, Vineeta supported her throughout the pitch. She acknowledged that while she was well-prepared for her presentation, Vineeta's reaction was beyond her control. However, she was pleasantly surprised by Vineeta's approach. "I really can't say that she was threatened by me or I was uncomfortable. Within the first two minutes she made me so comfortable. I was lucky enough to be on her good side." She also revealed that Vineeta actively helped her secure a deal with Kunal Bahl, another shark on the panel.

Rubeina further clarified that during her pitch, she was careful not to criticise or demonise other beauty brands to avoid unnecessary friction with Vineeta. Instead, she focused on highlighting the unique ingredients used in her products. "In the pitch, I had clearly said that I am not here to demonise any chemicals or other brands. I knew there would be friction." During the investment negotiation in the Tank, Kunal Bahl made an offer to Rubeina. She initially sought Rs 1 crore for a 2.5 percent equity stake, valuing her company at Rs 40 crore. However, Kunal countered



with Rs 1 crore for 10 percent equity, a Rs 10 crore valuation. Refusing to settle for less, Rubeina boldly negotiated, and they eventually reached an agreement at Rs 12.5 crore for an 8 percent stake.

## Complaint filed against Vijay for discrepancies at Iftar event



Actor-politician Vijay entered active politics in 2024, and has been part of activities that establish his party's credentials among Tamil Nadu people. In lieu of that, he conducted an Iftar meeting during the Ramadan month. Wear-

ing a skull cap, Vijay was seen praying along with many Muslims who attended the event, and broke the fast together. However, controversy broke out during the event, which has resulted in a police complaint filed by Tamil Nadu Sunnat Jamath. Explaining why they filed a complaint, Syed Ghouse from the organisation said, "Muslims were insulted in the event because many of them who attended the occasion were drunkards, and hooligans. Having such people attend the pious event is an insult to Muslims who religiously follow the rules of Ramadan. It is a shame that Vijay hasn't even tendered an apology about the inconveniences that occurred at the event."

The Tamil Nadu Sunnat Jamath also argued that such discrepancies in crowd control were present even during the political launch. "People are not being respected as human beings, and are treated as cattle, and their emotions are not respected. Plus, they have non-local bouncers who are not respecting the people who turned up for the events. So, we have registered a police complaint to ensure such incidents don't happen in events revolving around Vijay. Most importantly, we want to register the fact that we are not doing this publicity," said Ghouse.

On the acting front, Vijay is working in *H Vinoth's Jananayagan*, which is billed to be his last film before he hangs his acting boots and completely concentrates on his political career. The film, which is backed by KVN Productions, features Pooja Hegde, Bobby Deol, and Mamitha Baiju in pivotal roles.

## KCPD, the fourth single from Kiran Abbavaram-starrer 'Dilruba' released

Chennai: The makers of director Viswa Karun's romantic action thriller 'Dilruba', featuring actor Kiran Abbavaram and Rukshar Dhillon in the lead, on Tuesday released 'KCPD', the fourth single from the film. Taking to his X timeline, actor Kiran Abbavaram wrote, "Student Anthem #Dilruba," and shared the YouTube link to the song 'KCPD'.

The peppy and youthful number has music by Sam CS and lyrics by Viswa Karun. The song, which features an explosive fight sequence, has been rendered in the energetic voice of Abhishek A R. Written and directed by Viswa Karun, the film, apart from Kiran Abbavaram and Rukshar Dhillon, will also feature Kathy Davison John Vijay and Aadukalam Naren in pivotal roles.

Earlier this month, the makers had released a trailer for the film which showed that Kiran Abbavaram plays a righteous angry young man called Siddhu in the film. Siddhu's character is such that he will not apologise for anything or anybody when he knows that he is right. However, everybody around him including his girlfriend want him to apologise for some reason.

