

Tirumala laddus ready for Vontimitta Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam

Tirumala, April 9 Tirumala Srivari Laddu Prasadamams are ready to be provided to the devotees who will attend the Vontimitta Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam on April 11.The packing of the laddus was carried out on Wednesday at Srivari Seva Sadan – 2 in Tirumala with the help of Srivari Sevaks.Under the guidance of Deputy EO (General) Siva Prasad and AEO Balaraju, about 300 male and female Srivari Sevaks packed 70 thousand laddus.These laddus will be distributed as Srivari prasadam to the devotees participating in the grand state festival of Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam, which will be held on April 11th from 6:30 to 8:30 pm as part of the ongoing Sri Kodandarama Swamy annnual Brahmotsavam in Vontimitta in Kadapa district.

BJP leaders are more dangerous than British: CM Revanth



Ahmedabad, April 9 Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has alleged that Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders are more dangerous than the British. "Just as the British were expelled from India, we must also work together to remove the BJP from our nation under Rahul Gandhi's leadership. Everyone should prepare to stand up against Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Revanth Reddy stated during an Extended CWC meeting in Ahmedabad on Wednesday.With a strong resolve taken from here, we are going to defeat the BJP in Telangana. I appeal to every Congress worker and Gandhi followers to take the responsibility of defeating the BJP in the coming days from here," he said.The Chief

Minister asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is disseminating Godse's ideology across the nation, urging citizens to resist this ideology associated with Modi. He remarked that Modi had committed to generating 2 crore jobs annually. With 11 years having passed, the central government should have created over 20 crore jobs by now. Instead, he argued, both Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah have resulted in 2 crore young people becoming unemployed each year.

The Chief Minister emphasised that the Congress government in Telangana has delivered on Rahul Gandhi's promises by forgiving Rs 21,000 crore in farm loans, thereby providing significant relief to 25 lakh farmers within just 10 months of taking office. He also noted that the government has carried out a caste census as pledged by Rahul Gandhi."The Telangana region was freed from the Nizam's governance through the efforts of former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel. This historical connection has fostered strong ties between the people of Telangana and those from Gujarat, as well as the descendants of Vallabhbhai Patel. It was Vallabhbhai who played a crucial role in liberating Telangana, and it was Sonia Gandhi who granted it statehood," Revanth Reddy emphasized. "While standing in Gujarat, I made a commitment to prevent the BJP from gaining a foothold in Telangana. Under the guidance of Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, we will ensure that the BJP does not enter Telangana. We will stand against them, and their actions will not be forgiven," Revanth Reddy stated.

KTR demands rollback of fuel price hike

Hyderabad, April 9 Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) Working President K.T. Rama Rao (KTR) has issued a stern demand to the Union government to immediately reverse the recent hike in petrol, diesel, and LPG prices, accusing the Modi administration of plunging the lives of Indian citizens into chaos with its unrelenting fuel price increases. In a letter addressed to Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, KTR slammed the Centre's policies, asserting that India has become one of the most expensive nations globally for fuel, outstripping even Bhutan, Pakistan, and economically crippled Sri Lanka. KTR pointed out the paradox of rising domestic fuel prices despite a significant decline in international crude oil rates, accusing the Centre of exploiting citizens through excessive taxation.



Even as global crude prices drop, the Central Government continues to jack up fuel costs. Is this the 'Achche Din' they promised?" he questioned sharply. He expressed outrage over the Centre's use of unshareable cesses, which he claimed are choking states financially while filling the Union's coffers, calling it a betrayal of cooperative federalism.The BRS leader alleged that the Modi Government is engaging in "severe economic exploitation" by hiking fuel rates through cesses, denying states like Telangana their rightful share of revenue."While states contributing significantly to India's economy struggle with fund shortages, the Centre uses illegally collected cess revenues to dominate them instead of providing infrastructure," KTR charged. He further criticised the government's slogan of "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance," stating it has morphed into "Maximum Taxation, Minimum Relief." In his letter, KTR highlighted the crippling burden of LPG prices, which have soared past Rs.1,100 per cylinder, rendering

them unaffordable for poor and middle-class women. He termed the much-touted Ujjwala Yojana a "cruel joke," noting that beneficiaries who once received cylinders with fanfare are now forced back to cooking with firewood due to escalating costs"The LPG price hike isn't just a statistic—it disrupts every facet of life," he said, adding that oil companies are poised to pocket thousands of crores while the poor choose between gas and groceries.Drawing a historical comparison, KTR recalled that even when crude oil prices exceeded \$100 per barrel in the past, fuel costs in India were lower than they are today. He reminded the BJP of its own protests against fuel prices during the UPA era, accusing the party of hypocrisy. "Ministers and BJP leaders once hit the streets demanding lower prices. Now, they burden the public while oil companies rake in billions," he said, alleging that the Centre keeps prices stable during elections only to hike them post-polls, deceiving the electorate.

Governor extends support to social, educational initiatives through discretionary grants



Hyderabad, April 9 : Governor Jishnu Dev Varma presented Demand Drafts (DDs) to four institutions under his Discretionary Grants at a special event held at Raj Bhavan on Wednesday The grants aim to encourage innovation, and community developmentThose recipients, who receive grants are Prajwala NGO, Maheshwaram – A well-known organisation working to prevent human trafficking has been given Rs.20 lakhs. The grant will help the educational needs of the trafficked girls and children of trafficked women.RGUKT, Basar – The grant of Rs.15 lakhs will support the development of the Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship Development (IIED) Cell at Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies, encouraging research and student-led innovation.Army College of Dental Sciences, Secunderabad – A grant of Rs.2.24 lakhs for special "Governor of Telangana Rolling Trophy" to be instituted to promote and reward excellence in community service

among students.Mayur Marg Senior Citizens' Association, Begumpet – The grant of Rs.1.35 lakhs will be used to purchase a TV and a public address system to enhance recreational and informative activities for senior citizens.The Governor praised the efforts of the organisations and expressed hope that the grants would help them make a greater impact. He called for collaborative efforts to build a more compassionate and progressive Telangana.The event were attended by Principal Secretary to Governor M. Dana Kishore, Padma awardee Sunitha Krishnan of Prajwala; Brig. Prashant Halgeri from Army College of Dental Sciences; Prof. A. Govardhan, Vice Chancellor of RGUKT Basar; and representatives from the Mayur Marg Senior Citizens' Association.

AP revenue grows by 2.2%: CM Naidu calls for increased focus on tax evasion

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu recently announced that Andhra Pradesh's revenue has seen a growth of 2.2 per cent. During a review meeting with key revenue-generating departments, the Chief Minister emphasised that true economic progress will only be realised through an enhancement of the state's own revenue sources.Naidu urged officials to utilise artificial intelligence to address issues of tax evasion, highlighting the importance of leveraging technology in revenue collection. He also set a target for state officials to achieve a revenue goal of Rs. 1.37 lakh crore, underlining the necessity for strategic planning and execution to meet financial objectives.

Rachakonda She Teams nab 203 persons in March for harassing women

Hyderabad: In the last one month, the Rachakonda She Teams caught 203 persons including 65 minors for harassing women at various spots across the Commissionerate. While 14 criminal cases and 84 petty cases were booked, 116 persons were counselled.Officials said complaints were received from various sources including WhatsApp and via social media from different hotspots like metro trains, stations, bus stops, working places and colleges between March 1 and 30.Those caught attended mandatory counselling sessions conducted by trained counsellors and professional psychologists at the Police Commissioner's camp office at LB Nagar.

At Navkar Mahamantra event, PM Modi's special gesture in the spotlight



GNS News Agency, April 9

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and participated in the Navkar Mahamantra Divas programme at Vigyan Bhawan on Wednesday. He spoke highly of the spiritual experience of the Navkar Mantra and also emphasized its ability to bring peace and stability to the mind.However, what caught everyone's attention and also earned all-round admiration was PM Modi's special gesture at the event.PM Modi walked into the Vigyan Bhawan, the venue for the

Navkar Mahamantra Divas programme, without any footwear as a mark of reverence. He also shunned the dais and chose to sit among the people. This heartfelt gesture of PM Modi won the hearts of people present there.Notably, PM Modi has broken the protocol at earlier occasions also to show solidarity with the common people and make them feel like a family.Addressing the Navkar Mahamantra event, PM Modi extolled the Jain dharma and described 'Jain literature as the backbone of intellectual glory of India'.He also proposed

nine resolutions on the Navkar Mahamantra Divas and also urged everyone to adopt them, after collective chanting of Navkar Mantra.He proposed 'water conservation' as the first resolution and recalled the words of Buddha Sagar Maharaj Ji, who predicted 100 years ago that water would be sold in shops. He emphasized the need to value and save every drop of water.'

Ek Ped Maa ke Naam' was the second resolution, where he highlighted the importance of planting trees and urged everyone

to plant a tree in their mother's name.Other resolutions that he stressed upon and urged everyone to imbibe in their lives included -- Cleanliness Mission, Vocal for Local, Explore India, Adopting Natural Farming, Healthy Lifestyle, Incorporating Yoga and Sports.

He proposed 'Helping the Poor' as the ninth and final resolution, saying that assisting the underprivileged is the true essence of service.PM Modi emphasised that these resolutions align with the principles of Jainism and the vision of a sustainable and harmonious future."These nine resolutions will infuse new energy into individuals and provide a fresh direction to the younger generation. Their implementation will foster peace, harmony, and compassion within society," he added.Notably, the Navkar Mahamantra Divas is a momentous celebration of spiritual harmony and ethical consciousness that seeks to unite people through the collective chanting of the Navkar Mahamantra -- the most revered and universal chant in Jainism.

CM Revanth expresses grief over demise of Kumari Ananthan



Hyderabad, April 9 Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has expressed deep shock at the demise of Tamil Nadu Congress party senior leader and prominent writer Kumari Ananthan (Harikrishnan Nadar Ananthan), father of former Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan.The Chief Minister said the passing away of a patriot Ananthan, who revived the principles of Mahatma Gandhi and a lover of the Tamil language, is mournful.Revanth Reddy recalled Kumari Ananthan rendered commendable services as the member of Legislative Assembly for 4 times and once as a Member of Parliament. He expressed his deepest sympathies and condolences to Tamilisai and the grieving family members. The Chief Minister prayed to God the departed soul rest in peace.Veteran Congress leader Kumari Ananthan, who was 93 years old at the time of his death from age-related health issues, was recognised for his longstanding dedication to public service. He served as a Member of Parliament and was a well-known representative of the Indian National .

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SC rap for Governor

The Supreme Court's strictures against Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi should serve as a warning to the Centre's appointees across the country, particularly in states where the BJP is not in power. In a major victory for the DMK government, the court has ruled that Ravi's decision to reserve 10 Bills for the President's consideration was illegal, arbitrary and against constitutional provisions. The overarching message is that the Governor must ideally be the state government's friend, philosopher and guide; he or she should not let political considerations undermine his or her allegiance to the Constitution.

Confrontations between chief ministers and governors have become the norm in states ruled by Opposition parties. In recent years, the situation has worsened in Tamil Nadu, where the MK Stalin government has been at loggerheads with Governor Ravi over a number of issues, most importantly the inordinate delay in granting assent to Bills passed by the state legislature. In 2023, the Governor went to the extent of dismissing a tainted minister from the state Cabinet without consulting the CM. The Union Home Ministry had to intervene to undo the wrong that was aimed at cutting the state dispensation down to size. It is a no-brainer that good governance must be the top priority of both the CM and the Governor. The apex court has rightly observed that the members of the legislature, being elected representatives, are better attuned to ensuring the wellbeing of the people of the state. Creating roadblocks for political reasons does not behove the holder of a constitutional office. The Centre would also be well-advised to desist from giving governors carte blanche to impede the functioning of state governments. This can help in restoring much-needed balance in Union-state relations.

"COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS IN PEDDAPALLI DISTRICT — INSPECTION BY SCHOOL NET TEAM".



P.S.ASHOKAN "INDIAN-CHRONICLE" "MANTHANI" "10-4-2025." "Pursuant to the directives of Honorable IT Minister Sri Sridhar Babu and the guidance provided by the District Collector, a dedicated team from SchoolNet visited Peddapalli district to assess the educational needs of the district's government schools." "The inspection team, led by Senior Manager Mr. Shivaprasad and Academic Manager Mr. Nursing Das, had an official meeting with the District Collector and Magistrate, Honorable Sri Koya Sriharsha, IAS, to engage in in-depth discussions regarding the current state, needs, and development strategies of the schools." "The meeting also saw the participation of key district officials, including District Education Officer Mrs. D. Madhavi, District Planning Coordinator Mr. Ch. Mallesh Goud, and Mandal Educational Officer (MEO) Mrs. Dasari Lakshmi, along with other prominent members of the Education Department." "The central focus of the review was to address the enhancement of educational quality in the district's schools, the improvement of infrastructure, and the creation of an actionable plan to integrate advanced technology in order to better serve both students and teachers." "Dates of Review: April 8-9, 2025 (Two Days)" "During this two-day review, the SchoolNet team conducted on-site assessments of several government schools across the district. The schools visited included: "Kasturba Gandhi Girls' School (KGBV) – Muttaram" "TGMS School – Daryapur" "ZPHS Girls' School – Manthani" "ZPHS – Gunjarpadu" "ZPHS Boys' School – Manthani" "Social Welfare Boys' High School – Manthani" "KGBV – Ramagiri" "The SchoolNet team meticulously evaluated the educational standards, infrastructural needs, and technological requirements of these institutions. This comprehensive assessment will form the basis of a detailed report, which will be submitted to the government. The report will outline necessary interventions and strategies for the future development of the district's educational system." "The review also benefited from the contributions of various education leaders, including Boys High School HM Mr. Mosam Srinivas, Social Welfare Principal Mr. Srinath, and CRP Mr. Mallanna, whose valuable insights were integral to the discussions.

Jupally to attend 20th South Asia Hotel Investment conference today

Hyderabad, April 9 Minister for Tourism Jupally Krishna Rao is set to attend the 20th South Asia Hotel Investment Conference and Workshop at Powai Lake in Mumbai on Thursday. During the event, the Minister will interact with important figures in the hospitality industry and highlight the extensive investment prospects in Telangana. Under the guidance of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the Telangana government is actively seeking to attract substantial investments in the tourism sector. Jupally Krishna Rao will underscore the State's commitment to ecotourism, temple tourism, and medical tourism, as well as introduce the details of the newly developed Telangana Tourism Policy. The Minister will guarantee investors appealing incentives, efficient processes, and comprehensive government backing for tourism-related projects.

SR Educational Society Celebrates Graduation and Annual Day with Enthusiasm



GNS News Agency, April 9

SR Educational Society, located in Dattatreya Colony, Asif Nagar, recently hosted its Annual Day and Graduation Day celebrations at the Dattatreya Com-

munity Hall. The event was a vibrant and joyous occasion, filled with enthusiasm, laughter, and colorful performances. Students, along with their proud parents, participated wholeheartedly, making the celebration a truly memorable

one. A key highlight of the event was the Graduation Ceremony for UKG students, marking a significant milestone in their early academic journey.

The event featured a variety of cultural perfor-

mances, including dances, skits, and songs, which showcased the talents and creativity of the young learners. These performances reflected the nurturing and holistic educational environment that SR Educational Society strives to provide. Mrs. Shwetha, the Principal of the institution, congratulated all the students and appreciated the active involvement of parents in making the event a grand success. She also extended her heartfelt thanks to the teaching and non-teaching staff for their unwavering support.

Certificates were awarded to students for their participation and achievements, adding to the excitement and pride of the day. The celebration concluded on a high note, with smiles, applause, and a sense of accomplishment shared by students, parents, and staff alike.

OPPO K12x Crosses Two Million Sales Milestone – OPPO K13 Coming Soon to Raise the Bar

GNS News Agency, April 9

Hyderabad: With over "two million units sold, the OPPO K12x has cemented its position as a blockbuster success in India's mid-range smartphone segment. A large part of this success was driven by Flipkart's Festive Sale 2024, where the K12x emerged as one of the highest-selling Android smartphones. The device also earned an outstanding 4.5-star rating from 1.5 lakh+ reviews on Flipkart, reinforcing user trust in its powerful performance, long battery life, and reliability that doesn't need a premium price tag. Building on this success, OPPO is geared to launch its new "OP" the OPPO K13 in India ahead of its global debut. The "OverPowered" K13 will bring smooth gaming, cutting-edge battery life with fast charging, and a buttery-smooth smartphone experience designed to dominate its category. Anshuman Bhatt, Head of E-commerce, OPPO India, said, "The OPPO K12x set new industry benchmarks, reinforcing our commitment to high-performance, feature-packed smartphones. With the OPPO K13, we are taking it a step further – pushing the limits of speed, gaming, and battery endurance. We are confident the K13 will redefine expectations and further solidify OPPO's leadership in the segment."

Smriti Ravichandran, Vice President Mobiles, Flipkart, said, "We, at Flipkart, are thrilled to introduce the highly anticipated OPPO K13 5G to our customers in India prior to the global launch. The remarkable success of the OPPO K12x 5G, which was one of the most popular choices



for customers during the 2024 festive season, reflects the strong trust and preference young Bharat has for OPPO devices." "OPPO's commitment to their R&D and strong QC mechanism enables their devices to deliver an exceptional software and hardware experience. We believe the latest launch will cater to the dynamic needs of today's youth with not only its cutting-edge features but also for its exceptional value" said, Ms. Ravichandran."

"FORMER MLA PUTTA MADHUKAR HAS LAUNCHED AN INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE IN KANNALA VILLAGE, PALAKURTHI MANDAL.



"P.S.ASHOKAN "INDIAN-CHRONICLE" "MANTHANI" "10-4-2025." "In preparation for the BRS Party's Rajatotsava Sabha, scheduled to be held in Warangal on the 27th of this month, Madhukar himself wrote a wall message urging for the event's success."

"He emphasized that this gathering is being organized to mark the foundation day of the party. In his message, he appealed to party supporters, activists, and leaders to work together in making the event a grand success.

Tirumala Laddus ready for Vontimitta Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam



"April 9, Indian Chronicle, Rayalaseema co-ordinator" "Tirumala Srivari Laddu Prasadam are ready to be provided to the devotees who will attend the Vontimitta Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam on April 11. "The packing of the laddus was carried out on Wednesday at Srivari Seva Sadan – 2 in Tirumala with the help of Srivari Sevaks. "Under the

guidance of Deputy EO (General) Siva Prasad and AEO Balaraju, about 300 male and female Srivari Sevaks packed 70 thousand laddus. "These laddus will be distributed as Srivari prasadam to the devotees participating in the grand state festival of Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam, which will be held on April 11th from 6:30 to 8:30 pm as part of the ongoing Sri Kodandarama Swamy annual Brahmotsavam in Vontimitta in Kadapa district. "Srivari Seva staff and others also participated in this program.

AP Tourism new package for vontimitta Sri Rama kalyanam ...

April 9, Indian Chronicle, Rayalaseema co-ordinator" "Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation Divisional Manager C.H. Srinivasa Rao said in a statement that a new package tour is being organized on the occasion of Ontimitta Srikodanda Rama Swamy Pournami Kalyanam. The details of the package tour are as follows: April 11. Per person: Rs. 600.00 (including non-AC bus and guide facility). The bus will leave from Srinivasam, Vishnu Nivasam (TTD) at 8 am. For more details,



Divisional Manager C.H. Srinivasa Rao 08772289123, 9848007033. Phone numbers are requested to be contacted.

Daimler India Commercial Vehicles appoints Rajiv Chaturvedi as President & Chief Business Officer



GNS News Agency, April 9

Hyderabad: Daimler India Commercial Vehicles (DICV), a wholly owned Subsidiary of Daimler Truck AG, today announced the appointment of Mr. Rajiv Chaturvedi as the President & Chief Business Officer, Domestic Sales & Customer Service, effective April 1st, 2025. He succeeds Sreeram Venkateswaran in this role.

With over 30 years of industry experience, Rajiv brings extensive expertise in business strategy, market expansion, sales and operations. In his new role, he will lead DICV's domestic business, focusing on growth, operational excellence and strengthening the brand's market position. Mr. Satyakam Arya, Managing Director & CEO, Daimler India Commercial Vehicles, said, "We are delighted to welcome Rajiv Chaturvedi to DICV. His extensive experience in the construction & heavy equipment industry, combined with his expertise in business strategy, market expansion and sales make him exceptionally well suited to lead the brand and take our domestic business to the next level." Rajiv previously served as the Senior Vice President (India & SAARC) at Hyundai Construction Equipment India Pvt Ltd., where he played a key role in driving growth and expansion while achieving sustained profitability. Prior to that, he held key leadership positions at Tata Hitachi Construction Machinery. Mr. Rajiv Chaturvedi, President & Chief Business Officer, Daimler India Commercial Vehicles, said, "I am honored to be a part of DICV and excited about the opportunities ahead. I am confident that we will achieve significant growth, set new industry benchmarks and further strengthen our competitive edge in the commercial vehicle segment in India."

WAVES 2025: Finalists Announced for "Make the World Wear Khadi" Challenge



The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in collaboration with the Advertising Agencies Association of India (AAAI), has announced the shortlist for Make the World Wear Khadi - one of the 32 Creative in India Challenges being held as part of the WAVES Summit 2025, scheduled from May 1 to 4 in Mumbai. Shortlisted Candidates: Iman Sengupta & Soham Ghosh – Havas Worldwide India Kartik Sankar & Madhumita Basu – 22feet Tribal Kajal Tirlokar – Interactive Avenues Tanmay Raul & Mandar Mahadik – DDB Mudra Group Akash Mejari & Kajol Jeswani – DDB Mudra Group Sharing insights behind their work, the participants reflected on Khadi's evolving identity—from a symbol of India's freedom movement to a solution for sustainable fashion. Kajal Tirlokar described Khadi as "a testament of time... slow, soulful, and spun with care," while Tanmay Raul and Mandar Mahadik positioned it as the "Fabric of the Future," highlighting its potential to address environmental degradation caused by fast fashion. Akash Mejari and Kajol Jeswani focused on Khadi as a means to "undo" ecological damage, encouraging climate-conscious action through their campaign. Meanwhile, Iman Sengupta and Soham Ghosh emphasized Khadi's economic and cultural value, advocating for it as a premium, purpose-driven choice in global fashion.

Rahul Gandhi Supports Telangana Caste Census, Hits Out at BJP

GNS News Agency, April 5

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) are undermining the nation's religious freedom and constitutional framework. Addressing party workers at the 84th plenary session of the Congress in Ahmedabad on Wednesday, Gandhi issued a sharp critique of the ruling government. He said that defending the Indian Constitution and preserving Congress values was a collective responsibility. He asserted that the BJP aims to dismantle the foundational ideology established by Congress. Gandhi urged party members to actively safeguard the Constitution, characterizing the document as the voice of India shaped over thousands of years. "The Constitution represents the collective wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Ambedkar, Sardar Patel, Kabir, and Guru Nanak. It is not just a 75-year-old text but a reflection of India's inclusive philosophy," he said. Speaking on social equity, Gandhi reiterated his commitment to ensuring proper representation for marginalized communities, including Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Dalits, Adivasis, and minorities.

Tirupati Parliament Salivahana President meets Minister Kollu Ravindra.



“““April 9,Indian Chronicle, Rayalaseema co-ordinator”““Tirupati Parliament Salivahana President

Aamudala Tulsidas politely met Excise Minister Kollu Ravindra, who is on a visit to Tirupati, at the Tirupati Parliament office. Minister Kollu Ravindra was felicitated with a salwa and presented with a bouquet. In this context, he explained the problems faced by the salivahanas in the Tirupati area. He requested the state government to bring their problems to the attention of the state government and provide assistance.

He also requested that his name be considered in the context of filling nominated posts. Speaking on this occasion, Minister Kollu Ravindra assured that he would resolve every problem that came to his attention as soon as possible. State Yadava Corporation Chairman G Narasimha Yadav, Nai Brahmin Corporation Development Chairman Rudrakoti Sadasivam, Shalivahana members Krishna Telugu Desam Party leaders and activists participated in the program.

IPT Student Successfully Graduates from Startup Nexus Cohort 20th Program

“April 9, Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema co-ordinator”“Sri Padmavati Mahila University, “Institute of Pharmaceutical Technology (IPT) student, successfully completed the Startup Nexus Cohort #20 Program. Vaishnavi Harish, a 6th semester student of B.Pharmacy at Sri Padmavati Mahila University, Institute of Pharmaceutical Technology, successfully completed the prestigious Startup Nexus Cohort #20 Program held at the American Center, New Delhi from 3rd February 2025 to 2nd April 2025. The program, a pre-incubation initiative organized by the US Embassy in partnership with UCON Global, aims to foster creativity and productivity among students and aspiring youth. Vaishnavi presented her creative idea, 'Smart Digital Stethoscope', and received a certificate of completion.”Prof. V. Uma, Vice Chancellor, Sri Padmavati Mahila University, congratulated Vaishnavi for this achievement. He said that this achievement not only showcases the dedication and creative thinking of the student but also reflects the industrial culture that is going on at the Institute of Pharmaceutical Technology.”Prof. S. Joshna Rani, Head, Department, Institute of Pharmaceutical Technology, explained that the Nexus Pre-Incubation Programme was an important achievement for Vaishnavi's successful completion. She strongly encouraged the students to participate in



such prestigious programmes.”Prof. A. Sridevi, the student's mentor, said that the 'Smart Digital Stethoscope' was designed with an aim to redefine the quality of healthcare with modern features and accessibility. Also, he said that the institute, as the leader, will continue to recognize the potential of students and support them in shaping the future of pharmaceutical technology and creativity.

BRS Vows to Make Warangal Silver Jubilee a Historic Triumph, : MLC Dasoju Sravan

Hyderabad, April 9 : “The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) is mobilizing on a war footing to ensure its 25th anniversary Silver Jubilee public meeting on April 27 in Warangal becomes a defining moment, declared MLC Dr. Dasoju Sravan today . Speaking at a massive preparatory meeting of the party workers in Ramsinghpura in Karwan assembly constituency, he rallied the cadre for the grand event while unleashing a blistering critique of the Congress government's 16-month tenure.Dr. Sravan said that the Silver Jubilee marks a proud milestone for BRS party founded by former CM K. Chandrasekhara Rao (KCR) to secure Telangana statehood. “This is not just a celebration of 25 years but a powerful reaffirmation of our commitment to Telangana's people,” he stated.He called on the party workers from Karwan to join lakhs of supporters in Warangal by turning the event into a “pink festival” that reflects the party's unyielding grassroots strength. “We aim to make this a historic gathering that resonates across the state,” he added.He alleged that the ruling Congress party Pushed Telangana into Crisis in the last 16 Months.

Taking the ruling Congress to task, Dr. Sravan said

that the Warangal meeting would spotlight the stark contrast between the BRS's decade of transformative governance and the current administration's failures. “Under former CM KCR, Telangana reached new heights in development and welfare and in just 16 months, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's mismanagement has derailed this progress and plunged the state into a crisis,” he alleged. He accused the Congress of betraying the public with unfulfilled promises and neglecting critical sectors like employment, irrigation, and agriculture while pledging that BRS would lay bare this “destructive misrule” before the people. Dr. Sravan said that the Silver Jubilee event would serve as a launchpad for BRS's resurgence with KCR delivering a roadmap to revitalize the party.

“KCR's address will inspire our cadres and set a clear path to reclaim power,” he remarked. He expressed absolute confidence in KCR's return by stating that the people's trust in his leadership is unshakable and he will come back as the Chief Minister for the third time. He pointed to KCR's recent district-level engagements as a proof of the party's growing momentum.

Former MP Narendra remembered

Hyderabad, April 9 (NSS): BJP leader Ale Narendra's 11th death anniversary was held grandly at the Bharatiya Janata Party state office in the city today. On this occasion, the party leaders and activists paid floral tributes to Narendra's portrait and remembered his services. BJP State Organizational General Secretary Chandrashekhara Tiwari participated as the chief guest in the program. Former MLC N. Ramchandra Rao, former MLA Saidi Reddy, BJP State General Secretary Kasam Venkateswarlu, BJP OBC Morcha State President Anand Goud, former OBC Morcha State President Ale Bhaskar and other leaders participated in the program.Speaking on the occasion, Ramchandra Rao said that Narendra, who represented Himayatnagar Assembly constituency, considered the people of Hyderabad as his relatives. “He used to bravely face the injustices done to Hindus in the old city. His role in the Telangana movement is unforgettable. Narendra's services in taking the ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party to the people are immeasurable,” he said. He said that all the workers should move forward by continuing his ideals. “I pray to God that the soul of the late Tiger Narendra may

rest in peace. BJP Telangana State General Secretary Kasam said that Narendra was the inspiration for the Telangana BJP. “He fought like a warrior with a group of Razakars in Hyderabad city and provided protection to the Hindus. He bravely faced the attacks of MIM party goons in the old city. He fought against ISI terrorists , Rohingya immigrants and illegal infiltrators and stood by the local people. The whole of India praised his courage.In particular, Narendra stood by great activists like Ashok Singhal in the Ayodhya Ram Temple construction movement and walked in the front line. Narendra was the first activist to be injured in the attack by Mulayam Singh Yadav's army on the sanctum sanctorum in Ayodhya. He stood by the Hindu people to keep Hyderabad peaceful through many struggles and movements. BJP is carrying forward Narendra's legacy with dignity,” he said He noted that the BJP was working towards fulfilling the aspiration of the people of Telangana to hoist the saffron flag on Golconda fort and added that With the inspiration of Narendra , they would stand for the defense of the Hindus while facing the MIM goons and ISI gunmen.

BRS leaders responsible for HCU land controversy: BJP MP Raghunandan Rao

Hyderabad, April 9 BJP MP Raghunandan Rao has accused BRS party leaders of talking nonsense that they had saved HCU lands and added that they were the ones who actually did the wrong. The Telangana BJP MPs met at the residence of Chevella MP Konda Vishweshwar Reddy regarding HCU lands on Wednesday. MPs Konda Vishweshwar Reddy, Raghunandan Rao, Eatala Rajender and HCU VC Jagadishwar Rao attended this meeting. Legal issues related to the HCU lands were discussed on this occasion. Later, speaking to the media, Raghunandan Rao said that the then undivided Andhra Pradesh government had entered into an agreement to take 534 acres of land from the Central University, of which only 397 acres were transferred back in the name of the university and the remaining 137 acres were not registered. However, he said that former CM KCR gave the 134 acres land that should have been given to the university to TNGOs. He said that if the BRS really loved the students and the university, it would have given those 134 acres to the university and added that it was now trying to shift the blame on others. “If they gave land to the TNGOs and built a road here, they would have lost the case in the university court. They are spending crores in the Supreme Court over this issue.” he claimed

.Rao said that If CM Revanth Reddy's rule is truly Indira's Rajyam, the 2,324 acres of land that the Congress government gave to the HCU should be fenced and the students should be protected. He said that the ruling party leaders should stop these superficial acts of pretending that the cases had been withdrawn against the students. He said that the then Rangareddy District Collector had written in 2012 that HCU had only 2,185 acres of land and added that the remaining 400 acres also belonged to the HCU while noting that it was within the jurisdiction of the court.“Today, the court has ruled that the land does not belong to private individuals. In that case, would that land become the land of the HCU,” Raghunandar Rao questioned. He said that if the HCU lands were given to the university as the collector had written in 2012, the fresh controversy over the land would not have happened. He said that let the details of the scam that BRS party working president KTR is talking about behind these lands be revealed and added that they would react on the issue only after KTR's revelation. He said that Telangana BJP MPs had not fled the country and added that he would support the HCU students and would bring the issues discussed in the meeting to the attention of the party leaders.

Workshop highlights digital innovations to strengthen FPO ecosystems



Hyderabad, April 9 :Digital Green Trust hosted a state-level workshop called “Harnessing Data to Unlock Digital Opportunities for FPOs,” which was funded by the Digital Green Foundation, at a hotel here on Wednesday. The event showcased eFARM, a tool designed to assist Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in making data-driven decisions, along with Farmer.Chat, an AI-driven advisory platform providing farmers with 24/7 access to local, scientifically validated agricultural advice in their native languagesFarmer.Chat is designed with a focus on resilience to climate change and gender inclusivity, ensuring it is accessible, especially for women farmers.The workshop attracted over 80 participants from FPOs and NGOs in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, in addition to more than 20 key representatives from government agencies, leading agricultural research institutions, and financial organisations With a focus on advancing the digital

enablement of FPOs, the workshop served as a strategic platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration. It highlighted innovative digital solutions such as e-FARM and Farmer.Chat, which are poised to transform how FPOs manage data, make informed decisions, and integrate more effectively with financial and market ecosystems.Nidhi Bhasin, CEO, Digital Green Trust, emphasized the importance of digitizing FPOs to enable informed, evidence-based decision-making.

Notable participants included representatives from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) bodies such as the Indian Institute of Rice Research (IIRR), Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), and also the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT). Senior officials from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) also took part in the discussions, adding valuable perspectives to the dialogue. Experts highlighted the importance of digitization in enhancing operational efficiency and building sustainable business models for FPOs. Panel discussions and interactive sessions explored tools for data collection, analysis, and application in decision-making. Case studies demonstrated how data-driven insights are already enabling FPOs to access finance and improve their market linkages.The workshop concluded with a call for collaboration between technology providers, research institutes, and grassroots organizations to create an ecosystem that supports FPOs in their digital journey.

POCO unveils C71, a game-changer in budget smartphone segment

Hyderabad, April 9 POCO India, a brand renowned for delivering high-performance devices at aggressive price points, has launched its latest budget-friendly smartphone—the POCO C71.With a compelling combination of features and affordability, the C71 is poised to redefine value in the entry-level smartphone category. Digvijay Chauhan, Lead Marketing explained the features of the new phone at an event in Hyderabad on Wednesday.He mentioned that with an entry price of just Rs 6,499, the POCO C71 distinguishes itself as the only smartphone in its category to feature a 6.88-inch HD+ display with a 120Hz adaptive refresh rate and TÜV Rheinland Triple Eye Protection. The display is designed to enhance the viewing experience and includes Wet Touch technology, which allows for accurate use even when hands are wet or when it's raining, according to Digvijay Chauhan. The POCO C71 has an elegant flat-frame

design, complemented by a stylish golden-ring camera decoration and an eye-catching split-grid layout. Photography lovers will enjoy the 32MP dual rear camera configuration and an 8MP front camera, which promise clear and vibrant photos.

The phone is equipped with a robust 5200mAh battery along with 15W fast charging, making it suitable for all-day use with minimal interruptions. Moreover, the device has an IP52 rating for splash and dust resistance, enhancing its durability for everyday use, he noted.Commenting on the launch, Himanshu Tandon, Country Head of POCO India, said, “We're thrilled to unveil the POCO C71, a device that embodies power, performance, and innovation. With features like a 120Hz display, 12GB RAM, and Android 15, all at an unbeatable price, the C71 sets a new benchmark in the budget smartphone category.”

CAT allows AP IAS officer Ronald Rose to work in Telangana

Hyderabad, April 9 Senior IAS officer Ronald Rose has received significant relief from the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT). Despite being assigned to Andhra Pradesh during the state's bifurcation, the CAT has issued important orders permitting him to remain in Telangana.Following the separation of the Telugu States, the Union Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) assigned Ronald Rose to Andhra Pradesh. Although he initially reported to AP, he later returned to Telangana for various reasons, prompting Ronald Rose to seek judicial intervention regarding his transfer.This marks the second time the IAS officer has

approached the CAT, requesting an order from the DoPT to allow him to continue his service in Telangana. Recently, the tribunal ruled in favor of Ronald Rose regarding his petition. Following the review of the arrangements established during the State's bifurcation, the Tribunal directed the DoPT to permit Ronald Ross to remain in Telangana. This decision has facilitated Ronald Ross's continued service.This situation has sparked an engaging discussion in Telangana. Analysts suggest that this case has evolved, coinciding with the controversies that have arisen from the distribution of IAS and IPS officers after the bifurcation.

Farmers stage rasta-roko demanding water to crops in Nirmal



GNS News Agency, April 9

Nirmal: Farmers from different villages demanded the government to take steps to ensure irrigation facilities to their crops cultivated under Sadarmat irrigation project in this ongoing Yasangi season. They staged a rasta-roko in Kaddampeddur mandal centre on Wednesday.Around 300 farmers belonging to Lingapur, Mallannapet, Elagadapa, Dildarnagar, Masaipet, Nachanellapur, Pettarpur, Maddipadaga, Laxmisagar, Sarangapur and many other villages blocked the traffic demanding the government to provide water to their crops. They recalled that they raised crops by pledging gold after being assured by local public representatives and officials of ensuring the irrigation facility to their crops at a meeting held on January 2.

The disgruntled farmers regretted that the officials now stopped the supply of water to their crops, which reached near harvesting stage. They said that they had no option but to die by suicide if the officials continue to neglect them. They announced that they would not quit the protest if the crops were not irrigated till May 10.On receiving information about the protest, police rushed to the spot and tried to stop the agitation by assuring them of justice. However, the farmers wanted an assurance from Collector Abhilaasha Abhinav and Tahsildar. The revenue officials including Tahsildar Prabhakar held consultations with the farmers and Irrigation officials, but in vain.Meanwhile, Khanapur MLA Vedma Boiju spoke to the farmers over the phone. He urged them to bring their challenges to his notice. He faulted them for blocking the traffic. The farmers alleged that Boiju was

confined to Uttoor though he represents Khanapur Assembly segment. They went to block the traffic.They withdrew their protest when the revenue officials promised to address their challenge at the earliest.

Bhadrachalam Road Railway Station to be redeveloped with an Expenditure of Rs. 25.41 Crores

Hyderabad, April 9 A major transformation is in progress for Indian Railways with up gradation of Railway stations on a massive scale, with a vision to provide World-class facilities to the passengers. Under the “Amrit Bharat Station Scheme” (ABSS), 40 Railway stations across Telangana are being redeveloped with an estimated cost of Rs 2,737 crores, to provide modern passenger amenities and convert them into growth centers to the regional population.

The mission got a major boost when the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for stations redevelopment in the state of Telangana during August, 2023 and February, 2024. The list includes the major upgradation of Secunderabad Railway station works that has been taken up on large scale to meet the world class standards.

Forest dept issues notice to Surat mobile shop owner who made ‘reel’ using elephant to promote product



GNS News Agency, April 9

The Forest Department has issued a notice to the owner of a mobile phone shop in Gujarat’s Surat after he was allegedly found to have used an elephant to promote a product and gain popularity on social media by making a reel. After a video of the incident went viral Friday, Surat forest officials issued a notice to the shopowner Chandrakant Raja from Varachha in Surat, asking him to be present at the forest office

The purported video shows a man holding a mobile phone and standing on the main road below a flyover, along with a woman, and he is heard saying that the phone can

withstand the heaviest of weights. The camera then pans to the elephant with a mahout seated on its back. The animal is then made to walk on a red carpet on which the phone is placed. “This elephant weighs 4-5 tonnes and now we will see when it walks on this phone,” the man is heard saying. After two takes, the elephant is seen stepping on what looks like a mobile phone placed on the carpet. The man then restarts the phone and talks about its “durability”. Talking to The Indian Express, Nitin Vanmora, Forest Officer, Surat Range, said, “We called the mobile phone owner Chandrakant Raja, but he did not answer. We sent our team with a notice to his shop, and told his staff to inform him to be present at the Surat forest department office on Saturday to explain why he did a stunt using a wildlife animal, an adult elephant. Raja did not turn up at the forest office till Saturday afternoon.” He added, “We will try and identify the animal’s owner. After taking their statements in detail, we will decide the next course of action. He used elephants to promote mobile phones and increase followers on social media, which cannot be tolerated. The mobile phone was intact, and nothing happened to the elephant. If mobile phone instrument had got shattered, glass particles would have entered his feet, causing great pain to the animal.” The official further added that such activities will not be entertained, and strict action will be taken if anybody indulges in such acts.

Kunal Kamra fails to show up before Mumbai police for third time in a row

GNS News Agency, April 9

Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra failed to appear before the Mumbai Police on Saturday in a case filed against him for allegedly calling Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde a “traitor.” This is the third time that Kamra has skipped the police summons, an official said. Kamra secured an interim anticipatory bail in the matter till April 7 from Madras High Court but was expected to join the inquiry earlier this week. As he did not show up, the Khar police served a third summons to him asking him to join the probe by April 5.

Kamra shot a video lampooning Shinde over the split in the Shiv Sena, and party workers later ransacked the studio and the hotel in which it is located on the night of March 23. Three FIRs registered against the comedian at Nashik Rural, Jalgaon, and Nashik (Nandgaon) have been transferred to Khar police station. BookMyShow removes Kamra from platform, claims Shiv Sena Shiv Sena functionary Rahool Kanai on Saturday claimed that BookMyShow has removed Kunal Kamra from its list of artists and the platform’s sales listings. Kanai, the social media in-charge of Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, thanked BookMyShow CEO Ashish Hemrajani for keeping its portal “clean and keeping such artist out of the list of pure entertainment.” The BookMyShow team said they have no comments to offer as of now, news agency PTI reported. Reacting to these reports, Kamra asked BookMyShow to confirm if he can still list his shows on their platform. “If not, it’s fine. I understand,” he wrote in a post on X. Kanai, in a letter to Hemrajani, wrote “I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for your continued support of our team to take the said artist out of your sale and promotion listing, thank you for even taking him out of the book my show search history. Your belief in maintaining peace and at the same time respecting our emotions has been instrumental.” He said Mumbaiers love and believe in every form of art but not personal agendas. “Your personal touch and guidance by your team were invaluable in navigating and reaching a solution. We deeply value your commitment to BookMyShow’s values that align with the support, and customer experience, your vision and



leadership are truly inspiring, thank you for giving us your team and getting this cleared at the earliest. Thank you,” Kanai said. Kanai was booked along with Shiv Sainiks for allegedly vandalising the studio where Kamra had performed and alluded to Shinde while making a traitor jibe, which snowballed into a major row.

Mumbai Police has issued three notices to Kamra, believed to be in Puducherry, seeking his personal appearance, but he has skipped all of them. Kunal Kamra’s 5-step guide on how to kill an artist ‘democratically’ Earlier this week, Kamra took to social media to post a sharp critique on how artists are silenced through outrage, intimidation, and institutional pressure. His post, titled ‘How to Kill an Artist ‘Democratically’, comes amid mounting legal trouble and police action against him for allegedly mocking Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in a stand-up performance. In a strongly worded post on X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram, Kamra detailed a “step-by-step guide” to silencing artists democratically. He described a process of growing outrage leading to brand disassociations, drying up of private and corporate gigs, the refusal of major venues to host them, and eventually, pressure from authorities that leaves artists with the stark choice of self-censorship or professional ruin. Kamra’s post came just a day after he criticised the Mumbai Police for attempting to locate him at an outdated address in connection with an ongoing investigation.

3 Bareilly cops, including SI, booked for kidnapping farmer, extorting Rs 2 lakh from kin

GNS News Agency, April 9

Three police personnel, including the in-charge of a police outpost, have been booked in Bareilly for allegedly kidnapping a 45-year-old farmer and extorting Rs 2 lakh from his family. The other two accused are constables posted at the same outpost. Anurag Arya, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Bareilly, has suspended all three accused and ordered a departmental inquiry against them. Raids are underway to trace the absconding policemen, said Nilesh Mishra, Circle Officer. The accused have been identified as Sub-Inspector Balbir Singh, in-charge of the Kasba police outpost, and constables Himanshu Tomar and Mohit Kumar. The SSP took action against them based on the findings of an inquiry conducted by the circle officer.

According to police, they received a complaint from the victim, Balbir Kumar, alleging that on the afternoon of April 3, the accused forcibly entered his house in Bithora village and took a photograph of him with his son. The policemen then allegedly made him sit on his motorcycle and took him to a house located within the police station premises. There, they are learnt to have detained him, issued murder threats, and forced him to call his family to arrange Rs 3 lakh for his release. The victim further claimed that he was abused and thrashed by the policemen. “He stated that the police personnel let him go only after his nephew handed them Rs 2 lakh on the evening of April 3. Before releasing him, the policemen allegedly threatened to kill him if he told anyone about the incident,” said a police officer.



On the basis of complainant, a case was lodged against the policemen on Friday at the Fatehganj West police station under BNS sections 333 (house trespass), 140 (kidnapping or abduction to murder or for ransom, etc), 127 (wrongful confinement), 308 (auction) and 115 (voluntarily causing hurt). Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, meanwhile, slammed the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh over the incident. Taking to X, he wrote in Hindi: “Today’s sensational ‘UP News’: Criminal Cops and a Missing Government.” He went on to list issues under the “corrupt BJP rule” and added, “The police are kidnapping for ransom; the police are filing FIRs against police; the police are raiding the police; the police are searching for fellow policemen; in the name of zero tolerance, the police have become zero.”

UP to emerge as prosperous state in next 3 years with eradication of poverty: CM Yogi Adityanath

GNS News Agency, April 9

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said Uttar Pradesh will emerge as a prosperous state in the next three years by eradicating poverty and his government will make the state’s economy number one in the country. Addressing an event here, the chief minister also attacked previous governments, saying they encouraged “one district, one mafia” while the BJP government has replaced it with “one district, one medical college”. Adityanath is in Maharajganj for the inauguration of the Rohin Barrage. He will also lay the foundation stones of and inaugurate 629 developmental projects worth Rs 654 crore, according to the state government. “In the next three years, Uttar Pradesh will be established as a prosperous state by eradicating poverty. We will make Uttar Pradesh the number one economy in the country by achieving the target of zero poverty,” he



said. “Uttar Pradesh is no longer a BIMARU state. Maharajganj is no longer a backward district,” he said. The acronym ‘BIMARU’ (sick) was coined by demographer Ashish Bose in the mid-1980s, formed from the first letters of names of some of the country’s then poorest states.

‘Told her that parents are in London’: Kin of Muskan, Saurabh may move court seeking custody of their 6-year-old daughter



GNS News Agency, April 9

The family of Muskan Rastogi, who was arrested along with her boyfriend for killing her husband Saurabh Rajput, have sought the help of the police to ensure that they get the custody of Muskan’s six-year-old daughter. However, Saurabh’s elder brother Rahul alias Babloo Rajput has also made a similar request. “I have a son but no daughter. I will be very happy to raise Saurabh’s daughter like my own,” said Rahul. Muskan’s father Pramod Rastogi, however, said that the girl may remind Saurabh’s family members of his killer and they may eventually resent her. “At present, they may be staking a claim on her because Saurabh had purchased a small piece of land in her name in Meerut last year and if she remains with them, they will be the rightful owner of that land.”

Ayush Vikram Singh, Superintendent of Police (SP), Meerut, said both families have been advised to take legal recourse. “Only the court can decide who is rightfully and legally suitable to take the minor girl’s custody. The role of

the police is restricted to arresting the culprits, which we did. We will follow court orders whenever we are directed to ensure her custody with a particular family,” he said. Pramod, meanwhile, said that he was willing to give it in writing that he had nothing to do with Saurabh’s money or property, and added that he “will not get her separated from us at any cost”. Muskan’s mother Kavita Rastogi said the girl currently lives with them and asks for her parents every day. “She has mostly lived with us since her birth as Muskan used to leave her with us on most days. We have a strong connection with her. We told her that her parents have gone to London and will return soon. She asks us to videocall them, but we make excuses,” Kavitha said. Rahul said he was ready to move court to obtain the girl’s custody. “I had gone to see off Saurabh when he left for London the last time. He asked me who would take care of his daughter if something happened to him. I was taken aback by the question, but promised him that I would look after her. At the time, I had no idea what he was talking about. If I had the slightest hint of what was to happen, my brother would have been alive,” he added. Saurabh’s mother Renu Rajput said they are prepared to fight every legal battle to get justice for her son. “We naturally love our granddaughter. Our foremost aim is to ensure that my son’s killers are hanged,” she stated. The investigation has revealed that Muskan stabbed her semi-conscious husband in the chest on March 3 with the help of her boyfriend Sahil Shukla. Sahil then allegedly dismembered the body in the bathroom before putting the parts in a drum and pouring cement into it. The two accused then embarked on a 14-day tour to Himachal Pradesh, mainly Shimla, in a taxi. Muskan and Sahil were arrested on March 19 and sent to judicial custody until April 1. The judicial remand was later extended till April 16.

Karnataka HC disposes of plea challenging election of Waqf Board member; tells petitioners to approach tribunal

GNS News Agency, April 9

The Centre, in its Statement of Objections submitted to the Karnataka High Court, has listed an array of arguments against X’s earlier contentions. A single-judge bench of the high court on April 4 disposed of the challenge to the election of Syed Mohammed Ali as a member of the board in 2024, and his subsequent election as its chairman, though only five members of the 12-member board were present for the polling. (File Photo) The Karnataka High Court has refused to intervene in a petition challenging the election of a member to the state Waqf board who was later elected as its chairman. The high court disposed of the plea, citing its previous orders as per which disputes related to the Waqf Board are the domain of the tribunal set up under the Waqf Act, 1995.

A single-judge bench of the high court on April 4 disposed of the challenge to the election of Syed Mohammed Ali as a member of the board in 2024, and his subsequent election as its chairman, though only five members of the 12-member board were present for the polling. The two separate petitioners in the case – Riyaz Ahmed from Bengaluru and Mohammed Sadatullah from Shivamogga – initially challenged the inclusion of Ali, who hails from Kalaburagi, in the electoral roll of muttawalis (custodian/trustee of Waqf property) on October 22, 2024. Later, they challenged his election to the Waqf Board as a member and finally as its chairman. “The learned senior counsel for the respondents (Waqf Board and others) Jayakumar S Patil would take us through an order passed by a coordinate bench in identical circumstances where the coordinate bench relegated those persons to challenge the elections to the Wakf board to the tribunal in terms of section 83 (1) and (2) of the Wakf Act, 1995,” the high court said.

According to section 83 (1) of the Waqf Act, 1995, Waqf Tribunals constituted by the state government are



vested with powers “for the determination of any dispute, question or other matter relating to a waqf or waqf property...” According to section 83 (2) of the Waqf Act of 1995, “Any mutawalli person interested in a waqf or any other person aggrieved by an order made under this Act, or rules made thereunder, may make an application within the time specified in this Act or where no such time has been specified, within such time as may be prescribed, to the Tribunal for the determination of any dispute, question or other matter relating to the waqf.” The Karnataka High Court said on Friday that in light of section 83, since the dispute involves “matters that arise out of the elections that are already over to the Wakf Board, the petitioner who claims to be a voter from the electoral college of Muttawalis cannot maintain this petition and it has to be necessarily before the tribunal”. “Therefore, the petitioners are reserved liberty to approach the tribunal. A writ petition challenging the election process after the conclusion of the election process would not be maintainable in the view of this court. The issue of the quorum (for electing the chairman) would also have to be thrashed out before the tribunal in appropriate proceedings,” the high court said in its order.

Delhi private schools hiking fees since AAP went out of power, says Manish Sisodia; demands CBI probe



GNS News Agency, April 9

Former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia has alleged that since the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) dropped out of power, private schools across the Capital have been hiking their fees. Sisodia accused the BJP-led government of colluding with school managements and turning a blind eye to the financial burden on parents. Alleging a deeper issue, the former education minister also said there might be a nexus between private school managements and BJP leaders, and demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry into the matter.

Addressing a press conference on Saturday, Sisodia said, “The biggest worry for us right now is that private schools have started increasing their fee. Back when we formed the government, we had made a regulation to ensure that private schools cannot arbitrarily increase their fee... In 2015, we had carried out an audit of each school for which we had hired CAs, and made it mandatory that schools will require a government nod before they can increase their fee.” Sisodia claimed that the ruling BJP is “hand in glove” with private schools, enabling unjustified fee hikes. Citing specific examples, Sisodia pointed out that Ahlcon Public School had increased its fees for Class 11 from Rs 11,000 to Rs 12,000 while Angels Public School had implemented an 11 per cent hike, among others. He emphasised that the AAP government had enforced strict measures to curb arbitrary fee hikes, including a comprehensive financial audit by chartered accountants empanelled by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). “Only those schools

were given permissions for which the CAG-empanelled CAs had affirmed that the school needs to increase their fee in order to provide salaries. Any school that had money in their coffers was not allowed to increase their fee,” Sisodia said. He added, “Many schools had only approached the court in opposition to the government’s decision. If you would have noticed then during my tenure, the highest number of cases against any department was the education department. These were mostly cases in which private schools had approached the court.”

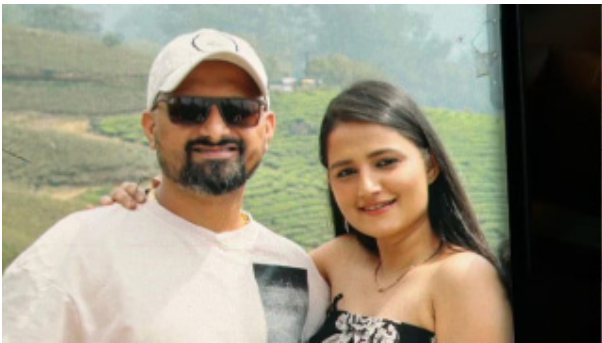
Home guard officer booked for cheating

Hyderabad: The Punjagutta police have booked a case against a home guard officer for allegedly cheating a person by promising to provide a government job. Complainant Sunil Goud, a private employee and resident of Pratap Singaram, came in contact with D Chandra Prakash, a home guard, through a friend in 2012.

In 2024, Sunil Goud had shared with Chandra Prakash about his wife appearing for the TGPSC Group-4 examination and was waiting for the job. For this, Chandra Prakash promised to provide her a job as junior assistant in quota and also talk to senior officials in that regard. He collected Rs 3 lakh for the purpose and also a blank cheque. Months passed, but there was no response from Chandra Prakash, and when Sunil Goud asked him to return the money, the former refused to do so. Investigation is underway.



Software professional suspected of killing wife in Bengaluru telephoned neighbour from Maharashtra to report presence of body



GNS News Agency, April 9

A software professional who is alleged to have murdered his wife at their rented residence in Bengaluru on Thursday before fleeing to Maharashtra reported the murder himself by informing a tenant in the residential building of the presence of his wife’s body in the locked apartment on the first floor.The body of Gauri Anil Sambrekar, 32, the wife of the software professional, Rakesh Rajendra Khedekar, 36, was found stuffed inside a trolley bag lying in a bathroom of the house by the owner of the building – who opened the door of the rented property, along with a police team, after being informed by the tenant of the phone call he received from Khedekar.

After informing the tenant of the presence of the body of his wife, the suspect, Rakesh Khedekar, who fled in a car to Maharashtra, is alleged to have attempted suicide but was found by the Maharashtra Police.“The husband is alleged to have attempted suicide. He has been admitted to a hospital in Pune. The blood relatives of the victim have come to Bengaluru to identify the body and file a complaint. The prima facie indication is that the motive for the murder is a marital dispute,” Bengaluru police commissioner B Dayananda said Friday.According to the FIR registered by

the Hulimavu police in the murder of Gauri Anil Sambrekar – based on a complaint filed by the owner of the house where the couple lived – the accused Rakesh Khedekar telephoned another tenant Prabir Singh and informed him about the presence of his wife’s body in the rented house where he had been living.

According to the complaint by Sanitha G, the house owner, the other tenant who was living on the ground floor telephoned her at around 4.35 pm on Thursday and stated that he had received a call from Khedekar saying the body of his wife was lying in the house.Based on the information, the complainant telephoned the police emergency number of 112, and after a police team arrived at the scene, the house owner opened the locked first floor where Khedekar and his wife stayed.The Bengaluru police began tracking the location of Khedekar’s mobile phone based on the calls he had made to the tenant and found that he had reached Maharashtra. They alerted the local police and dispatched a team from Bengaluru as well to locate Khedekar. The Maharashtra Police tracked down the software professional shortly after he allegedly attempted suicide.A police team from Bengaluru has reached Pune and will take Rakesh Khedekar into custody for the probe of the murder of his wife as soon as he is discharged from the hospital, the police said.

“The woman’s whole body, which was intact, was found stuffed in the suitcase, which was in the washroom,” Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) Sarah Fathima said on Thursday.The couple, married for two years, was originally from Maharashtra, the police said, and moved to the rented house in February 2025. Khedekar was employed as a project manager in a reputed private firm. Sambrekar was a homemaker and was looking for jobs.The police suspect that Khedekar intended to dispose of the body after the murder but later abandoned the plan, fled the scene, and informed the tenant about the presence of his wife’s body before attempting suicide.

Gujarat Assembly passes Bill to aid regularisation of unauthorised development on land

GNS News Agency, April 9

Gujarat Assembly on Friday passed The Gujarat Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which proposes to regularise unauthorised development on land for which prior sanction, necessary under revenue laws, was not taken across the state. According to the proposal, no legal proceedings would be initiated for unauthorised development on land for which mandatory sanction was not taken. Besides, if any proceedings have been initiated for the violation, they would be abated.The significant Bill, which will aid regularisation of unauthorised development in breach of revenue laws and supplemental settlement of the private lands, was passed unopposed in the House.

Cabinet minister Balvantsinh Rajput, who presented the Bill in the House, stating that it would “lift the hanging sword”, said that the amendments will be applicable to unauthorised developments done between 1960 and 2005 on land parcels in breach of three revenue laws.Rajput said that the Bill is about saving people, who have unintentionally breached some legal provision, from litigation. “Law is for people. When the law causes discomfort to a larger group of people then if (their property) is regularised by paying fixed premium amount, it lifts the hanging sword (for them),” Rajput said adding that the Bill is for a larger public interest of the state.Presenting the Bill, Rajput said, “As Gujarat rapidly developed, people’s hunger for education and thorough development too increased. People have diverted to cities for educational and economic development of their family. Because habitation in the city has become costly, people have started living in its periphery. Due to lack of information, those who bought lands and built houses over it, did not know that the certain sanctions under rules (like conversion of agricultural land into non-agricultural land etc.) had not been taken for the lands they have bought.”

He further said, “A lot of difficulties have arisen for such people who have, due to ignorance, bought land paying its amount and started living on it (after) building houses or societies. I have come with this Bill to declare such areas as transitional areas and regularise them to give them a legal status.”The Bill proposes to amend certain provisions of Gujarat Land Revenue Code, 1879, that also deals with the Gujarat Tenancy and Agricultural Land Act 1948; or the Gujarat Tenancy and Agricultural Lands (Vidarbha Region and Kutch Area) Act, 1958.

The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill read, “Chapter IX-A has been inserted in the Gujarat Land Revenue Code, 1879, in the year 2017 with the purpose of creating, updating and maintaining the Register of Mutations over lands situated in the transitional area by making special provision for having supplemental settlement of the private lands; for providing specified proceedings arising due to breach under certain revenue laws on payment of compounding fees and the amount of premium and other Government dues for bringing on record all such holdings for the purpose of settlement of land revenue, payment of con-



version tax; and also for the purpose of bringing on record all other Government dues, etc. as also for the purpose of bringing on record the exact and real status of occupancies, and for the purpose of bringing the Register of Mutations and the Record of Rights to their current status.”It added that the government considered it necessary to bring the amendment Bill for taking the vision of 2017 Amendment Act effectively to a larger set of people.”Therefore, making amendment as above shall mean that no other proceedings under other Acts are to be undertaken or continued and breach of conditions or provisions may be decided under Chapter IX-A of the (Gujarat Land Revenue) Code,” the statement of the Bill added.Rajput underlined that the provisions of the Bill are not going to be applicable to any unauthorised development done on gauchar (grazing) land or government wasteland.

Rajput said that the Bill is about saving people, who have unintentionally breached some legal provision, from litigation. “Law is for people. When the law causes discomfort to a larger group of people then if (their property) is regularised by paying fixed premium amount, it lifts the hanging sword (for them),” Rajput said, adding that the Bill is for the larger public interest of the state.He also said that the Bill has been brought with a “noble objective” of helping people get legal ownership of their property on which they can get various benefits like bank loans etc.BJP MLA from Vijapur constituency C J Chavda supported the Bill while saying that it is to clear the deficiencies in the 2017 amendment for the larger public interest to exempt people from legal proceedings for breach of some laws that they could have committed unintentionally or out of ignorance.Though the Opposition Congress did not oppose the Bill, its leader Amit Chavda asked if the government had done any survey to find out the need to bring such an amendment or the number of people who had demanded the amendment. Chavda asked if the Bill has been brought in to benefit a certain section of people. He also asked the government to ensure that regularisation of such unauthorised developments in breach of government rules does not cause difficulty to the people in the neighbourhood. Further, he asked why the government has not brought any law to punish those who have constructed residential schemes without taking due permissions.

Pimpri Chinchwad police arrest man who married illegal Bangladeshi resident, burnt her Bangladeshi passport to destroy evidence

GNS News Agency, April 9

The Pimpri Chinchwad police recently arrested a man who allegedly married a Bangladeshi woman residing illegally in India. The man is also said to have burnt her Bangladeshi passport to destroy evidence of her being a foreign national.The accused has been identified as Mohammad Rana Mohammad Salam Shaikh, 33. His 30-year-old Bangladeshi wife has also been arrested in this case, the police said.Acting on a tip-off, a police team nabbed Shaikh and his wife at Kudalwadi in Chikhali on Thursday afternoon. A First Information Report (FIR) was lodged against them under Sections 420, 465, 468, 471, 201, 212, and 34 of the Indian Penal Code and also sections of the Passport Act and Foreigners Act.As per a press release issued on Friday, the accused woman is a native of Narayanganj in Bangladesh. The police said her first husband was a Bangladeshi citizen. But after he passed away in Bangladesh, she travelled to India with their son on a tourist visa, which expired on April 7, 2022.Even after the



visa expired, the woman and her minor son continued to reside in India illegally. Despite knowing that the woman hails from Bangladesh, the accused Mohammad Shaikh gave shelter to the woman, the police said.The press release mentions that Shaikh married the woman, and she also gave birth to a boy in India, who is now one year and three months old.

Mumbai’s Santa Cruz-Chembur Link Road extension project nears completion



GNS News Agency, April 9

While several phases of the SCLR and its extensions have already been opened, the final phase, which will directly connect to the Western Express Highway (WEH), has been the missing link.While several phases of the SCLR and its extensions have already been opened, the final phase, which will directly connect to the Western Express Highway (WEH), has been the missing link. Currently, motorists travelling from Chembur or Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) towards the western suburbs must exit the SCLR at the Hans Bhugra Marg-WEH signal, navigate through the traffic signal at Vakola junction, and then proceed further.To address this, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority

While several phases of the SCLR and its extensions have already been opened, the final phase, which will directly connect to the Western Express Highway (WEH), has been the missing link. Currently, motorists travelling from Chembur or Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) towards the western suburbs must exit the SCLR at the Hans Bhugra Marg-WEH signal, navigate through the traffic signal at Vakola junction, and then proceed further.To address this, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority

(MMRDA) has planned the construction of an arm that will bypass these junctions and traffic signals, offering direct access to the Western Express Highway. Once the north-bound SCLR arm passing over WEH is completed, commuters will no longer have to face the congestion at the Hans Bhugra Marg-WEH junction and the busy Vakola junction, making their journey smoother and more efficient.Actual length is 5.4 km, out of which 3.4 km is already opened and the remaining length is slated to be opened in April.The SCLR extension is expected to ease traffic on the Western Express Highway. The project will ensure quicker access for people travelling from the Eastern Suburbs and Navi Mumbai to key destinations like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport and the western suburbs.

A standout feature of the SCLR extension is the 215-metre-long cable-stayed bridge that spans 25 metres above the Western Express Highway. This unique structure is Asia’s first cable-stayed bridge with a 100-metre sharp curvature, bypassing the Vakola Junction and directly landing on the Western Express Highway. This final link ensures a signal-free ride for commuters travelling between the Eastern and Western Express Highways, significantly improving traffic flow and reducing congestion.“The Santa Cruz-Chembur Link Road (SCLR) is not just an infrastructure project; it is an engineering marvel that redefines urban mobility in Mumbai. With Asia’s first cable-stayed bridge featuring a 100-metre sharp curvature and the innovative use of Orthotropic Steel Deck (OSD) technology—first introduced in India for the Atal Setu—this project showcases cutting-edge engineering. The success of OSD in Atal Setu has proven its efficiency, and we are now leveraging it in the SCLR to enhance structural integrity and minimize disruption during construction. More importantly, SCLR is a key part of our ‘Mumbai in Minutes’ initiative, providing seamless East-West connectivity between the city’s thriving business districts and residential hubs. By significantly reducing travel time and decongesting key junctions, the SCLR will boost economic productivity, improve fuel efficiency, and contribute to a more sustainable urban future,” Dr Sanjay Mukherjee, Commissioner, MMRDA.

Pastor Bajinder Singh held guilty in 2018 rape case, verdict on April 1

GNS News Agency, April 9

A court in Punjab’s Mohali Friday convicted, Bajinder Singh, a self-proclaimed Christian pastor, in a rape case registered in 2018. The quantum of sentence will be pronounced on April 1.The court of additional district and sessions judge Vikrant Kumar convicted Bajinder Singh (42) under Sections 376 (rape), 323 (punishment for voluntary causing hurt), and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code. Bajinder, who was present in the court, was arrested and sent to Patiala jail.Meanwhile, the court also acquitted five others — Pastors Jatinder Kumar and Akbar Bhatti, Rajesh Chaudhary, Sitar Ali, and Sandeep Pehlwan – who were named as accused in the FIR registered at at Zirakpur police station in 2018.The complainant woman had alleged that Bajinder, on the pretext of helping her in moving and settling abroad, lured her to his residence in Mohali’s Sector 63, where he raped her and also recorded the act. She had further alleged that he had threatened to post the video on social media if she did not agree to his demands.Following the registration of the FIR, Bajinder was arrested at Delhi airport in 2018. He was later released on bail.

Earlier this month, on March 3, the Mohali court had issued non-bailable warrants against Bajinder Singh and the other five accused in the case.The conviction comes a time when the Kapurthala police have formed a three-member special investigation team to investigate sexual harassment charges levelled against Bajinder by a 22-year-old woman. Police had registered an FIR against the pastor under sections 354A (sexual harassment), 354D (stalking) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the BNS on February 28 after the woman alleged that in 2002, Bajinder Singh took her into a cabin, touched her inappropriately, and hugged her. She also claimed that he threatened to harm her family if she reported the incident. Bajinder had rejected the allegations as baseless.



On March 25, Mohali police booked Bajinder for assault, wrongful restraint and other charges, days after a video of him purportedly arguing and slapping a woman went viral on social media. The FIR was registered after a 40-year-old woman, who was seen in the viral video, filed a complaint alleging that Bajinder had also tried to strangle her. The FIR has been registered at Majri police station in Mullanpur under sections 74 (assault with intent to harm a woman’s dignity), 115 (2) (voluntarily causing hurt) and 351 (2) (criminal intimidation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) on the complaint of the woman who had been serving in Bajinder’s ministry for the past 13-14 years.Bajinder runs two churches — The Church of Glory and Wisdom at Tajpur in Jalandhar and another one in Mohali’s Majri. He became a preacher in 2012, with his supporters claiming that he presides over 260 churches worldwide. He hold congregations, often attended by a large number of people who come in anticipation of getting their ailments cured. These congregations are broadcast live on the YouTube channel ‘Prophet Bajinder Singh’, which has 3.74 million subscribers.

High Court summons all Punjab DCs and SSPs over NHAI land acquisition delays

GNS News Agency, April 9

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has summoned all district collectors and senior superintendents of police (SSPs) to appear before it on April 4, 2025, along with affidavits detailing the steps taken to ensure the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) receives encumbrance-free land for the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway Spur 1.The directive was issued by a division bench comprising Justice Sureshwar Thakur and Justice Kuldeep Tiwari in response to continued delays in handing over land for the crucial highway project. The court made it clear that any failure to comply would lead to serious consequences.

The court’s summons follows multiple complaints by NHAI officials about encroachments and resistance from landowners despite legal proceedings and compensation payments. The petitioners, represented by advocates R.S. Madaan, Mayank Aggarwal, and Mahender Joshi, accused the state administration of failing to act decisively in facilitating the project’s progress. The Punjab government was defended by Senior Deputy Advocate General Maninder Singh.The court noted that despite its previous orders, landowners continued to obstruct the handover of land, causing delays in the project. It cited a specific instance involving Yadwinder Singh, a resident of Dhunda village, who refused to vacate a 300-metre stretch of agricultural land. Punjab police, in a report submitted to the court, confirmed that an FIR had been registered against Singh under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, as well as the National Highways Act, 1956. He was subsequently arrested and sent to judicial custody, after which the disputed land was handed over to NHAIExpressing its displeasure over repeated obstacles, the court made it clear that bureaucratic inefficiency and resistance from landowners could not be allowed to stall infrastructure projects of national importance.

“The completion of these projects is critical for economic growth, and unnecessary delays cannot be tolerated. All responsible officials must ensure that land is handed over to NHAI without further obstruction,” the bench observed.The judges also took on record affidavits submitted by Punjab’s Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav, Chief Secretary K.A.P. Sinha, and NHAI Regional Officer Vipnesh Sharma. However, the court insisted on further ac-



countability from district-level officials, directing them to personally appear and explain the steps taken to comply with the orders.

District judge sentences Nalgonda man to 27 years in jail for raping woman

Nalgonda: The district judge Roja Ramani on Thursday convicted and sentenced a man to 27 years of imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 3,000 for deceiving a woman under the pretext of marriage.The convict Nallabothu Jagan of Parvathagiri village had lured a woman with false promises of marriage.The victim, who became pregnant, filed a complaint after Jagan refused to fulfill his commitments, leaving her and her family devastated.The police, after conducting a thorough investigation, charged Jagan with multiple offences. During the trial, the court found him guilty on various counts, including rape, fraud, and exploiting the woman, who belonged to a marginalised community.The judge sentenced the accused to 10 years imprisonment and a fine of Rs 1,000 fine for the charges of rape, 10 more years of years imprisonment and Rs 1,000 fine for cheating the woman belonging to a Dalit community, and seven years imprisonment and Rs 1,000 fine for deceiving the victim under the guise of marriage.

Russian strike kills 18 in Ukrainian President Zelenskyy's home city



GNS News Agency, April 9

A Russian ballistic missile strike on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's home city of Kryvyi Rig killed 18 people, among them nine children, authorities said. Sixty-one people were injured, the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Governor Sergiy Lysak said Saturday (April 5, 2025) after emergency operations were completed overnight.

The missile struck a residential area near a children's playground on Friday (April 4), according to Oleksandr Vilkul, the head of Kryvyi Rig's military administration. Unverified videos on social media appeared to show bodies lying on a street, while another showed a plume of smoke rising into the evening sky. Social media video from the scene showed a car in flames, while people could be heard shouting, "18... that is how many people were killed by the Russians when they launched a missile at Kryvyi Rig. Among them were nine children," Lysak said on Telegram. He 12 children were injured in Friday's attack. "This is the kind of pain you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy," said Lysak. Russia's defence ministry said it "delivered a precision strike with a high-explosive missile at a restaurant" in the city "where

International aid flows to earthquake-hit Myanmar: Who's helping the country and how?

GNS News Agency, April 9

Rescue workers, sniffer dogs, paramedics and millions of dollars in aid have begun arriving in Myanmar after a massive earthquake ravaged much of the war-torn country. Over 3,000 people have so far been reported dead following Friday's (March 28, 2025) magnitude 7.7 earthquake in a country where millions were already displaced by a civil war triggered by the 2021 military coup. The quake is the deadliest natural disaster to hit Myanmar in years and has damaged critical infrastructure across the country of 55 million people. India sent a search and rescue team, medical professionals and a military transport aircraft filled with blankets, hygiene kits, food packets and other essential items on Saturday. New Delhi has since sent at least four more aircraft and four ships carrying relief material, a special military medical unit and members of its disaster response agency. Beijing sent the first batch of \$13.9 million in emergency aid to Myanmar on Monday, state news agency Xinhua reported. According to the China International Development Cooperation Agency, the initial supplies included tents, blankets and first aid kits. Xinhua said China has sent more than 30 rescue teams with over 600 personnel, and the Chinese Red Cross has provided 1.5 million yuan (\$205,563.93) in cash help, the foreign ministry told Reuters. The United States pledged \$2 million in aid "through Myanmar-based humanitarian assistance organizations". It said in a statement that an emergency response team from USAID, which is undergoing massive cuts under the Trump administration, is being sent to Myanmar.

The European Union has announced \$2.7 million in initial emergency assistance. EU has also activated its Copernicus satellite service to facilitate impact assessment. Apart from this, EU has launched a Humanitarian Air Bridge operation, from Copenhagen to Yangon. The cargo of 80 tonnes of EU owned supplies including tents, child protection kits, health and water and sanitation kits has been consigned to UNICEF. These supplies will be delivered to Mandalay for collection and distributed by EU partners. Australia has announced \$2 million contribution to the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) for rescue and related efforts in the earthquake-hit Myanmar. Additionally, Pat Conroy, Minister for International Development and the Pacific, on Wednesday (April 2, 2025) announced \$3.5 million to Australian NGOs and their local partners with a focus on food, water and sanitation and emergency health and education, and \$500,000 contribution to the Emergency Action Alliance appeal. She also announced \$3 million for emergency relief supplies and to support the efforts of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management. Vietnam has sent a team of more than 100 rescuers, medical staff and firefighters along with aid and sniffer dogs. "The most important task of the Vietnamese rescue force is to focus on searching for and rescuing survivors," Vietnam's Ministry of Defence said on Monday. State media reported that Vietnam had also sent \$300,000 in aid to Myanmar.

South Korea said it would provide \$2 million in initial humanitarian aid through international organisations to help Myanmar respond to Friday's earthquake. "The Korean government hopes that this support will help efforts to save lives in the affected areas, and will closely monitor the dam-

U.S. Federal officials quietly terminate legal residency of some international college students



GNS News Agency, April 9

A crackdown on foreign students is alarming college leaders, who say the Donald Trump administration is using new tactics and vague justifications to push some students out of the country. College officials worry the new approach will keep foreigners from wanting to study in the U.S. Students stripped of their entry visas are receiving orders from the Department of Homeland Security to leave the country immediately — a break from past practice that often permitted them to stay and complete their studies. International students weigh new risks of pursuing higher education in U.S. under Donald Trump

Some students have been targeted over pro-Palestinian activism or criminal infractions — or even traffic violations. Others have been left wondering how they ran afoul of the government. At Minnesota State University in Mankato, president Edward Inch told the campus on Wednesday (April 2, 2025) that visas had been revoked for five international students for unclear reasons. He said school officials learned about the revocations when they ran a status check in a database of international students after the detention of a Turkish student at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. The State Department said the detention was related to a drunk driving conviction. “These are troubling times, and this situation is unlike any we have navigated before,” Mr. Inch wrote in a letter to campus. Donald Trump signs executive order to shut down U.S. Education Department President Donald Trump campaigned on a promise to deport foreign students involved in pro-Palestinian protests, and federal agents started by detaining Columbia graduate student Mahmoud Khalil, a green-card-holder and Palestinian activist who was prominent in protests at Columbia last year.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said last week students are being targeted for involvement in protests along with others tied to “potential criminal activity.” In the past two weeks, the government apparently has widened its crackdown. Officials from colleges around the country have discovered international students have had their entry visas revoked and, in many cases, their legal residency status terminated by authorities without notice — including students at Arizona State, Cornell, North Carolina State, the University of Oregon, the University of Texas and the University of Colorado. Some of the students are working to leave the country on their own, but students at Tufts and the University of Alabama have been detained by immigration authorities — in the Tufts case, even before the university knew the student’s legal status had changed. Fear, uncertainty grip Indian students amidst Trump’s immigration crackdown. Feds bypass colleges to move against students. In this new wave of enforcement, school officials say the federal government is quietly deleting foreigners’ student records instead of going through colleges, as was done in the past. “Students are being ordered to leave the country with a suddenness that universities have rarely seen,” said Miriam Feldblum, president and CEO of the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration.

In the past, when international students have had entry visas revoked, they generally have been allowed to keep legal residency status. They could stay in the country to study, but would need to renew their visa if they left the U.S. and wanted to return. Now, increasing numbers of students are having their legal status terminated, exposing

Trump tariff effect: Global brokerages raise recession odds; J.P.Morgan sees 60% chance



GNS News Agency, April 9

J.P.Morgan ratcheted up its odds for a U.S. and global recession to 60%, as brokerages scrambled to revise their forecast models with tariff distress threatening to sap business confidence and slow down global growth. The Trump administration imposed tariffs on dozens of countries earlier this week. China retaliated on Friday with its own levies on U.S. goods, adding to worries about an escalating trade war and wreaking havoc on global financial markets. J.P.Morgan said it now sees a 60% chance of the global economy entering recession by year end, up from 40% previously. "Disruptive U.S. policies have been recognized as the biggest risk to the global outlook all year," the brokerage said in a note on Thursday, adding that the country's trade policy has turned less business friendly than anticipated. "The effect ... is likely to be magnified through [tariff] retaliation, a slide in U.S. business sentiment and supply-chain disruptions." S&P Global also raised its "subjective" probability of a U.S. recession to between 30% and 35%, from 25% in March. Last week, before the April 2 tariff announcement, Goldman Sachs also raised the probability of a U.S. recession to 35% from 20%, noting economic fundamentals were not as strong as in the previous years.

HSBC said on Thursday that the recession narrative will gain traction, but added some of this is already "priced in". "Our equity market implied recession probability indicator suggests equities are already pricing in (about) 40% chance of a recession by the end of the year," HSBC analysts added. Other research firms including Barclays, BofA Global Research, Deutsche Bank, RBC Capital Markets and UBS Global Wealth Management also warned the U.S. economy faces a higher risk of slipping into a recession this year if Trump's new levies remain in place.

them to the risk of being arrested. “None of this is regular practice,” Ms. Feldblum said. “At North Carolina State University, two students from Saudi Arabia left the U.S. after learning their legal status as students was terminated,” the university said. N.C. State said it will work with the students to complete their semester from outside the country. Supreme Court allows Trump administration to cut teacher-training money, for now

Philip Vasto, who lived with one of the students, said his roommate, in graduate school for engineering management, was apolitical and did not attend protests against the war in Gaza. "When the government told his roommate his student status had been terminated, it did not give a reason," Mr. Vasto said. Since returning to Saudi Arabia, Mr. Vasto said his former roommate's top concern is getting into another university. "He's made his peace with it," he said. "He doesn't want to allow it to steal his peace any further." Database checks turn up students in jeopardy

“At the University of Texas at Austin, staff checking a federal database discovered two people on student visas had their permission to be in the U.S. terminated,” a person familiar with the situation said. The person declined to be identified for fear of retaliation. One of the people, from India, had their legal status terminated on April 3, 2025. The federal system indicated the person had been identified in a criminal records check “and/or has had their visa revoked.” “The other person, from Lebanon, had their legal status terminated on March 28 owing to a criminal records check,” according to the federal database. Both people were graduates remaining in the U.S. on student visas, using an option allowing people to gain professional experience after completing coursework. Both were employed full time and apparently had not violated requirements for pursuing work experience, the person familiar with the situation said. Some students have had visas revoked by the State Department under an obscure law barring non-citizens whose presence could have “serious adverse foreign policy consequences.” Mr. Trump invoked the law in a January order demanding action against campus antisemitism. “But some students targeted in recent weeks have had no clear link to political activism. Some have been ordered to leave over misdemeanor crimes or traffic infractions,” Ms. Feldblum said. In some cases, students were targeted for infractions that had been previously reported to the government.

"Some of the alleged infractions would not have been drawn scrutiny in the past and will likely be a test of students' First Amendment rights as cases work their way through court," said Michelle Mittelstadt, director of public affairs at the Migration Policy Institute. "In some ways, what the administration is doing is really retroactive," she said. The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities is requesting a meeting with the State Department over the issue. It's unclear whether more visas are being revoked than usual, but officials fear a chilling effect on international exchange. Many of the association's members have recently seen at least one student have their visa revoked, said Bernie Burrola, vice-president at the group. With little information from the government, colleges have been interviewing students or searching social media for a connection to political activism. "The universities can't seem to find anything that seems to be related to Gaza or social media posts or protests," Mr. Burrola said. "Some of these are sponsored students by foreign governments, where they specifically are very hesitant to get involved in protests." "There's no clear thread indicating which students are being targeted, but some have been from the Middle East and China," he said. At Texas A&M, officials who looked into why three students had their status terminated said they had long-resolved offenses on their records, including one with a speeding ticket. "America's universities have long been seen as a top destination for the world's brightest minds — and they've brought important tuition revenue and research breakthroughs to U.S. colleges. But international students also have other options," said Fanta Aw, CEO of NAFSA, an association of international educators. "We should not take for granted that that's just the way things are and will always be," she said.

economic growth broadly between 0.1% and 1%. U.S. equity markets rallied in November after Trump won a second term in the White House on expectations of business-friendly policies. Following Mr. Trump's tariffs announcement in January, it has been a forgettable three months for Wall Street's main indexes, with the benchmark S&P 500 down over 8% so far this year. Brokerages including Barclays, Goldman, RBC and Capital Economics slashed their year-end targets on U.S. stocks, with UBS downgrading its recommendation to "neutral" from "attractive". Capital Economics cut its index target for the S&P 500 to 5,500, the lowest among major brokerages, closely followed by RBC's 5,550. Rate-cut hopes

While tariffs could stifle economic growth, some analysts expect this could give more room for the U.S. Federal Reserve to cut interest rates further in order to boost economic activity. J.P.Morgan said it expects the tariff shock to be “modestly dampened” by the prospect of further rate cuts. Goldman estimates three interest rate cuts by the end of the year, compared with expectations of two cuts before Trump’s tariffs announcement earlier this week. This year, Nomura and RBC expect one and three rate cuts, respectively, compared with expectations of none earlier. UBS sees the Fed cutting interest rates between 75 and 100 basis points over the remainder of 2025. Citigroup, reiterated its forecast of 125 basis points worth of cuts starting in May, while J.P.Morgan maintained its expectation of two 25-basis point rate reductions.

Trump posts video purporting to show deadly Yemen strike

U.S. President Donald Trump posted a video purportedly showing dozens of Houthi fighters being killed in an American strike on Yemen. Resembling images shot from military drones or other loitering aircraft, the black-and-white footage Trump posted to his Truth Social network shows several dozen human figures from an almost vertical angle.

“These Houthis gathered for instructions on an attack,” Mr. Trump wrote in an accompanying text. American forces have carried out major raids on Yemen in recent weeks in response to the group’s attacks on Red Sea shipping. Gathered in a loose oval along a road, the people in the video are superimposed with a gun camera-style crosshair. A few seconds in, a bright flash appears in the middle of the scene, followed by billowing smoke.

Senate GOP approves framework for Trump’s tax breaks and spending cuts after late-night session



GNS News Agency, April 9

Senate Republicans plugged away overnight and into early Saturday morning to approve their multitricillion-dollar tax breaks and spending cuts framework, hurtling past a hard line of Democratic opposition toward what President Donald Trump calls the “big, beautiful bill” that’s central to his agenda.

The vote, 51-48, fell along mostly party lines, but with sharp dissent from two prominent GOP senators. It could not have come at a more difficult political moment. The U.S. economy is churning after Mr. Trump’s vast tariff scheme sent stocks plummeting, and experts are warning of soaring costs for consumers at home and threats of a potential recession. Republican Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Rand Paul of Kentucky both voted against.

But with a nod from Mr. Trump, GOP leaders held on, determined to march ahead. Approval paves the way for Republicans, in the months ahead, to try to power a tax cut bill through both chambers of Congress over the objections of Democrats, just as they did in Mr. Trump’s first term with unified party control in Washington. “Let the voting begin,” Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said Friday night.

The evening kicked off what’s called vote-a-rama as Democrats were intent on making the effort as politically painful as possible, with votes on some two dozen amendments to the package that GOP senators will have to defend before next year’s midterm elections.Among them were proposals to ban tax breaks for the super-wealthy, end Mr. Trump’s tariffs, clip his efforts to shrink the federal government and protect Medicaid, Social Security and other services. One, in response to the Trump national security team’s use of Signal, sought to prohibit military officials from using any commercial messaging application to transmit war plans. They all failed.Democrats accused Republicans of laying the groundwork for cutting key safety net programs such as Medicaid and nutritional assistance to help pay for more than \$5 trillion tax cuts they say disproportionately benefit the rich. “Trump’s policies are a disaster,” said Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, as is Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency. “Republicans could snuff it out tonight, if they wanted.”

The Republicans framed their work as preventing a tax increase for most American families, arguing that unless Congress acts, the individual and estate tax cuts that Republicans passed in 2017 will expire at the end of this year.The Senate package pulls in other GOP priorities — including \$175 billion to bolster Mr. Trump’s mass deportation effort, which is running short of cash, and another \$175 billion for the Pentagon to build up the military — from an earlier budget effort.Sen. John Barrasso, the No. 2 ranking GOP senator, said voters gave Republicans a mission and a mandate in November, and the Senate budget plan delivers. “It fulfills our promises to secure the border, to re-

build our economy and to restore peace through strength,” Barrasso said.The framework now goes to the House, where Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., could bring it up for a vote as soon as next week as he works toward a final product by Memorial Day.The House and Senate need to resolve their differences. The House Republicans had already approved their version, with \$4.5 trillion in tax breaks over 10 years and some \$2 trillion in budget cuts and savings pointed at changes to Medicaid, food stamps and other programs, and some have panned the Senate GOP’s approach.

Throughout the day, the debate was generally one-sided, as Democrats took full advantage of the all-night voting frenzy. Pizza was wheeled in on a cart, for Republicans. Tacos, for Democrats.Republicans used their majority to swat back all the Democrats’ amendments, often in rambunctious voice votes. A few Democratic proposals, however, did draw some GOP support, including those to protect Medicaid, Social Security and the bargaining rights of federal workers, a potential sign of unrest ahead.Collins said she voted against the full package because potential Medicaid cuts in the underlying House bill “would be very detrimental to a lot of families and disabled individuals and seniors in my state.”And Paul questioned the math being used by his colleagues that he said would pile on the debt load. “Something’s fishy,” he said.One Republican, Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, expressed his own misgivings about tax breaks adding to the federal deficits and said he has assurances that Trump officials would seek the cuts elsewhere. “This vote isn’t taking place in a vacuum,” he said, a nod to the turmoil over Mr. Trump’s tariffs.

One crucial challenge ahead will be for the House to accept the way the Senate’s budget plan allows for extending the tax cuts under a scoring method that treats them as not adding to future deficits, something many House Republicans reject. A new estimate from the Joint Committee on Taxation projects the tax breaks will add \$5.5 trillion over the next decade when including interest, and \$4.6 trillion not including interest.On top of that, the senators added an additional \$1.5 trillion that would allow some of Mr. Trump’s campaign promises, such as no taxes on tips, Social Security benefits and overtime, swelling the overall the price tag to \$7 trillion.Republicans are also looking to increase the \$10,000 deduction for state and local taxes, something that lawmakers from states such as New York, California and New Jersey say is necessary for their support.

The House and Senate are also at odds over increasing the debt limit, which is needed by summer to allow more borrowing. The House had boosted the debt limit by \$4 trillion in its plan, but the Senate upped it to \$5 trillion to push any further votes on the matter until after next year’s midterm elections.The Senate calls for just \$4 billion in spending cuts, but GOP leadership emphasises that’s a low floor and that committees will be on the hunt for far more.Already, the GOP leaders are confronting concerns from fiscal hawks in deep red states and congressional districts who want trillions of dollars in spending cuts to help pay for the tax breaks. At the same time, dozens of lawmakers in swing districts and states are worried about what those cuts will mean for their constituents, and for their reelection chances.The GOP leadership has encouraged members to just get a budget plan over the finish line, saying they have time to work out the tough questions of which tax breaks and spending cuts to include.Extending the 2017 breaks would cut taxes for about three-quarters of households but raise them for about 10%. In 2027, about 45% of the benefit of all the tax cuts would go to those making roughly \$450,000 or more, according to the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center, which analyzes tax issues.

A people still waiting to move out of the margins

GNS News Agency, April 9

International Transgender Day of Visibility, which is observed on March 31, highlights the challenges that transgender individuals face. Despite legal advancements such as the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, social stigma, economic exclusion and discrimination persist. There are barriers to education, employment and health care. Workplace biases and financial discrimination hinder economic empowerment, while bullying and unsupportive environments restrict education. Health-care systems fail to address transgender-specific needs, worsening marginalisation. True inclusion requires strong policy implementation, anti-discrimination enforcement, and societal change. Governments, businesses and communities must ensure financial inclusion, equal opportunities and support, fostering empowerment beyond mere visibility.Legal recognition versus ground realityWeak implementation of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, hampers access to welfare schemes. As of December 2023, the National Portal for Transgender Persons received 24,115 identity card applications. However, only 15,800 certificates were issued, with over 3,200 pending beyond the mandated 30-day period. In Delhi, despite a transgender population of approximately 4,200 (2011 Census), only 23 identity cards had been issued by April 2022. The Act’s bureaucratic certification process delays recognition by contrasting global standards of self-determination. It also lacks provisions for addressing police harassment, family rejection, and social exclusion.

Economic empowerment remains a challenge in India due to systemic barriers in employment and entrepreneurship. A 2018 National Human Rights Commission of India (NHRC) report found that 92% of transgender individuals were excluded from economic activities, forcing many to engage in sex work. A 2022 study reported a transgender unemployment rate of 48%, far above the national average of 7%-8%.Discrimination starts at hiring, where biases lead to exclusion, and those employed face workplace hostility, a lack of gender-neutral facilities, and resistance from colleagues. While Tata Steel has hired over 100 transgender employees, the industry-wide adoption of such policies is limited. In 2024, the Finance Ministry clarified that LGBTQ+ individuals could open joint bank accounts and nominate partners as beneficiaries, yet broader financial exclusion persists. There need to be workplace inclusion policies, diversity hiring, targeted financial programmes, and government-backed loans to ensure economic empowerment.Hurdles in education, health-care accessEducation is crucial for inclusion and the economic empowerment of transgender individuals in India, but systemic discrimination leads to significant disparities. The 2011 Census reported a transgender literacy rate of 56.1%, when the national average was 74.04%. In Kerala, 58% dropped out due to bullying, harassment, and unsupportive environments. But some States have introduced inclusive policies



— Maharashtra has transgender cells in colleges and the University of Kerala has reserved seats and hostel facilities. However, nationwide policies remain weak. Ensuring equal opportunities requires gender-sensitive curricula, inclusive learning spaces, financial aid and vocational training.Transgender individuals in India face major health-care challenges owing to systemic discrimination, financial barriers, and inadequate medical infrastructure. Despite the National Health Policy (2017) and the Ayushman Bharat, accessibility remains limited. A National Legal Services Authority survey found that 27% were denied health care due to their gender identity. Gender-affirming treatments remain costly (between ₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh) with limited insurance coverage. While the ‘Ayushman Bharat TG Plus’ card offers ₹5 lakh annual coverage, implementation gaps persist. The lack of trained health-care professionals results in sub-standard care, and mental health support is severely inadequate. Solutions include mandatory transgender health-care training; inclusion of gender-affirming treatments in insurance; dedicated transgender health clinics, and expanded mental health services.Changing societal perceptions of transgender individuals in India requires genuine inclusion in the media, education, workplaces, and policies. While visibility has increased, portrayals often reinforce stereotypes. Deep-rooted prejudices in families, schools, and workplaces are another factor. Initiatives such as the ‘I Am Also Human’ campaign by the Humsafar Trust help, but broader efforts are needed. Gender sensitisation in schools, universities, and workplaces is essential. The media must depict transgender individuals in diverse roles, while cultural events such as Tamil Nadu’s Koovagam Festival can promote acceptance.International Transgender Day of Visibility underscores the need for policy reforms, social acceptance, and economic inclusion. Discrimination persists in employment, education, health care, and public spaces. Many face identity documentation issues, financial barriers, and workplace biases. Addressing these issues requires awareness campaigns, inclusive media representations, and gender sensitisation in schools and workplaces. Beyond symbolism, enforcing anti-discrimination laws, inclusive hiring, and supporting transgender entrepreneurs are also essential.

U.S. Federal officials quietly terminate legal residency of some international college students



GNS News Agency, April 9

A crackdown on foreign students is alarming college leaders, who say the Donald Trump administration is using new tactics and vague justifications to push some students out of the country.College officials worry the new approach will keep foreigners from wanting to study in the U.S. Students stripped of their entry visas are receiving orders from the Department of Homeland Security to leave the country immediately — a break from past practice that often permitted them to stay and complete their studies.International students weigh new risks of pursuing higher education in U.S. under Donald Trump

Some students have been targeted over pro-Palestinian activism or criminal infractions — or even traffic violations. Others have been left wondering how they ran afoul of the government. At Minnesota State University in Mankato, president Edward Inch told the campus on Wednesday (April 2, 2025) that visas had been revoked for five international students for unclear reasons.He said school officials learned about the revocations when they ran a status check in a database of international students after the detention of a Turkish student at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. The State Department said the detention was related to a drunk driving conviction. “These are troubling times, and this situation is unlike any we have navigated before,” Mr. Inch wrote in a letter to campus.

Donald Trump signs executive order to shut down U.S. Education DepartmentPresident Donald Trump campaigned on a promise to deport foreign students involved in pro-Palestinian protests, and federal agents started by detaining Columbia graduate student Mahmoud Khalil, a green-card-holder and Palestinian activist who was prominent in protests at Columbia last year.Secretary of State Marco Rubio said last week students are being targeted for involvement in protests along with others tied to “potential criminal activity.”

In the past two weeks, the government apparently has widened its crackdown. Officials from colleges around the country have discovered international students have had their entry visas revoked and, in many cases, their legal residency status terminated by authorities without notice — including students at Arizona State, Cornell, North Carolina State, the University of Oregon, the University of Texas and the University of Colorado.Some of the students are working to leave the country on their own, but students at Tufts and the University of Alabama have been detained by immigration authorities — in the Tufts case, even before the university knew the student’s legal status had changed.In this new wave of enforcement, school officials say the federal government is quietly deleting foreigners’ student records instead of going through colleges, as was done in the past.

“Students are being ordered to leave the country with a suddenness that universities have rarely seen,” said Miriam Feldblum, president and CEO of the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration.In the past, when international students have had entry visas revoked, they generally have been allowed to keep legal residency status. They could stay in the country to study, but would need to renew their visa if they left the U.S. and wanted to return. Now, increasing numbers of students are having their legal status terminated, exposing them to the risk of being arrested. “None of this is regular practice,” Ms. Feldblum said.

In South Africa, needle exchange programme for drug users feels effects of Trump's aid cuts

GNS News Agency, April 9

A secluded corner surrounded by litter and makeshift structures on the outskirts of South Africa’s capital is home to dozens of people with drug addictions. They inject themselves and each other with heroin-laden mixtures, some of them sharing needles.A group of health workers has been making weekly visits to this and a dozen other places across Pretoria. In the project backed by the University of Pretoria and the Tshwane municipality, they offer the chance to exchange needles for new, sterile ones.

Needle exchange is not a new idea globally, but such efforts have been jolted by the Donald Trump administration’s decision to kill 83% of U.S. Agency for International Development programs worldwide.In South Africa, which has more people living with HIV, treatment for people has been hit hard. Users who share needles are at risk of such diseases.The team in Pretoria have built relationships with the drug users, encouraging them to accept an opioid-substitution therapy, and offering treatment if they have illnesses such as HIV.Last year, a University of Pretoria report estimated that 84,000 people inject drugs in South Africa, and in Pretoria, there was an HIV prevalence of 38%. South Africa’s overall HIV prevalence is over 12%, according to data.The report said the country’s drug market for cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine is worth about \$3.5 billion, and is growing.

While the Community Oriented Substance Use Programme in Pretoria is fully funded by the municipality

“At North Carolina State University, two students from Saudi Arabia left the U.S. after learning their legal status as students was terminated,” the university said. N.C. State said it will work with the students to complete their semester from outside the country.Supreme Court allows Trump administration to cut teacher-training money, for nowPhilip Vasto, who lived with one of the students, said his roommate, in graduate school for engineering management, was apolitical and did not attend protests against the war in Gaza. “When the government told his roommate his student status had been terminated, it did not give a reason,” Mr. Vasto said. Since returning to Saudi Arabia, Mr. Vasto said his former roommate’s top concern is getting into another university. “He’s made his peace with it,” he said. “He doesn’t want to allow it to steal his peace any further.”Database checks turn up students in jeopardy“At the University of Texas at Austin, staff checking a federal database discovered two people on student visas had their permission to be in the U.S. terminated,” a person familiar with the situation said. The person declined to be identified for fear of retaliation.

One of the people, from India, had their legal status terminated on April 3, 2025. The federal system indicated the person had been identified in a criminal records check “and/or has had their visa revoked.” “The other person, from Lebanon, had their legal status terminated on March 28 owing to a criminal records check,” according to the federal database.Both people were graduates remaining in the U.S. on student visas, using an option allowing people to gain professional experience after completing coursework. Both were employed full time and apparently had not violated requirements for pursuing work experience, the person familiar with the situation said.

Some students have had visas revoked by the State Department under an obscure law barring non-citizens whose presence could have “serious adverse foreign policy consequences.” Mr. Trump invoked the law in a January order demanding action against campus antisemitism. “But some students targeted in recent weeks have had no clear link to political activism. Some have been ordered to leave over misdemeanor crimes or traffic infractions,” Ms. Feldblum said. In some cases, students were targeted for infractions that had been previously reported to the government.

“Some of the alleged infractions would not have drawn scrutiny in the past and will likely be a test of students’ First Amendment rights as cases work their way through court,” said Michelle Mittelstadt, director of public affairs at the Migration Policy Institute. “In some ways, what the administration is doing is really retroactive,” she said.The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities is requesting a meeting with the State Department over the issue. It’s unclear whether more visas are being revoked than usual, but officials fear a chilling effect on international exchange.Many of the association’s members have recently seen at least one student have their visa revoked, said Bernie Burrola, vice-president at the group. With little information from the government, colleges have been interviewing students or searching social media for a connection to political activism. “The universities can’t seem to find anything that seems to be related to Gaza or social media posts or protests,” Mr. Burrola said. “Some of these are sponsored students by foreign governments, where they specifically are very hesitant to get involved in protests.” “There’s no clear thread indicating which students are being targeted, but some have been from the Middle East and China,” he said.At Texas A&M, officials who looked into why three students had their status terminated said they had long-resolved offenses on their records, including one with a speeding ticket.“America’s universities have long been seen as a top destination for the world’s brightest minds — and they’ve brought important tuition revenue and research breakthroughs to U.S. colleges. But international students also have other options,” said Fanta Aw, CEO of NAFSA, an association of international educators. “We should not take for granted that that’s just the way things are and will always be,” she said.



and the university, it has been indirectly affected by the shock to the global aid system.At least one local health clinic that provides services in Pretoria has closed, forcing patients to turn to often crowded, poorly funded government-run facilities.Now, harm reduction programmes will face stiff competition for sharply shrinking resources.The 30-year-old Dipolelo Lekota said she was struggling to quit drugs. She said she can access HIV medication and clean needles through the visiting project to avoid infecting others.Likwa Ncube leads the project in parts of Pretoria. He acknowledged that drug withdrawal can be painful, as people accept methadone instead. The challenge is helping them through it. He said the programme had been unfairly accused of enabling or encouraging drug use because it provides needles.

North Korea leader Kim Jong Un visits military training base

This picture taken on April 4, 2025 and released from North Korea’s official Korean Central News Agency shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (centre) looking at a weapon as he visits a training base of the Korean People’s Army’s special operations forces to observe a comprehensive training session, at an undisclosed location in North Korea.This picture taken on April 4, 2025 and released from North Korea’s official Korean Central News Agency shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (centre) looking at a weapon as he visits a training base of the Korean People’s Army’s special operations forces to observe a comprehensive training session, at an undisclosed location in North

Korea. “North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Friday (April 4, 2025) visited the military training base of the special operation units of the Korean People’s Army,” state media reported on Saturday (April 5, 2025).“Mr. Kim mounted the observation post to watch the general tactical training and small-arms shooting contest conducted by combatants of various special operation units under the training programme,” KCNA state news agency said.“Strengthening of the special operation forces constitutes a major component of the Army-building strategy at present,” KCNA quoted Mr. Kim as saying.Mr. Kim said strengthening special operations forces is a key part of the current military strategy,

Picture of a Gurugram farmer beside the London Bridge frames aspiration of our times



My most enduring memory of 2024 is likely to be of a villager from Gurugram — a previously impoverished man of the Gujar caste who is a recent land-sale millionaire — standing under the shadows of London Bridge. In the photo that I have, he is wearing a pair of fashionably ripped jeans, hands folded across his chest in a gesture of confidence that conceals an extraordinary journey from being a village milkman at the bottom of the rural caste hierarchy to global traveler. I have known him over the past 10 years of field-work in southern Haryana where, along with clods of earth thrown up by construction machinery, his fortunes have also turned.

As we begin 2025, the photo of a Gurugram villager standing under an iconic tourist spot — just one link in a global chain he intends to complete — is a sign of the new worlds of being, buying and believing that just over a quarter century of economic and cultural change has produced. It is a world of aspirations significantly made through policy-actions of the recently departed Manmohan Singh and successfully re-defined for its own purposes by the BJP and its alliance partners. And, just as importantly, it is also a chronicle of the making of an Indian type that has no precedence. We had better understand the worldview of the man under the bridge in ripped jeans if we are to come to grips with what the times portend. For, his demeanour is that of someone who has, actually, upended ways of thinking about modern life itself. My 55-year-old visitor began life as a hand-to-mouth dairy farmer, progressing to becoming a middle man for major real-estate companies, who was trusted by villagers to deal with “outsiders” in the sale of their land. His biography forms an integral part of the story of the making of a new Indian type: He is part of a very significant section of the Indian population whose lives make it impossible to think through the binaries of “modern” and “pre-modern”. Why should we bother with this seemingly arcane distinction? Because it lies at the heart of the India that has come to life over the past quarter century and defines a range of cultural, social and (especially) political outcomes in the republic. We live in an age where the world has not become a “disenchanted” place, to invoke a phrase made famous by the German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920), through a decline of belief in magic and religion. Rather, as my Gurugram visitor’s life-story tells us, modern life has itself become magical and, hence, re-enchanted in ways that Weber may not have predicted. The crux of the re-enchament lies — unlike the Weberian understanding of modernity — in what the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai correctly identified as “the capacity to aspire”. Strategies of aspiration now produce world views that are impossible to comprehend through uni-linear ways of understanding the new

As farmer protest continues, Punjab’s well of goodwill may be drying up

Almost four years after their protests forced the Narendra Modi government to repeal the three contentious farm laws, farmers at Shambu and Khanauri on the Punjab-Haryana border prepare to mark a year of their protest seeking the implementation of 14 demands, including a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP). Not only are there cracks among farmer unions but the frequent disruptions caused by their protests mean the industry stakeholders and common people, especially in the urban areas of Punjab, are increasingly cold to their demands.

For instance, while the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), seen to be the parent farmer body, which was behind the 2020-21 protest, has extended its support to the ongoing agitation, none of its members have been present at Khanauri or Shambu. The agitation has also not drawn much support from beyond Punjab, with Haryana having earlier this year stunned the Congress by overwhelmingly voting for the BJP. As of Wednesday, the protesters under the banner of the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and SKM (Non-Political) had been camped at the protest sites for 322 days, with farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal’s hunger strike entering its 37th day at Khanauri.

Monday’s nine-hour Punjab bandh called by the farm bodies, the latest, brought 174 trains to a halt and affected 232 in total. Railway sources said that every such blockade causes running into crores of rupees. While no official overall figures are available, Monday’s bandh resulted in loss of Rs 6.4 lakh through ticket refunds for the Ferozpur division alone. Moreover, for many, the bandh brought back memories of when the farmers resorted to a 33-day rail roko between April 18 and May 20, 2023, demanding the release of three youths arrested by the Haryana Police. A total of 170 trains were affected while 70 trains cancelled on a daily basis during this period, while premium trains such as the Shatabdi Express and Vande Bharat took thrice their usual time to reach their destinations. Apart from hitting the railway network, the road blockades have also increased commute time on NH-44 and NH-52 by an hour. Taxis on the Ludhiana-Delhi route are costing up to Rs 1,000 more. The brunt to industry Among the supporters of the farm protests, the state’s industry has lately come out in the open, saying they have “had enough”. “All industries are feeling the heat. It is just that only a few express their agitation on record,” Badish Jindal, the convener of the All Industries and Trade Forum, told The Indian Express. Pegging Monday’s losses alone at over Rs 500 crore, the president of the Association of Trade and Industrial Undertakings, Pankaj Sharma, said, “Members of many (farmer) unions forcibly entered the premises of industrial units and shut them. They can call for bandh but cannot shut them down forcibly. The prolonged protests are hitting industries hard. We do not want Punjab getting the tag of being a ‘protest state,’” he said.

Terming the “forcible” closure of industries as a “new kind of terrorism where the industry is being deprived of their right to do business”, Jindal claimed many of his clients had “shifted” to Haryana during the April-May rail roko even as the state government remained a “mute spectator”. “They (investors) fear that protests can break out any time in Punjab and are moving their base. Punjab’s loss is Haryana’s gain,” he said. Punjab imports 90% of the scrap for steel-related products and sells 90% of its manufactured goods to other states. It also exports rice worth over Rs

formations of Indian culture: We do not move from more to less magic. Rather, the new cultures of aspirations — now spread across all strata of society, rather than limited to a privileged minority — have given rise to an imagination that ascribes success to the power of magic and the divine. In a society with such great barriers to economic and social mobility, a magical modernity is not such a strange thing.

“I think to myself”, my Gurugram visitor had once noted, “that I was a peasant with such a small landholding that I could not make a living through farming”. And that “I had no choice but to earn my livelihood by delivering milk door to door on a bicycle... and it is god’s grace that now my relationships are with such significant people in my biradari (fraternity) as well as the outside world”. The extraordinary conditions of deprivation and discrimination that his community had endured — classified as a “criminal tribe” under colonialism, driven to rocky and un-cultivable lands and stigmatised by “higher” castes — makes its current affluence seem miraculous indeed. However, the “miracle” owes little to divine intervention and is entirely due to strategies that are this-worldly. The men of my visitor’s community have achieved their current level of affluence through learning the tricks of modernity. Land dealings are a very tricky matter, especially when a relatively disadvantaged community must deal with the guiles of large real estate companies and self-serving government machinery. Further, there are byzantine legal procedures to be negotiated. In many instances, a combination of legal, administrative and corporate chicanery has had debilitating consequences for small-scale landholders who have found themselves in the maelstrom of new land markets. However, those who owned bits and pieces of land — unsuitable for farming but large enough for commercial building or a gated residential enclave — have struck gold.

most read A community banished to the fringes of rural life is now at the centre of national and global level financial processes. God, however, has had little to do with it and learning hardheaded ways of dealing with administrative loopholes, legal minefields and corporate slyness is at the heart of the rise of the global peasant, (to use my visitor’s self-description). He — men make greater headway than women — stands with poise against the backdrop of London Bridge, having mastered the ways of the world. But the new Indian type — of which the global peasant is a representative example — embodies a personality that interprets the world through the language of aspirations. Aspirations constitute the politics of our times and more traditional forms of politics — human rights, anti-caste movements, land rights, etc — are rarely imagined as part of the lives of those who are thought to be their key beneficiaries. The current era of mass aspirations is quite different from an earlier one that defined Indian life: Traditional nationalism. The latter produced ideas of community life through playing down the notion of individualised aspirations. The current shift to a time of aspirational individualism is, on the other hand, defined by the idea of the cut-piece: Gods come together with land markets, global financial and bureaucratic and statist processes and worldliness is enchanted with the mysteries of the divine hand. Enchantment as a feature of our times is important to understand. It derives from the most fundamental politics of our time, that of aspirations, and the latter itself has multiple political uses. Happy new times!



8,000 crore, woollen and cotton clothes worth Rs 7,500 crore, meat worth nearly Rs 2,000 crore, auto parts worth around Rs 2,500 crore, yarn worth Rs 2,000 crore, cloth and linen worth Rs 3,500 crore, scaffolding worth Rs 1,300 crore, tools, medicines and other chemicals worth Rs 1,800 crore, tractors and agricultural implements worth Rs 800 crore, fasteners, flanges and other products worth Rs 1,200 crore. Many of these industries fear they have not seen the last of such bandhs. Vice-President, Punjab Pradesh Beopar Mandal, Anil Bansal also echoed Jindal’s views. “There are over 40 farmer unions. Should we consider each call for a bandh? This way, we will never be able to work. Sometimes, I feel farmer unions are running a parallel government. Protests outside banks and stores even over related issues like loans are not common,” he said. Upkar Singh, president of the Chamber of Industrial and Commercial Undertakings, said he supported the farmers but their way of registering protests is hurting the industry, and he urged them to “rethink their ways”. Jindal said the state’s industries would be further hit if anything untoward happened to Dallewal. “The farmers’ actions are hurting Punjab and this time they do not have the support that they had in 2020,” he said. The protesting farmers have found support from the Federation of Industrial and Commercial Undertakings with its general secretary Manjinder Singh Sachdeva expressing concerns over Dallewal’s health. “It is not correct that the Union government is not bothered about the farmers and is not hearing out their concerns. It seems like they have an ego clash with some farmer leaders,” he said. The political fallout The more the protest continues, there is increasing disenchantment with the ruling Aam Aadmi Party. In the recently held local body polls, the party managed to win only three of the 11 seats in the Khanauri panchayat, with urban residents accusing the AAP government of being “silent spectators” to their problems. Even in Sangrur, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann’s home turf, the AAP managed to win only seven of the 29 seats and is now extending support to Independents to cobble up a majority and “save face”. KMM coordinator Sarwan Singh Pandher puts the blame squarely on the Centre, calling it “responsible for the losses”. “They (the Centre) are not hearing us out and not even allowing us to go to Delhi on foot,” he said. AAP spokesperson and Anandpur Sahib MP Manwinder Singh Kang, echoed Pandher’s views, urging the Centre to “let go off its stubbornness” and talk to the farmers. “Dallewal has risked his life for the farmers’ demands, yet the heartless Centre remains unmoved. All demands concern the Central government. Only a dialogue will end farmers’ struggles and put an end to the hardships faced by the general public,” he said.

Short Stream | Bobby Beauty Parlour: The finishing line of childhood



Two friends working in a claustrophobic beauty parlour on the hottest day of the year face a life-changing arrival, a departure, freedom, and fear. The hottest day of the year in Noida can be extreme in a lot of ways. It is, for Eelu (Adrija Sinha) and Manu (Parul Rana), the protagonists in Shashwat Dwivedi’s debut short film Bobby Beauty Parlour, produced by Anurag Kashyap and Ranjan Singh, and co-written by Dwivedi and Janhavi Asthana, who is also the cinematographer. The story is by Asthana.

Besides the discomfort and the confinement that the hottest day has caused the two best friends — on the verge of adulthood, in the last leg of their teenage years, when innocence and the desire to break away to adult life cause tumult in hearts and minds — the heat becomes a sort of mirror to what they are feeling. Will they stew in the mugginess that is Noida in summer — and that is their life, working for Aunty Bobby (Preeti Kochar) at Bobby Beauty Parlour? Eelu drops by to see her best friend Manu. While there, when the owner of the salon suffers a heatstroke. The girls find themselves alone and unable to get out due to the severe heat. Trapped together, the story moves to mumblecore territory. A chat leads to a laugh, a dance, and a fight. A man arrives looking for Eelu. Eelu is about to leave for better opportunities in another city. Neither of the girls is entirely convinced the man is safe enough for Eelu. But Ella will leave; she has made up her mind. Manu feels trapped. Their friendship is under a momentous test, suddenly confronted with the pain of growing up — the anticipation as well as the loss.

Will the Waqf law usher in transparency?

The story so far: President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday (April 5, 2025) gave her assent to the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, as per a notification issued by the Union Law Ministry. The contentious legislation was passed by Parliament this week after two marathon debates in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. In the Upper House, the Bill was cleared with 128 votes in favour and 95 against—a narrower margin compared to the Lok Sabha, where it passed with a lead of 56 votes. Initially introduced last year, the Bill was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) chaired by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Jagdambika Pal for scrutiny. The committee’s report was tabled in both Houses on February 13, 2025.

What does the law aim to do? In Islamic law, waqf refers to property dedicated in the name of god for religious or charitable purposes. Proceeds from such properties are typically used to maintain mosques, fund educational institutions, or support the poor. Once designated as waqf, the property becomes inalienable — it cannot be sold, inherited, or gifted. The Waqf Act, 1995 (1995 Act), and its 2013 amendments under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government created the legal framework for managing waqf properties and established State Waqf Boards. The new law seeks to amend the 1995 Act, now renamed the Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act. It proposes sweeping reforms that significantly expand the government’s role in regulating such properties and adjudicating disputes related to them. While the government justifies these amendments as necessary for transparency, critics and Opposition parties argue that they encroach upon the religious autonomy of the Muslim community.

Who is eligible to make a waqf dedication? Under the original law, any person, regardless of religion, could dedicate property as waqf. However, the new amendments restrict this right to only those who have practised Islam for at least five years. The amended law now requires individuals to “show or demonstrate” adherence to Islam for this duration to establish a waqf. Dr. Faizan Mustafa, noted academician and Vice-Chancellor of Chanakya National Law University, Patna, has criticised this requirement as constitutionally suspect. “Once a person embraces Islam, they are entitled to all associated rights, including the right to religious dedication. This provision also violates the right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution, as it discriminates against recent converts by selectively barring them from endowing property for religious purposes”, he told The Hindu.

What about ‘waqf by user’ properties? Last year, the government proposed a complete repeal of the doctrine of “waqf by user” — a principle rooted in Islamic legal tradition that recognised properties as religious or charitable endowments based on uninterrupted communal use, even in the absence of formal documentation. However, the JPC report cautioned that dismantling this doctrine could destabilise the legal standing of such properties, many of which have been informally managed by local communities for decades. Accordingly, the amended law now clarifies that all existing “waqf by user” properties registered on or before the law’s enactment will retain their status unless they are disputed or classified as government land. In effect, the government has retained the doctrine for existing cases but barred its application to future land claims.

Will government oversight intensify? The 2024 Bill reallocated the responsibility of surveying waqf properties from dedicated survey commissioners to District Collectors. It also repealed Section 40 of the 1995 Act, which had empowered the Waqf Boards to initiate suo motu inquiries to determine whether a property qualified as waqf, even without official documentation. However, the JPC recommended that such surveys be conducted by senior State officials. Accordingly, the new legislation now

Asthana, who wrote the story, says that the kernel of the idea came from her own experience of leaving behind close friends when she had to move from a town she lived in as a child. “I have often wondered if we would still be friends, what it would be like to meet them now. I wanted to explore that sense of loss through this story,” she says. Asthana works primarily as a cinematographer in Mumbai and has worked with various productions in different capacities. In Bobby Beauty Parlour, the camera captures the suffocating canvas of the parlour and infuses the moments between the friends with baroscopic tension as well as tenderness. Dwivedi’s directorial signature is restraint in over-dialogued scenes and authenticity in milieu, language, and art direction. He has worked with producer-director Anurag Kashyap as a songwriter and script supervisor. His last film as a songwriter is Kashyap’s Kennedy, which played at Festival de Cannes last year. Dwivedi’s vision has a verité charm about the milieu and context of Delhi where the story unfolds. “We did not struggle like many short filmmakers do. We had the technical resources for this film, thanks to our collaboration with Ranjan Singh and Anurag Kashyap. What you see is really me holding together a lot of talented technicians, and Janhavi’s story,” Dwivedi says. Under his direction, the actors, Adrija Sinha and Parul Rana, perform the roles with conviction and nuance. Bobby Beauty Parlour had its premiere at the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles in June this year, and the second leg of its film festival run begins next year.



mandates that “an officer above the rank of Collector” survey properties where government ownership is disputed. “The claim that there was no government oversight is a myth. The existing law already allows the government to issue directions to Waqf Boards, nominate members, and even supersede them. Replacing trained survey commissioners with District Magistrates who are already overburdened undermines institutional capacity. If the regulator is weakened in this manner, how can the law’s stated objective of improving waqf administration and efficiency be achieved?”, Dr. Mustafa pointed out.

Is there non-Muslim representation? One of the law’s most contentious provisions is the inclusion of non-Muslims in key waqf institutions. It mandates that both the Central Waqf Council and State Waqf Boards must have at least two non-Muslim members. It also removes the requirement that the Chief Executive Officer of a Waqf Board should be a Muslim. In line with a JPC recommendation, the law now stipulates that the State government’s representative on the Waqf Board must be a joint secretary-level officer specifically overseeing waqf affairs.

Opposition parties argue that these changes infringe upon the community’s constitutionally guaranteed right to manage its religious affairs. However, welcoming the reforms, Dr. Mustafa said, “The diversity of the nation must be reflected in all its institutions, including Waqf Boards, which are statutory bodies. The inclusion of women, non-Muslims, and members of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) is a positive step. The real question is whether similar reforms will be introduced in temple boards as well.”

What about financial accountability? The law introduces a centralised registration system for waqf properties to enhance financial oversight. Muttawalis (custodians of waqfs) will be required to upload property details within six months of the law’s enactment, and all future registrations must be routed exclusively through this portal to the respective Waqf Boards.

The legislation also proposes to repeal Section 107 of the Waqf Act, 1995, which had exempted waqf properties from the scope of the Limitation Act, 1963. This exemption had enabled Waqf Boards to reclaim encroached land without being bound by the Act’s 12-year limitation period. However, critics argue that its removal would permit encroachers to claim ownership through adverse possession, legitimising illegal occupations of waqf land.

What lies ahead? Congress MP Mohammed Jawed, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi, Delhi legislator Amanatullah Khan, and the NGO Association for Protection of Civil Rights have filed separate petitions before the Supreme Court, contending that the legislation infringes upon constitutionally guaranteed rights to religious freedom and property. “When the constitutionality of a law is challenged, courts begin with a presumption in favour of its validity. Therefore, the burden lies heavily on the petitioner to demonstrate that the law violates fundamental rights,” said Dr. Mustafa.

Drinking water contamination: A recurring nightmare in Bengaluru



Three hundred residents of the city’s BTM Layout faced serious health risks in November, in the latest episode of sewage inflow into Cauvery water lines. Two months earlier, the entire HBR Layout was perched dangerously close to a similar health disaster. No lessons were learnt from April of the same year, when water contamination had triggered a big, 40% spike in cholera cases across the city. Is there no end to this recurring nightmare? As lakhs of Bengalureans cry out for an enduring solution that ensures supply of clean, safe drinking water, huge structural and systemic gaps remain unaddressed. Chaotic underground pipeline networks exasperated by a lack of coordination by multiple civic agencies, big gaps in ferrying sewage and treatment, absence of a prompt contamination alert system have all left the citizens precariously exposed.

In most cases, the contamination is detected only after the foul stench hits the residents. But by then, the damage would be done. In BTM Layout 2nd Stage, many residents had their entire sumps filled with 3,500 to 4,000 litres of Cauvery water turn black. Often, the citizens end up spending an enormous amount of money to entirely flush out the polluted water, clean the interior pipeline system and refill with tanker water. The presence of the diarrhoeagenic bacteria called *Escherichia Coli* (E-Coli) is a clear indication of faecal contamination in drinking water samples. The presence of the diarrhoeagenic bacteria called *Escherichia Coli* (E-Coli) is a clear indication of faecal contamination in drinking water samples. The United Nations General Assembly has declared safe drinking water as a human right. Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is one of the UN’s Sustainable Goal. Yet, the country’s wannabe global city has been found wanting year after year in periodical water quality assessment and surveillance, critical to guide action on safe drinking water.

The presence of the diarrhoeagenic bacteria called *Escherichia Coli* (E-Coli) is a clear indication of faecal contamination in drinking water samples. Counts of coliforms are an indicator of microbial contamination. But how frequently is the supplied drinking water tested for these critical parameters?

“Microbial studies are rarely done on water, since they are convinced that UV and chlorine will take care of all those pollutants,” says Ramprasad V., Co-founder, Friends of Lakes. Recurring contamination can only be addressed through a scientific water safety plan, says independent water and wastewater consultant Thippeswamy M.N. “Contamination can happen anywhere from catchment to consumer. Though treatment happens at the headworks, pollutants can enter at the pumping stations, reservoirs and the 10,000 km plus pipeline network that carries water to the consumer,” he points out. Regular monitoring is mandated in areas where water and sewer lines are in close proximity. A minimum separation of 10ft is required but not followed due to narrow road width. In many slums within the core city areas, storm water drains (SWDs), Cauvery and sewer lines are laid too close since the lanes are narrow. This increases the risk of contamination. Thippeswamy elaborates: “The drains – small, medium and large – all carry sewage. Sewage lines too are in poor condition, leading to leakage into the SWDs. Besides, many households have their latrines connected directly to the SWDs.” Regular monitoring is mandated in areas where water and sewer lines are in close proximity. A minimum separation of 10ft is required but not followed due to narrow road width. Sewer lines get blocked and enter water lines in many places. Seasoned water experts say this is very common in slum areas, and the cascading effect could quickly engulf the surrounding localities.

SpaDeX first of many as ISRO prepares for Chandrayaan-4

There will be a series of space docking experiments before the Indian Space Research Organisation embarks on its Chandrayaan-4 mission to bring soil samples from the moon to the earth, ISRO has said. On December 30, 2024, the C60 mission of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) placed two satellites, each weighing 220 kg, in orbit. They will rendezvous and dock with each other as part of ISRO’s first Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX). ISRO Chairman S. Somanath said “the nominal time” for the docking “will be approximately January 7.” He added, “The two SpaDeX satellites have moved one behind the other, so over a period of time, they will pick up further distance. The distance will increase by 20 km over the next few days and then the rendezvous and docking process will start.” For Chandrayaan-4, ISRO will launch the mission’s modules in two Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM-3) rockets. At various points during the mission, the modules will undergo a series of docking and undocking manoeuvres before finally transporting a canister of lunar soil safely back to the earth. A crucial technology

Mr. Somanath had said on December 31, “2025 will



be an exciting year as ISRO will launch four GSLV rockets, three PSLV launches as well as an SSLV launch.” (GSLV is short for Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle and SSLV for Small Satellite Launch Vehicle). Docking is a crucial technology for India to master for Chandrayaan-4 as well as its forthcoming orbital Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), expected to be ready by 2035, and for its goal to send an Indian astronaut to the moon. Chandrayaan-4 study director P. Veeramuthuvel said, “Docking is important for all future missions of ISRO because you cannot launch everything in one go. So you need docking of modules in space. ... There will be five modules in BAS, all of which

The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), being the first response agency, should test at least 1,000 samples every month, says Thippeswamy. “As per WHO standards, one sample per 10,000 people has to be tested for multiple physical and bacteriological parameters. The BBMP is supposed to monitor it while involving third parties for surveillance. They are not doing much. The city has grown so much. They have to take cognizance of not only quantity but also quality.” Besides, six percent of households with a Cauvery water supply are inappropriately using RO technology as they can consume UV-treated Cauvery water. Besides, six percent of households with a Cauvery water supply are inappropriately using RO technology as they can consume UV-treated Cauvery water. | Photo Credit: Rasheed Kappan

Chemical contamination risks While microbial contamination gets the spotlight after coloration and stench, chemical pollutants often escape the radar. Chemically contaminated groundwater is usually purified by Reverse Osmosis (RO) technology. “However, this technology wastes water as only a portion of raw water is treated and the remaining is discarded as RO reject with almost twice the salinity of the raw water,” finds a June 2024 study titled “Examining Bengaluru’s Potable Water Quality and the Usage and Consequences of RO Technology in Treating the City’s Drinking Water.” The study authors Sudhakar M. Rao and Nitish Venkateswarlu Mogili note that potable water supplied in all BBMP zones is contaminated by Fe (iron) and nitrate. “Calculations projected that 49% of 29.1 lakh households consume 14.29 MLD (million liters per day) of RO water. Groundwater in some BBMP zones has TDS (total dissolved solids), F (fluoride) and Pb (lead) contamination.” Besides, six percent of households with a Cauvery water supply are inappropriately using RO technology as they can consume UV-treated Cauvery water. “Usage of 14.29 MLD of RO water will generate 14.29–33.3 MLD of RO reject water with elevated salinity levels that eventually reach the inland water bodies,” says the study report.

Water kiosks, not so pure To address public concerns about water safety, the government opened scores of ‘Pure Drinking Water’ kiosks, offering 20 litres at ₹5. But Ramprasad wonders how safe the water really is. “Maintenance is an issue. Many of them don’t have their UV systems working. There are chances that the water will have pollutants. People stand in queue believing that it is very good water. All these are ROs, they need maintenance,” he says. However, water conservationist S. Vishwanath is certain that if the systems were properly checked at the initial implementation stage, the process itself would determine the purity of water. He elaborates, “If the process is followed, you will get good, clean water without E-Coli or coliforms. However, there is potential for contamination when people take the water in containers that are not clean. Secondary contamination could be an issue, and the public need to be aware of this.” Lack of 24/7 water supply in most parts of the city implies wide recourse to storage tanks and sumps. This can be a source of secondary contamination in households. While pressurized water supply negates the need for storage and pipes under vacuum, intermittent supply lets pollutants in through leaks and conflict points between water and sewage lines. Reduce sewer joints As Thippeswamy points out, one way to reduce leakages is to reduce sewer joints. “Older sewer pipes were 2.5ft in length, thus requiring more joints. This is now being addressed with pipes that are even 10ft long. Joints are vulnerable to the leakages.” To find an enduring solution to the problem, Vishwanath suggests a thorough audit of every contamination spot to pinpoint the cause.

Testing could be democratised by equipping apartments and even individual houses with devices now available at highly affordable rates. These could easily ascertain the extent of Total Dissolved Solids, residual chlorine and other pollutants. Apartments are advised to send samples every month to accredited labs, ensure that they are thoroughly checked for BIS 10500 drinking water standards and the values put up in public domain. “They should do this both for the water supply system and treated waste water emerging out of their STPs to ascertain the level of treatment. This should be a monthly ritual,” says Vishwanath.

Tackling delimitation by reversing population control



Recently, the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, N. Chandrababu Naidu and M.K. Stalin, respectively, were quite peeved about the question of the proposed delimitation exercise and the possibility, subsequently, of the loss of parliamentary seats. This is very likely as the two States, along with the other southern States, are ahead of the rest of India in terms of fertility transition — implying a reduced share of the population when compared with the northern region. What is galling to people in general, and not necessarily just the politicians in south India, is that success in “family planning” will surely reduce the number of seats of the less populated States in Parliament. “The state government [Andhra Pradesh] is thinking of enacting a law that would make only those with more than two children eligible to contest local body elections,” Mr. Naidu had said. Earlier, Andhra Pradesh had passed a piece of legislation barring people with more than two children from contesting local polls. Mr. Naidu said, “We have repealed that law, and we are now considering reversing it.... Government may provide more benefits to families with more children.”

Mr. Stalin’s response was, “Today, as there is a scenario of decreasing Lok Sabha constituencies, it raises the question why should we restrict ourselves to having fewer children? Mr. Stalin added in jest, “Why not aim for 16 children?” The example of China The question that arises in the light of the reactions and the responses of the Chief Ministers is: would it be possible to arrest fertility decline and, moreover, reverse it by attempting to increase it? It is evident that the attainment of low fertility in the course of fertility transition is hardly reversible by intervention, but in the natural course of events, there might be a minor reversal as suggested by experience worldwide. Despite this understanding, there are attempts being made in some countries to reverse the fertility trend through incentivisation, but to no effect. China’s one-child policy was one of the desperate measures to realise population control. The consequences confronting the Chinese state on varied fronts include problems in the marriage market, a dependency burden and, above all, extreme low fertility beyond the scope for reversal.

Women electors turned out more in 2024 LS polls, gender difference highest in Bihar

The Election Commission (EC) has released granular data for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections recently. The gap between male and female turnouts was narrowing in recent elections, before female electors’ turnout surpassed that of men in the 2019 and now, the 2024 elections. The difference between the turnout increased from 0.16 to 0.23 points from the 2019 to the 2024 elections. In 15 out of the 28 major States and U.T.s, female turnout surpassed that of men, while in the rest, it was the opposite. The gender difference in turnout was highest in Bihar, even as the overall turnout was relatively low. Bihar apart, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand also experienced higher female turnout relative to males. Chart 2 shows the male and female voter turnout in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in percentage.

Among States with high turnout, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, and West Bengal had higher female turnout compared to males. In States with moderate turnout, Odisha, Kerala, and Himachal Pradesh had a similar gender divide in turnout. The situation was the opposite in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir, and Rajasthan, where overall turnout was lower relative to the rest of the country, and male turnout surpassed that of females. In States with moderate turnout, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, and Karnataka had higher turnout among men. In others, the gender difference in turnout was not that high.

Looking at turnouts alone would paint an incomplete picture. We need to see female turnout relative to the electorate. If a State has a skewed electorate with higher composition of men, a relatively higher turnout among women could still mean that men turned out more because of the latter’s higher electorate numbers. Chart 3 plots the ratio of female to male electors (eligible voters) against the ratio of female to male voters (absolute numbers of those who turned out). Bihar stands out among States that had a higher female-to-male (voters) ratio despite having a lower female-to-male electorate ratio. This means that in Bihar, more women turned out to vote than men in absolute numbers even though there were more registered male electors than women. Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh also come un-

der this category but the difference between these ratios is less stark compared to Bihar. In States like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh, more women were eligible to vote compared to men and more women turned out to vote as well. The situation was the opposite in States like Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh among others where female voters were outnumbered by male voters as there were more registered male electors than women. What could explain the drastic difference in female and male voting in States like Bihar and Jharkhand? The reasons could be political factors (which motivate more women to vote) or structural factors such as the migration of male workers to other States and their inability to return to their home States to vote despite being registered as voters there.

Varied population counts The course of fertility decline in India’s States does show signs of a convergence across space and characteristics but a population momentum keeps the demographic divide wider between regions. Given this circumstance, population counts between provinces may not be the appropriate criterion to have political representation that will defy the federal structure of our nation. ‘One person one vote’ may well be ideal but the difference in numbers of political representation in one region will be skewed beyond proportions. Unless these counts are weighed with some characteristics in terms of appropriating political representation, it will be unfair, for example, to a region that ushered in development with population control. This brings in a recognition of demographic divide apparent with education, coupled with the number of children being the criteria for shaping political outcomes. Impact on women

Encouraging women to have more children may be easier said than done. In the current circumstances, a woman’s personal loss in engaging in reproduction is much greater than imagined given the state’s approach in facilitating the same. When the state celebrates the fertility decline and its dividend has benefited the larger cause, its implication in a woman’s life has been less than expected. Therefore, thinking about fertility reversal needs to be preceded by measures of guaranteeing the state’s social support for the additional children on the one hand and compensation for women’s engagement in reproduction on the other. Reversing fertility could well be ideal in terms of maintaining a sustainable population but the regional population imbalance can perhaps be addressed through migration in immediate terms. What needs to be answered is the ensuing disadvantage of a lower population count and political representation that can only be resolved provided the count gets an equivalence in valuation in terms of capability characteristics. Therefore, the ultimate solution lies not in reversing fertility but in revising count-based political representation in the delimitation exercise.



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Table 4 looks at the top 10 common sources and destinations of migrant workers who used unreserved tickets to travel to other States in 2023. Note how Bihar features in four entries among the top 10 sources and the fact that there are two States/U.T. destinations for Bihar’s migrants which are not neighbouring States/U.T.s. Out-migration seems a possible reason for lower male turnout in States like Bihar. Establishing this fact might require more granular data processing beyond the scope of this article. Table 5 shows the five seats in which the difference between the male and female turnout was the most, and the five seats in which the difference between the male and female turnout was the least

Women-centric public healthcare initiatives abandoned by Congress govt in Telangana

Hyderabad: The lack of support for public health initiatives, those aimed specifically at women’s health, by the Congress government in Telangana is threatening to significantly impact women’s health. Almost all major initiatives, including the once-in-a-week exclusive Arogya Mahila clinics, organised in government hospitals every Tuesday, have been abandoned by the current State government.

“Currently, only the Central government-sponsored healthcare initiatives for women are being implemented in Telangana. There is, however, a need for specific healthcare initiatives that are aimed at early diagnosis of NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension, breast and cervical cancers, thyroid deficiencies and post- and pre-menopausal healthcare support that women desperately need,” senior health officials said. The Arogya Mahila initiative itself involved conducting over 20 different diagnostic tests for the early detection of ailments. Apart from this initiative, another major women-centric healthcare initiative abandoned by the Congress government in Telangana is the additional supplementation of nutrition for anaemic women.

While the Congress government claims that all the above-mentioned healthcare services are still available for



women, the fact remains that there is no concerted attempt to ensure that all women from weaker sections in Telangana get access to healthcare on a specific day. “Such a measure is important because a specific day empowers women, who usually struggle with inhibitions. Providing women-centric healthcare facilities with general patients is not a good idea. Such practices discourage women from visiting government hospitals,” public health specialists point out.

Trump tariffs singe India Inc: TCS, Infy to Tata Motors and metal firms in turmoil



Top Indian companies are facing a major challenge following US President Donald Trump’s announcement to raise tariffs. This move is expected to affect directly or indirectly many Indian corporates, including IT giants TCS and Infosys, automobile firms like Tata Motors, pharmaceutical companies such as Sun Pharma and Cipla – which are now set to be brought under the reciprocal tariff policy — and National Aluminium and Tata Steel.

The stock market has already started feeling the heat, with stocks of pharma, automobile, IT, aluminium, steel companies and even Reliance Industries experiencing a significant decline over the last two days, taking the benchmark indices down by 1.22 per cent on Friday. The tariff increase is expected to disrupt India’s export-oriented industries, potentially leading to job losses, profit margins and revenue declines. As the situation unfolds, Indian corporates are gearing up to mitigate the effects of the tariff hike and explore alternative strategies to maintain their competitiveness in the global market. “Our analysis suggests that India’s direct export loss from higher tariffs could be limited to around \$ 9-13 billion, which is 0.2-0.3 per cent of its GDP. India’s domestically driven economy may offer some resilience,” CareEdge Ratings said in a report.

The Trump blow has come at a time when the rise in input costs and moderation in urban consumption slowed down corporate performance in the quarter ended December 2024 and companies listed on the stock exchanges set to report a lacklustre performance in profits and sales during the quarter ended March 2025, reflecting th1e challenging business environment. There’s uncertainty over the corporate performance and GDP growth in the first quarter of FY2025-26 in the wake of the tariff changes. Tremors created by the Trump tariffs are expected to impact the entire industrial spectrum.Hit by the tariff hike, shares of TCS, India’s largest IT firm, fell another 3.07 per cent and Infosys plunged by three per cent on the stock exchanges on Friday amid worries that US firms will cut down IT spending. “Higher tariffs may result in higher inflation (versus the 2 per cent target of the US Fed) and may impact the FED’s rate cut decision which is not conducive for the IT sector, in general,” said Sumit Pokharna, VP-Fundamental Research, Kotak Securities.

WTO, IMF raise alarm over Trump’s reciprocal tariffs; Economists predict weaker Indian growth prospects

Key multilateral agencies, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), on Friday raised alarm over higher-than-expected US reciprocal tariffs, which are set to upend the global trade order and trigger a potentially long-drawn trade war between large trading blocs such as China and the European Union. This could, they warn,ultimately hurting global goods trade volumes.The WTO’s initial estimates suggest that US tariff measures introduced on April 2, along with those imposed since the beginning of the year, could lead to an overall contraction of around 1 per cent in global merchandise trade volumes this year. This represents a “downward revision of nearly four percentage points” from previous projections, WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the IMF warned that the new US tariffs have heightened the risk of sluggish global growth and urged the US to ease trade tensions.“We are still assessing the macroeconomic implications of the announced tariff measures, but they clearly represent a significant risk to the global outlook at a time of sluggish growth. It is important to avoid steps that could further harm the world economy. We appeal to the United States and its trading partners to work constructively to resolve trade tensions and reduce uncertainty,” IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said.Okonjo-Iweala further emphasised that the recent US announcements will have substantial implications for global trade and economic growth prospects.“I’m deeply concerned about this decline and the potential for escalation into a tariff war with a cycle of retaliatory measures that lead to further declines in trade. It is important to remember that, despite these new measures, the vast majority of global trade still flows under the WTO’s Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) terms. Our estimates now indicate that this share currently stands at 74 per cent, down from around 80 per cent at the beginning of the year. WTO members must stand together to safeguard these gains,” she said, as per Reuters.The WTO was established precisely for moments like this—as a platform for dialogue to prevent trade conflicts from escalating and to support an open and predictable trading environment, Okonjo-Iweala added, encouraging members to use WTO forums to engage constructively and seek cooperative solutions.Goldman Sachs, in its report, estimated a 30-basis-point drag on India’s GDP growth for the current year, given India’s 4 per cent share in US final demand. The investment banking firm further stated that it expects no retaliation from India and believes some announced tariffs will likely be negotiated lower over time during the ongoing trade deal negotiations.HDFC Bank Research warned that FY26 growth estimates could see a “significant downward revision” due to potential trade wars and the absence of a strong domestic demand recovery, exacerbated by weather-related disruptions, the risk of heatwaves, increased financial market volatility, inflation spikes, and a more severe downturn in the global economy.Sakshi Gupta, Principal Economist at HDFC Bank, stated in a report that the across-the-board reciprocal tariffs imposed by the US are much more extreme than initially anticipated, posing a downside risk to India’s GDP growth forecast of around 30 basis points.

“We must admit that there continues to be a significant level of tentativeness in this forecast, which hinges on several ‘unknowns’—whether other countries like the EU and China would retaliate, or whether the US will eventually reduce tariffs through successful bilateral negotiations,” the report stated.Furthermore, HDFC Bank’s research report

Indian IT companies get almost 70 per cent of their export revenue from the US. Any imposition of retaliatory tariffs on US exports by the US’s trading partners could add to global inflation, which had turned benign.Tata Motors, a leading vehicle manufacturer, fell by 6.15 per cent on Friday after US has imposed 25 per cent tariffs on imported cars, light trucks and select auto parts sourced from outside of North America. Over 30 per cent of Tata Motors-owned JLR’s revenue is from the US.Further, almost 150 auto parts will face tariffs at similar rate. This move could result into increase in car prices in the US and cost pressure for component suppliers. In the event of car prices going up, the US car market may witness a steep volume decline and that can impact revenue for component players supplying parts to the US car/light truck industry, according to Arun Agarwal, VP (Fundamental Research – Automobiles), Kotak Securities.Bharat Forge which exports 20 per cent of its auto components to the US fell by 8.46 per cent on the stock exchanges.However, auto makers like Maruti Suzuki and Mahindra & Mahindra have largely escaped as they are unlikely to get hit in a significant way.

Sun Pharma and other pharma majors in the country are also set to face Trump tariff policy as the US has planned to include pharmaceuticals in the reciprocal tariffs in the next stage. Sun Pharma plunged by 3.43 per cent and Cipla by 5.32 per cent on the exchanges on Friday. India exported \$ 8 billion of pharma products to USA in fiscal 2024, its largest export destination, and supplies 40 per cent of generics consumed in the USA and any hike in tariff by the US Administration is likely to impact pharma exports.India has more than 650 manufacturing facilities approved by the US Food and Drugs Administration (USFDA), the second-highest number outside the US. They account for a quarter of all such certified facilities outside the US, Crisil said.Steel and aluminium companies are also bracing for tough times as they fear dumping from other Asian countries following the Trump tariff. National Aluminium and Tata Steel shares plummeted by 8.6 per cent each as there could be pressure on their margins in the coming quarters, analysts said.Though textile firms like Arvind and Raymond declined on the stock markets in line with the subdued trend, they are likely to be beneficiaries. This is because the US administration has levied 27 per cent reciprocal tariff on home textiles and readymade garments from India. This is lower than the levies on other major textile exporting countries — China (54 per cent), Vietnam (46 per cent), Bangladesh (37 per cent) and Pakistan (30 per cent) — and could enhance India’s relative competitiveness and present an opportunity to increase its share of textile exports to the US. For Arvind, the US is a key destination for its products.Higher tariffs are likely to be passed through to consumers to an extent, leading to an increase in the prices of end products, which could dampen the demand over the medium term. This, along with any potential reversal in tariffs imposed on India and the competing nations, will remain a key monitorable, Crisil said.



warned that a sharp global growth slowdown, particularly in the US (with recession odds now rising to 40 per cent), could reduce India’s total export volumes—not just in goods but also in services.

“We believe this is the biggest risk to India’s GDP growth (estimated at 0.3-0.4 percentage points for a 0.8-1 per cent drop in global growth), more so from the direct impact of US tariffs. Moreover, with tariffs of over 50 per cent on China, the risk of oversupply flowing into India and hurting domestic manufacturing remains high,” the report noted.Gupta added that the impact on India could be softened if it secures some concessions under the ongoing bilateral talks with the US. However, she cautioned that the potential benefits could be weaker than expected if other countries choose to absorb some of the tariff hikes by reducing prices, negotiate lower tariffs with the US, or engineer currency depreciation to offset the impact of tariffs.

Musk’s Grok-3 Vs China’s DeepSeek: Which is leading the AI turf war?

New Delhi: As the artificial intelligence (AI) turf war escalates, Elon Musk-owned Grok and Chinese DeepSeek models now stand at the forefront of AI capability — one optimised for accessibility and efficiency and the other for brute-force scale — despite the vast disparity in training resources, a report showed on Saturday.Grok-3 represents scale without compromise — 2,00,000 NVIDIA H100s chasing frontier gains, while DeepSeek-R1 delivers similar performance using a fraction of the compute, signalling that innovative architecture and curation can rival brute force, according to Counterpoint Research.Since February, DeepSeek has grabbed global headlines by open-sourcing its flagship reasoning model DeepSeek-R1 to deliver performance on a par with the world’s frontier reasoning models.“What sets it apart isn’t just its elite capabilities, but the fact that it was trained using only 2,000 NVIDIA H800 GPUs, a scaled-down, export-compliant alternative to the H100, making its achievement a masterclass in efficiency,” said Wei Sun, principal analyst in AI at Counterpoint.Musk’s xAI unveiled Grok-3, its most advanced model to date, which slightly outperforms DeepSeek-R1, OpenAI’s GPT-o1 and Google’s Gemini 2.“Unlike DeepSeek-R1, Grok-3 is proprietary and was trained using a staggering 2,00,000 H100 GPUs on xAI’s supercomputer Colossus, representing a giant leap in computational scale,”* said Sun.

Easy to criticise consumer internet startups: Zepto CEO cites firm’s contributions after Goyal’s jibe



Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal’s scathing remarks on Indian startup ecosystem and its innovation priorities have drawn sharp reaction from the industry, with Zepto CEO Aadit Palicha putting up a strong defence citing the company’s contribution to jobs, FDI and terming it a “miracle in Indian innovation”.Underlining the role played by consumer internet companies in pushing technology-led innovation, Palicha — one of the most recognised faces in the startup circles, and the co-founder of quick commerce company Zepto — argued that the startup ecosystem, the government, and the owners of large pools of Indian capital need to actively support the creation of these local champions, “not pull down the teams that are trying hard to get there”.“It is easy to criticise consumer internet startups in India, especially when you compare them to the deep technical excellence being built in US/China. Using our example, the reality is this: there are almost 1.5 Lakh real people who are earning livelihoods on Zepto today — a company that did not exist 3.5 years ago,” Palicha said in a LinkedIn post.

The Zepto co-founder statement comes after Goyal on Thursday asked the Indian startup community to shift their focus from grocery delivery and ice cream making to high tech sector like semiconductor, machine learning, robotics, and artificial intelligence.“Are we going to be happy being delivery boys and girls... Is that the destiny of India... this is not a startup, this is entrepreneurship... What other

How India may gain from relatively lower tariff rate: Foreign inflows likely to rise

US President Donald Trump’s announcement to impose lower reciprocal tariffs on India compared to other Asian countries will give India a competitive advantage over its peers and attract higher foreign inflows into the domestic market, experts say.On Wednesday, President Trump announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs on its trading partners. In the case of India, the tariff imposed is 27 per cent. This rate is much lower than 34 per cent imposed on China, 46 per cent on Vietnam, 37 per cent on Bangladesh and 36 per cent on Thailand.“Exporters are going to benefit given the preferred tariff rates for India vis-a-vis the other economies of the globe, especially Asia Pacific. Now, India is going to have a better advantage in terms of exporting at a lower cost, and that will tantamount to better profitability, and earnings growth cycle in the country. This, in turn, will attract further investments into India, especially from foreign investors,” said Akhil Puri, partner, financial advisory, Forvis Mazars in India.All export-oriented sectors, such as auto, textile and minerals, are going to reap the benefits.

“In the textile segment, our major competitor is Bangladesh. After the political upheaval in Bangladesh, customers are looking at India. Now, with higher tariffs on Bangladesh, India is better placed,” said an analyst.Lower tariffs directly reduce the cost of doing business, making Indian markets more attractive than high-tariff economies. This competitive edge encourages FIIIs to invest larger capital amounts, anticipating higher returns in a lower-barrier trade environment, he saidA favorable tariff structure also signals a business-friendly climate, leading to immediate foreign capital influx and increased investor confidence, Puri said.“Over the medium to long term, sustaining these (FIIs) inflows will depend on stable trade policies and investor-friendly regulations. If India maintains a predictable policy environment, lower tariffs could ensure a steady and stable stream of FII investments,” he said.India has been in talks with the US for a trade agreement and both sides are soon

Companies defend India’s startup proposition after Piyush Goyal’s jibe stirs debate

Several Indian entrepreneurs on Friday (April 4, 2025) rallied in unison after Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal questioned the Indian startup ecosystem’s value and innovation proposition, as prominent names like Zepto CEO Aadit Palicha and Zoho founder Sridhar Vembu voiced their opinion on the issue that has stirred a debate in the startup circles.Palicha - one of the most recognised faces in the startup circles and the cofounder of Zepto - cited the quick commerce company’s contribution to jobs and FDI, and termed it a “miracle in Indian innovation”.

He underscored the role played by consumer internet companies in pushing technology-led innovation.The young founder argued that the startup ecosystem, government, and owners of large pools of Indian capital need to actively support the creation of “local champions” and “not pull down the teams that are trying hard to get there”.Zoho’s Vembu saw the minister’s call as a challenge to engineers and technologists and not as pointing fingers.

“What we need are smart engineers who roll up our sleeves and get it done. Keep in mind the vitamins and cancer cure argument - sequencing how we pay for our big tech ambition is very much part of the engineering problem that smart engineers must solve! We can do this,” Vembu said in a social media post.Meanwhile, Goyal talking to reporters on Friday accused Congress of misleading Indian startups by misinterpreting his message at the Startup Mahakumbh, which was taken positively by the budding entrepreneurs.He also alleged that the Congress ecosystem did not understand his message for startups, which is a reflection of their negative approach.

“My message for startups has been received (positively) except by some Congress party (social media) handles who are hell-bent on manufacturing a controversy when it is none. By and large, the feedback that I have received is that the young Indians are ready to capture the world,” he told reporters here.In a post on X, the Congress said, “Piyush Goyal admits India’s startup struggles”.In another post, it alleged that Goyal exposed the lies of Prime

side is doing — robotics, machine learning, 3D manufacturing and next generation factories,” Goyal said on Thursday, comparing the nature of Indian startups with that of Chinese.Palicha went on to count many other economic contributions, and placed many arguments.

Rs 1,000 plus crores of tax contribution to the government per year, over a billion dollars of FDI brought into the country and hundreds of crores invested in organising India’s back-end supply chains (especially for fresh fruits and vegetables). If that isn’t a miracle in Indian innovation, I honestly don’t know what is,” he wrote.Why doesn’t India have its own large-scale foundational AI model, he quipped, then added “It’s because we still haven’t built great internet companies”.“Most technology-led innovation over the past 2 decades has originated from consumer internet companies. Who scaled cloud computing? Amazon (originally a consumer internet company). Who are the big players in AI today? Facebook, Google, Alibaba, Tencent etc. (all started as consumer internet companies),” he said.Consumer internet companies drive innovation because they have the best data, talent, and capital to put behind it.“We need to build great local champions in the internet that are generating hundreds of millions of dollars in free cash flow (FCF) first if we ever want to get a piece of great technology revolutions. The startup ecosystem, the government, and the owners of large pools of Indian capital need to actively support the creation of these local champions, not pull down the teams that are trying hard to get there,” he argued.

Zepto, he said, is still far away from being a great Internet company that can hold a candle to the global best, but is “executing day in and day out to get there”.“I can promise that any capital we generate from this business (and it honestly looks like we will) will be invested towards long-term innovation and value creation in India.“That is essentially what I am dedicating the next few decades of my life to try to do: create dynamism in the Indian economy and our capital markets, in the same way the Americans have for decades. We have the talent and capital; we just need the execution,” he further said.



expected to arrive at a common ground.After incessantly selling for months, foreign portfolio investors changed their strategy and became buyers of domestic stocks. The modest buying by FPI was visible in the week ending March 21, which further increased in the week ended March 28.Big buying by FPIs during the last several days of March substantially reduced the total FPI selling in the month to Rs 6,027 crore. Since FPIs invested Rs 2,055 crore through the primary market, the net FPI sell figure for March is down at only Rs 3,973 crore.The re-emergence of FIIs as buyers contributed to nearly six per cent recovery in Nifty. The factors that resulted in recent buying by foreign investors included valuation in the domestic market turning attractive, recent appreciation in the rupee and improvement in India’s macros such as gross domestic product (GDP), IIP and CPI inflation, according to VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Ltd.The real GDP picked up pace sequentially to grow at 6.2 per cent in October-December 2024 (Q3 of 2024-25 or FY25) compared with 5.6 per cent in July-September 2024 (Q2) quarter. Consumer price inflation (CPI), or retail inflation eased to a seven-month low of 3.61 per cent in February, compared to 4.26 per cent in January.



Minister Narendra Modi on startups. Infosys’ former CFO Mohandas Pai reacted to Goyal’s critique, urging ministers to keep faith, help deep-tech startups, and remove difficulties, and assured that the industry will deliver on the promise.He said any comparison with China is not right as India also has such startups, albeit “small”.Shark Tank India judge and founder of Shaadi.com Anupam Mittal, in a post on X, said that he was left mighty impressed by a few deep-tech companies that he has met.

“In the last few months, I have met a few deep-tech companies that have absolutely blown me away. From AI and space tech to material science, Indian entrepreneurs are ready to take on the world. But capital and the ecosystem for growth and commercialisation are severely lacking,” he saidFOUNDERS can do most things but not everything, Mittal wrote.

Zepto’s Palicha - in an elaborate post on LinkedIn - said: “It is easy to criticise consumer internet startups in India, especially when you compare them to the deep technical excellence being built in US/China. Using our example, the reality is this: there are almost 1.5 Lakh real people who are earning livelihoods on Zepto today - a company that did not exist 3.5 years ago”.

Rishabh Pant sanctioned Despite the win, LSG captain Rishabh Pant also copped a fine for his team's slow over-rate during the match. As it was Lucknow's first offence of the season Pant was fined INR 12 Lakh according to the IPL Code of Conduct.

Travis Scott India concert tickets sell out within hours even after adding a second show; most expensive ticket priced at Rs 30,000



When rapper Travis Scott announced that he would be coming to India during his 'Circus Maximus' tour, all hell broke loose on the internet. Scott became the latest addition to the long list of international artistes who are set to perform in India. The tickets for his concert on October 18 went live at 1:30 pm IST on Saturday and sold out so rapidly that another show on the next day was announced, which also got sold out. The two shows scheduled for October 18 and 19 will take place at the Jawahar Lal Nehru stadium in New Delhi, which has the capacity to accommodate 60,000 people.

Fans on the internet made fun of the booking process

and said that the huge queue number made them remember their JEE rank. Similar grievances were voiced by the fans when Coldplay came to India. Their 'Music Of The Spheres World Tour' broke all records internationally, recording the highest ever attendance for a music tour. The band played in India on January 25 and 26 at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, which has a total capacity of 132,000, and more than 223,000 fans attended over the course of two days. They also performed at the DY Patil stadium in Mumbai, on January 18, 19 and 21, which has a capacity to seat 45,300 people.

Ticket prices for the Travis Scott concert were ranged from ₹3,500 to ₹30,000 with several different options. Standing tickets were prices at ₹6500 and ₹15000 for the silver and gold sections respectively. There was also early access for Kotak Mahindra credit card holders. A spokesperson from BookMyShow shared a statement about the concert and said that the response is not an indicator of the scale but also the rising capability of the Indian audience to host the biggest international artistes in their own backyard. Apart from Travis, Guns N' Roses are also coming to India this year, with their show scheduled to take place at the Mahalaxmi Race Course in Mumbai on May 17. They had previously performed in India back in 2012.

Farah Khan says her mother-in-law expected her to manually grind spices using a stone when she first got married

Farah Khan, who married Shirish Kunder in 2004, recently shared the challenges of getting married into a South Indian family and spoke about navigating the cultural differences. In her latest vlog, Farah visited television star Karishma Tanna, whose husband also comes from a South Indian family. Farah recalled that when she was newly married, her mother-in-law expected her to grind spices using a traditional stone. She recalled how her mother-in-law was disappointed in her when she saw her using a mixer.

While cooking with Karishma Tanna, the filmmaker shared, "Once my mother-in-law told me, grind these masalas manually, using grinding stones. Don't grind them in the mixer. I was like, 'Kiske paas itna time hai bhai?' (Who has so much time?)" Hearing this, Karishma expressed shock, while the actor's South Indian mother-in-law shared, "Those masalas make food taste good." To which Farah quickly replied, "They taste good both ways." Previously, Farah had shared how her mother-in-law had struggled with the filmmaker's food choices. Farah, who hosts Celebrity Masterchef, recently invited Hina Khan and her boyfriend Rocky to the show. While speaking with them, she recalled, "My mother-in-law has never cooked for me. She only brings



food for her son. She gets idiyappams, coconut-based chicken, idli chutney, and all those things, but not for me." She then joked, "Now, she will watch this episode and call me and say, 'I don't feed you my food because you don't like it.'" In the same episode, she said her mother-in-law might not be a fan of her famous roasted chicken. "They are Mangaloreans and need coconut in everything," she said.

'Brad Pitt and I used to race go-karts,' recalls Tom Cruise: 'We would race all night, he's a very good driver'



Actor Tom Cruise, who is gearing up for the release of Mission Impossible: The Final Reckoning, shared an interesting story about Brad Pitt while addressing the audience at CinemaCon. While talking about his plans to see Pitt's upcoming film F1, he shared that Pitt and he used to race each other in go-karts after interviews and appreciated his contemporary's skill behind the wheel. "Brad's got the F1 movie coming out with Jerry Bruckheimer and Joseph Kosinski. I can't wait to see it this summer, and I am going to be there opening weekend. It's going to be awesome," he said.

"It's great to see Brad driving; he's a very good driver, believe me. I have raced against him. When we were doing Interview With The Vampire, we used to go and race go-karts against each other. We would finish and then go race

go-karts all night, and he was a hell of a driver," said Cruise.

Tom Cruise shared this anecdote while he was on stage to present Christopher McQuarrie with the director of the year award. He complimented the director and called him his "creative brother" while recalling the many adventures they have had together. One of those adventures happened on the set of Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol when writer Brad Bird and actor Simon Pegg, who also wrote for the film, were trying to write the Burj Khalifa stunt. "I gave him a ride to the set, and as we walked in, Pegg and Bird looked at me confused while thinking, 'Who's this guy? We are trying to write a scene' because I didn't tell him that he was there to help with the script. So I quickly made all the introductions and explained the scene to McQuarrie and said, 'Okay, there is a blue light and a red light. The blue means that the gloves are sticking, and the red means I don't stick,' and without hesitation, McQuarrie said, 'So blue is glue and red is dead,' and then proceeded to write the entire scene that we shot," shared Cruise.

Tom talked about working with McQ in Mission Impossible, Jack Reacher and Top Gun: Maverick, and how the director also helped with the structure, writing and editing of the Brad Pitt film World War Z. On receiving the award, McQ thanked his family, the studio and the audiences for their support. He thanked Tom separately, saying, "It's been an honour and a privilege to work with you, to learn from you, and to put you in harm's way for other people's entertainment. I love you, brother."

Mumbai: Veteran actor Raj Babbar mourned the demise of Manoj Kumar. He called for conferring India's highest civilian award, Bharat Ratna to the late actor. Raj Babbar spoke with IANS at Pawan Hans, after Manoj Kumar was given a state farewell. He told IANS, "The film industry has lost a gem today. Manoj Kumar worked towards solidifying the dignity of India, paid respects to the freedom fighters of India through his work in cinema. A director, writer, and actor, who spoke about patriotism. He was very noble, and made a place for himself in the hearts of people through love."

He further mentioned, "I remember, I was starting work on 'Shaheed Uddham Singh,' and went to seek his blessings. I met him in Delhi, and told him that I'm making this film, and I'll need you. I said, People immediately think of you when they think of our great freedom fighter Bhagat Singh, you're the face of Bhagat Singh (in cinema)." He gave me his blessings, as I told him that he has inspired me to make this film. He told me one thing, "Raj, you will do very good." When I showed him the rough cut, he loved it, and also advised us to make small changes in the

Alia Bhatt looks like me when I was young, says Ma Anand Sheela: 'I wasn't happy when Priyanka Chopra announced she wants to play me'



It was in 2019 that Priyanka Chopra declared that she would be interested in playing the role of Ma Anand Sheela. This came shortly after the release of the documentary series Wild Wild Country which turned Sheela into a pop-culture figure despite the fact that Sheela and other members of Rajneeshpuram had tried to spread

salmonella in a neighbouring city, and she was seen as the mastermind who weaponised the commune with arms. Around the same time, Shakun Batra had shared that he might be making a film on her and it was rumoured that Alia Bhatt might be playing the lead role. While none of these projects actually happened, Sheela shared in a recent interview that she was keen on seeing Alia play her on screen. She also shared that she was upset with Priyanka.

In a chat with Pinkvilla, Sheela said, "Shakun Batra was going to make a film on me but it has not happened because of the financing. They cannot find financiers for it. Before I had chosen Alia, and now there is no money in it so I don't know." Speaking about her anger towards Priyanka, she said, "She announced she wanted to play Sheela part, but she had not asked me. That was the problem and I wasn't happy. One should ask before making public announcements. They need to take approval."

Sheela, who has expressed her disappointment in Priyanka previously as well, said that now, all of this doesn't matter to her anymore. "Today, it doesn't matter, Priyanka can play my part", she said. When asked why was she eager for Alia to play her part, Sheela said it was because she felt that they look alike. She said, "I have never seen Bollywood films. I have not seen Priyanka's work. I have watched one of Alia Bhatt's film because of my sister and when I looked at her, I was surprised. I said, 'She looks like me when I was young.' Then I called Shakun and asked him if it was possible. I don't even know which film it was." None of the projects announced on her has been made yet, neither have there been any official updates on the same.

From Dheena to Billa and Mankatha, Ajith Kumar-Adhik Ravichandran's Good Bad Ugly makes multiple stops in the trip down memory lane

When even actors who have made just a handful of films use references from their previous projects in their films, imagine the kind of legacy of superstars with decades of experience and a demigod status among their fans. It has become a common occurrence in our films, and the latest film to join this nostalgia-milking bandwagon is Ajith Kumar's upcoming film, Good Bad Ugly. Backed by Mythri Movie Makers, Good Bad Ugly, directed by Adhik Ravichandran, promises to be a fun and no-holds-barred ride that deals with the story of a ruthless but retired gangster. When his son is kidnapped, the gangster returns to a world of violence, bloodshed, and bullets, and meets a younger generation of gangsters. Invariably, this means the younger gang have to be reminded of who the OG is, and this becomes the perfect recipe for the nostalgia train to leave the station.

Ajith Kumar plays AK, a gangster, and the film features his frequent collaborators like Trisha, who has previously worked with him in films like Mankatha, Vidaamuyarchi, Kireedam, and Ji. And for the first reference, we have Trisha talking about Mankatha, and how Ajith's character threw her father out of a moving car right in front of her eyes. Although it is clear that the reference is made in a wholly different context, one can't help but smile at the audacity.

Simran is seen in a cameo. It means Ajith and Simran might be sharing screen space. It also means they are reuniting for the first time in 25 years. It means we could see the pair of Vaali and Aval Varuvaala once again. And yeah, she is wearing a yellow jacket that tells people that if someone wants to remake Kill Bill in India, they don't have to look too far. Oh, and there's the iconic chewing gum scene from the 1999 film.

Once again, it is Arjun Das who does the honours of hyping up the hero, which seems to be the primary job of any antagonist of a superstar vehicle. Nevertheless, it does seem to work here simply because the film is exploring the history of a gangster who has retired from active gang things. So, when Arjun's character says, "Oh you are a big



villain? I can see your varalaaru (history)," it is cheeky but convincing. In the flashback sequences, we also see references to multiple films of Ajith Kumar that established him as the "Thala" of Tamil cinema. In fact, there are multiple throwbacks to the 'weapons' used and the look of the older characters, and it is fun to see the OG Don... Dheena. And of course, the iconic dialogue being uttered by Ajith himself. With the veteran actor Prabhu being part of the cast of Good Bad Ugly, it is to be noted that he has previously worked with Ajith in the blockbuster Billa, and Saran's Aasla. There are enough car chases that will build on the Billa hype, and when there is a conversation about a gangster in any film, let alone an Ajith film, one can't shake away the feeling of the Vishnuvardhan blockbuster. As it is fashion now, the trailer uses a remixed version of a 90s song to hype the film. This time around, Ilaiyaraaja's Oththa Roova number from Nattupura Paattu is used in the film, and just when you think they can't get better, Malaysia Tamil Rapper Darkey enters the fray with his iconic Puli Puli song.

R Madhavan says Indian kids are speaking Korean because of K-pop: 'How did we lose our audience to them?'

Keeping the audience engaged is one of the primary aspects of any form of art. It is even more so in the field of cinema where distractions are aplenty, and it is getting increasingly difficult to crack the code of engagement. Actor-filmmaker Madhavan, in an interview to India TV, opened up about the challenges today's filmmakers are facing, and how it isn't just relegated to what is being shown onscreen.

"Back in the day, when we went to see a film in the theatres, we didn't have many options in the food and beverages department. It was either popcorn or samosa. But today, there is a huge decision that has to be made there," Madhavan said and shared that going to watch a film as a family is a different beast altogether. Expanding on how the film-going audience are pushed to give a certain sense of commitment to watching a film, Madhavan said, "You have to take your vehicle, park it in some place, pay for the parking, brave the weather, marshal your family to the theatre, rush through security, and just before you enter the theatre, there is the wafting fragrance of the popcorn, which I am not sure if it is really fresh." Sharing that these are obstacles that his films have to overcome, Madhavan also said that the problems don't end when the film finally is screened.

In a rather tongue-in-cheek manner, Madhavan spoke about how mobile phones and menu options inside the theatre are also competing with the film. "Suddenly, you have a flash of light because someone is reading the menu. And some even order pani puri, and use their mobile phone to know what pani they are having. We have to fight all this to get to your attention, and if god forbid, the film isn't engaging... then the parents are at loggerheads about the wastage of money, and then, one of them has to rush back to



the parking just before the film ends to beat the rush of vehicles leaving the theatres. It is almost traumatic... and if you irritate them with your film, then they are not going to forgive you." Delving into another challenge that is gripping the kids of the country, Madhavan said that many Indian kids are now speaking in Korean because of the impact of the K-pop culture. "In the South, and I dare say, most of India, K-pop has taken over popular culture. I know children who speak in the language, and use it as a secret code to not let their parents know what they are conversing about. How did K-pop make an in-road into our culture? How did we lose our audience to K-pop? What is the difference in their storytelling? Such questions are frying my brain, now," said the actor, who was recently seen in the Netflix film, Test. Apart from Test, Madhavan has an interesting lineup of films, and the first of which is Kesari: Chapter 2, co-starring Akshay Kumar and Ananya Panday. The film is set to hit the screens on April 18