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Youth jailed for confining and raping minor in Hyd

Hyderabad: A fast track court for child-related offences in LB Nagar on Tuesday has sentenced a youth to undergo rigorous imprisonment of 20 years in the rape case of a minor girl reported at Chaitanyapuri in 2023. The convict K Mahesh alias Bunny (20), a construction worker from Chaitanyapuri and native of Suryapet district, had allegedly confined and raped the minor girl at her house in the same neighbourhood, in the absence of her parents.

Based on the complaint from the victim's family, the Chaitanyapuri police booked a case and arrested Mahesh. The court further imposed a fine of Rs 5,000 on the convict and ordered a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the victim girl.

Actor Prakash Raj condemns destruction at University of Hyd

Hyderabad: Actor and activist Prakash Raj condemned the felling of trees and clearance of greenery in 400 acres of land abutting University of Hyderabad (UoH). He voiced his support to the protesting students, demanding the Congress government to immediately cancel its plans to sell the land which is rich in flora and fauna.

He took to X and posted, "This destruction is not acceptable. This is not good. I stand with the students and citizens against such atrocious act." He urged people to share and amplify the protest to protect the future.

PM Modi and Chilean President hold bilateral talks at Hyderabad House



GNS News Agency, April 1

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday met Chilean President Gabriel Boric Font at the Hyderabad House, where the two leaders discussed ways to enhance bilateral engagement across economic, commerce and societal domains. The discussions will focus on strengthening India-Chile relations and exploring new avenues of cooperation. Later in the day, President Boric is scheduled to meet his Indian counterpart, President Droupadi Murmu. A banquet will be hosted in his honour following their discussions. Earlier, Boric paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat. Reflecting on the moment, he posted on X, "Together with our delegation of ministers and

parliamentarians, we paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at Raj Ghat, the memorial erected in his honour in New Delhi. His legacy reminds us that with India, we not only share common interests and a future of great opportunities for our people, but also shared fundamental values." The Chilean President arrived in New Delhi earlier in the day for a five-day State Visit to India. He was warmly received by Union Minister of State (MoS) Pabitra Margherita and accorded a ceremonial Guard of Honour upon landing at the airport.

Taking to X after his arrival, Boric expressed optimism about the visit, stating, "6:30 a.m. in New Delhi, and from here we begin this State Visit to India, a momentous occasion for strengthening and diversifying our economic, political, and cultural relations at a time when multilateral cooperation is more necessary than ever. We are talking about the fifth-largest economy and the most populous country on the planet, with whom we share common ground and opportunities for growth in key areas such as agribusiness, innovation, and the creative industries." Highlighting the delegation accompanying him, Boric added, "We're here to strengthen and deepen our ties, and that's why I'm joined by government officials, the National Congress, business leaders, leaders in the fields of innovation and culture, distinguished professors, and students. A busy schedule. I'll keep you posted!"

Before his meeting with PM Modi, External Affairs

Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar also called on the Chilean President and discussed ways to strengthen long-standing bilateral ties. Jaishankar later posted on X, "Pleased to call on President Gabriel Boric of Chile at the start of his State Visit to India. Appreciate his commitment for deepening our long-standing cooperation. Confident that his talks with PM Narendra Modi today will foster new partnerships and greater engagement." During his visit, Boric will travel to Mumbai and Bengaluru, where he is set to engage with political figures, industry leaders, startup entrepreneurs, and technology innovators, fostering collaborations between the two nations in key sectors. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) emphasised that this State Visit provides an opportunity for both nations to review their bilateral ties and deliberate on regional and global issues of mutual interest. "India-Chile relations have traditionally been characterised by warmth, friendship, and a commonality of views on a wide range of issues. Both countries cooperate extensively in multilateral fora and share similar views on climate change/renewable energy and on expansion and reforms of the UNSC," the MEA stated. "Chile articulated its support for India's claim to a permanent seat in the UNSC in a Joint Statement issued at the conclusion of the official visit of the Chilean Foreign Minister to India in April 2003 and has consistently reiterated this support since then. Chile shares India's concerns regarding the threat of international terrorism and has condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations," it added.

CM Revanth Reddy to convene a meeting regarding HCU issue



GNS News Agency, April 1

Hyderabad: Tensions have escalated at Hyderabad Central University (HCU) as student unions continue their protests against the alleged sale of university land. The protests, which have drawn significant attention, are being led by student leaders who are demanding clarity and justice on the issue. At the heart of the unrest, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) activists were seen staging a demonstration near the main gate of the university, further intensifying the already volatile situation. The presence of these activists has added to the growing anxiety among students, as they stand firm in their opposition to the land sale. In response to the escalating situation, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy convened a meeting with key ministers to discuss the ongoing issue concerning the HCU land. The Chief Minister arrived at the Command Control Centre, where he met with several prominent ministers, including Uttam Kumar Reddy, Komatireddy, Tummala, Damodara, and Ponguleti, to deliberate on the matter. The meeting, focused on the land dispute, is expected to play a crucial role in determining the next steps. As protests continue, all eyes are now on the government's response to the student demands and the future of HCU's land.

KTR slams Govt's stance on HCU lands

Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): BRS party working president KTR today reacted strongly to the State government's stance on the Hyderabad Central University's land issue and CM Revanth Reddy's style of conduct. He was furious that first the houses of the poor people were demolished by the CM in the name of environmental protection and added that the CM later made a futile attempt to forcefully take away the lands of the tribal people of the State. "Now, the CM is chasing animal nests and committing mass murders. The CM's justification is Development? Is the CM an elected representative or a real estate agent," he asked.

He mocked that destruction was the only slogan of the CM! "I ask you Revanth Reddy why did your bulldozers work continuously on weekends and during night times? Why are you afraid of the court? What are you hiding," KTR posed a volley of questions.

KTR tweeted a video of a herd of deer moving around the controversial lands on his X handle to support his acts. It may be noted here that the Congress government recently decided to sell 400 acres of land near HCU in Kancha Gachibowli area. The authorities have prepared the ground to flatten the place. Keeping this in mind, bulldozers were deployed on a large scale around the controversial piece of land. The students have blocked the land flattening works. They claimed that the land belongs to the university. The students and environmentalists are demanding that the destruction of nature be stopped and the living creatures living there be protected. (NSS)

Bandi Sanjay and KTR Accuse Telangana Government of Destroying Environment

GNS News Agency, April 1

Hyderabad: Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar and Bharat Rashtia Samithi (BRS) Working President K. T. Rama Rao have accused the Telangana government of defying court orders and causing environmental damage by bulldozing trees on 400 acres of land at Kancha Gachibowli, located next to the University of Hyderabad. Rama Rao condemned the act, calling it "green murder" and urged top Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to intervene. He shared visuals of the ongoing deforestation and called on the public to raise their voices against this environmental destruction.

Bandi Sanjay also weighed in on the issue, stating that the land in question is currently under litigation. He noted that the High Court has asked the state government to file a counter by April 7. He criticized the Congress government for bulldozing the trees despite the court order and defying environmental protection laws, specifically the Supreme Court's ban on deforestation without the Centre's consent. Sanjay described the auction of the land as a "peak opportunism" move by the Congress government, accusing them of attempting to illegally profit from the deforestation and auction of forest land. He also questioned the chief minister's stance, recalling that the CM had once opposed such land sales. The Union Minister urged the government to immediately withdraw its decision to auction the land and



warned that people would hold the government accountable for its actions. KTR emphasized the devastating impact of the deforestation, sharing photos and videos of bulldozers and JCBs clearing the land. He called the destruction of 400 acres of valuable land in western Hyderabad a tragic loss, adding that the sounds of peacocks crying for help highlighted the environmental devastation. He also called on Rahul Gandhi to speak up and take action, stating that if the Congress leader did not intervene, it would be seen as a failure to protect the environment. The ongoing protest from student groups, environmental activists, and opposition parties continues as the dispute over the auction and destruction of the land intensifies.

India, China must strengthen ties in 'Dragon-Elephant tango': Xi Jinping on 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties



GNS News Agency, April 1

China and India should work more closely together, Chinese President Xi Jinping told Indian President Droupadi Murmu, describing their relationship as a "Dragon-Elephant tango," a dance between their emblematic animals. Mr. Xi said the neighbours should find ways to

coexist peacefully and that he was ready to deepen communication and coordination in major international affairs, and jointly safeguard peace in border areas. Leaders of India and China exchanged congratulatory messages on Tuesday (April 1, 2025), marking the 75th anniversary of bilateral relations amid the efforts to reset the ties after over four years of freeze due to the eastern Ladakh military standoff. "Today marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and China", Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a media briefing in Beijing. President Xi Jinping exchanges congratulatory messages with President Droupadi Murmu on the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India. President Xi Jinping and his Indian counterpart Droupadi Murmu besides Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Prime Minister Narendra Modi exchanged congratulatory messages respectively, he said. "Both countries are ancient civilisations, major developing countries and important members of the Global South and both are in a crucial stage of modernisation," Mr. Guo said.

CS reviews on distribution of fine rice scheme



Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari on Tuesday held a teleconference with the Collectors, Additional Collectors and officials of civil supplies

department and took stock of the fine rice distribution programme. The prestigious programme of the government was launched by the Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Ugadi. The Chief Secretary directed the Collectors to chalk out an action plan in consultation with the Ministers and local MLAs to organise the fine rice distribution programme at all the mandal headquarters. The fine rice distribution programme should be conducted in a festive atmosphere by involving the local public representatives duly giving wide publicity to the programme, she said. Santhi Kumari informed that more than fifty percent stock of fine rice has already been received by the fair price shops and the remaining stock will be delivered in a couple of days. The Collectors were told to ensure that there are no complaints with regard to quality and quantity of rice.

400 acres of land at Kanche-Gachibowli is government property: Sridhar Babu



Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): Minister for Industries

Duddilla Sridhar Babu has reiterated that the 400-acre land in survey No. 25 at Kanche-Gachibowli is unequivocally government property. Speaking to the media at Secretariat here on Tuesday, Sridhar Babu, along with Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka and Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, accused the BRS and BJP leaders of misleading the people for their political gains. "Such actions are unacceptable. Political maneuvering that hinders the state's progress is not in the best interest of the people," he said. The Minister clarified that the State government has not encroached upon even an inch of land belonging to Hyderabad Central University. "Until now, the university has had no legal ownership rights over a single acre of land. Students and staff have long been demanding a resolution to this issue. However, the BRS government, during its tenure, ignored their concerns. Now, they are engaging in a false propaganda campaign against us," Sridhar Babu criticised. The Minister further informed that a week ago, the State government held a dedicated meeting with the university's Vice-Chancellor and Registrar and responding to their request, the government has proactively taken steps to grant legal ownership rights to the university in accordance with regulations. "Some individuals are spreading misinformation, alleging that we are destroying natural rock formations and water bodies. This is entirely false. We are proceeding with a well-defined action plan to safeguard the environment," he added. (NSS)

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Harish slams CM Revanth for cheating farmers

Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): BRS leader & former minister Harish Rao today strongly criticised Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for failing to implement the Rythu Bharosa scheme as promised, accusing him of repeatedly deceiving farmers. Harish Rao pointed out that Revanth Reddy had publicly assured that Rythu Bharosa funds would be deposited into farmers' accounts by March 31, a promise he reiterated during the recent Assembly Budget session. However, despite these commitments, the funds have not been disbursed, leaving farmers disappointed. He remarked that while the Chief Minister makes grand announcements, his actions fail to match his words. "His promises cross mountains, but his steps do not even cross a doorstep," Rao said, criticising the Congress government's failure to provide the promised financial support to farmers in time for Ugadi.

Harish Rao listed multiple instances where the Congress government had failed to fulfil its promises: Dussehra: Rythu Bharosa funds were promised but not delivered; Sankranti: Another assurance was given, yet no funds were released; Ugadi: Farmers were once again left disappointed. He accused the Congress of being an anti-farmer government, starting the new year with a bitter experience for farmers. He also compared the current administration with the previous BRS government, highlighting that while KCR's Rythu Bandhu scheme provided financial aid during the sowing season, Revanth Reddy's government is failing even at harvest time. Harish Rao attacked the government over other unfulfilled promises, such as: Loan waiver scheme, which he termed a massive fraud; Indiramma Athmiya Bharosa, which has seen no real progress. He criticised the Congress for continuously shifting deadlines while leaving farmers in distress. The BRS has vowed to continue holding the government accountable. Harish Rao declared that the BRS will not rest until every farmer receives loan waivers and Rythu Bharosa funds. The party will expose the Congress government's failures at every possible forum and continue protests until the promises made in the election manifesto and Assembly are fulfilled. (NSS)

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

RSS-BJP bonhomie

Narendra Modi's first visit to the RSS headquarters as the Prime Minister has given the impression that all's well between the BJP and its ideological parent. The optics were clearly aimed at demonstrating that the saffron party and the Sangh are generally on the same page. The PM's salute to RSS volunteers for "their selfless work in various fields" was actually a shout-out for their crucial role in the BJP's thumping wins in the Haryana, Maharashtra and Delhi Assembly elections. Sangh workers' proactive outreach programme to mobilise voters in the three states made a decisive difference; it also underscored the indispensability of the RSS for the BJP, which no longer looked all-powerful.

Doubts about their relationship had surfaced after RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat made scathing observations in the wake of the BJP's underwhelming performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Bhagwat had stated that a true sevak (one who serves the people) does not have shankar (arrogance) — a remark that seemed to target the party top brass, including the PM himself. This wake-up call prompted the BJP to get down from its hobby horse and reaffirm the Sangh's pre-eminence. The strategy has reaped electoral dividends in the past six months, and the saffron party is eager to continue in the same vein. PM Modi's visit and his high praise for the RSS leave no room for doubt that the Sangh Parivar will now have a greater say in the affairs of the government and the party. It won't be surprising if the next BJP president bears the Sangh stamp. Considering that the PM is heavily dependent on allies to prop up his coalition government, the BJP will increasingly bank on the RSS to fortify its defences. This arrangement will face a litmus test in states such as Punjab, Kerala and West Bengal, where the saffron party is looking to make big inroads over the next two years.

Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam held at Vontimitta



"April 1, (Indian Chronicle) Rayalaseema coordinator" The traditional temple cleansing fete, Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam was observed at Sri Kodandarama Swamy temple at Vontimitta in Kadapa district, "on Tuesday in view of the annual Brahmotsavam from April 05-15." "Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam is an Agamic temple cleansing ritual which is usually observed before any mega religious event." "Koil" means the temple, "Alwar" means the devotee and 'Tirumanjanam' means divine cleansing activity. On toto,



Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam is a Agama ritual which means cleaning of the temple premises by the devotees. "On Tuesday, an aromatic mixture called "Parimalam" was smeared all along walls, roofs of the main temple, sub-temples, puja utensils." "This unique mixture is an amalgamation of Srichurnam, Namakopu, Vermilion, Turmeric, A tuber vegetable called Kichchilli Gadda, which provides a cooling and soothing effect." "Temple officials performed this event with utmost devotion from 8am till 11:30am. Later devotees are allowed for darshan."

BC LEADER FAMOUS SOCIAL WORKER, CONGRESS LEADER 42 PERCENT BC RESARVTION DHARNA HELD AT DILHI



"In the medak district bc congress leader famous social worker bandari gangadher participated and demanded 42 percent reservation dharna held at jantar mantar chowk, new dilhi under hindhu bc mahasaba national president battula siddeswar, ambedker bahujana sangham president kngari narahari, socil freedom fighter gaddam mohan reddy, jakkani nanjani atended.



Tirupati Railway Station: Soon to be in service of passengers - Director Satyanarayana



"April 1, Indian Chronicle, Rayalaseema coordinator" Tirupati Railway Station is being developed with state-of-the-art facilities at the feet of the world-famous Tirumala Srivari. Speaking at a media conference held on Tuesday, Railway Station Director Kuppala Satyanarayana said that efforts are being made to bring this station into service of passengers soon. "Satyanarayana said that the modernization and beautification work of Tirupati Railway Station is going on at a fast pace. He explained that the project will be carried out in phases with a huge budget of Rs 300 crores, and a huge building of three floors is being constructed in the first phase and a total of ten floors in the second phase. 20 lifts and 22 escalators will be installed in this spacious railway station. He expressed confidence that Tirupati Railway Station will become a leading station in the country with these modern facilities. The modernization work of Tirupati Railway Station is being carried out by North India Veerendra Constructions Company. Satyanarayana revealed that the railway extension platform work has already been completed and made available to passengers. The station director said that the drinking water problem has been solved so that passengers do not have to face any problems during the summer season. He also said that they are improving the accommodation facilities for pas-



sengers and developing Tirupati Railway Station in a way that makes it world famous. After the press conference, Satyanarayana inspected the construction work and instructed the staff to expedite the work. Station Master Chinnna Reddappa, RPF, G RPF, Construction Supervisors, Engineers and Agency staff participated in the meeting. After the completion of the modernization work of Tirupati Railway Station, which is being carried out at a fast pace, this station will provide world-class services to the passengers.

HCU land row: Police arrest BJP leaders



Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): Political turmoil continues over the HCU-based Kancha Gachibowli land issue. A group of BJP representatives announced they would go to the HCU on Tuesday. Following this, police were deployed near the Hyderguda MLA Quarters. Several BJP leaders were placed under house arrest by the police. The police stopped the BJP MLAs who were leaving for the HCU. This created tension. The BJP has called for agitation by saying that the Congress government had opened the door for the sale of the university land and hand over the government lands to

private individuals. For the past two days, the BJP and the BJYM have called for agitation at Hyderabad Central University.

On Tuesday morning, the BJP MLAs left the Hyderguda MLA quarters and reached the HCU lands and were getting ready to talk to the affected students, HCU management and government officials. However, the police stopped the BJP leaders by saying that they did not have permission to do so. This created a tense situation in the area. The police placed the top BJP leaders under house arrest. In this process, a heated argument broke out between the BJP leaders and the police. Amidst the tense situation, the police arrested the BJP leaders and took them to police station. On the other hand, the Congress government has made it clear that there was no going back on the sale of the HCU lands no matter how many obstacles and difficulties are faced by it. On the other hand, the student unions have called for a boycott of classes today. They have decided to intensify the protests. (NSS)

JSW MG Motor India records sales of 5,500* units in March 2025; YoY growth of 9% over March 2024

Hyderabad: JSW MG Motor India reported sales of 5,500* units for the month ending March 2025. This represents a year-over-year (YoY) growth of 9% over March 2024, when the company sold 5,050 units.

MG's electric vehicles—Comet, ZS EV, and Windsor—accounted for over 85% of total sales, demonstrating significant consumer adoption of the company's electric vehicle portfolio. The MG Windsor, which holds the distinction of being India's highest-selling electric vehicle, reinforced its growing popularity and widespread approval among Indian buyers by recording its highest-ever sales in March.

'Nisar' launch in June.



"March 31, (Indian Chronicle) Tirupati district correspondent/ISRO" ISRO and NASA will jointly launch the NISAR (NASA ISRO's Synthetic Aperture Radar) satellite in the first week of June. Scientists are planning to launch a 2,800-kg satellite from SHAR via GSLV F-16. It is a completely remote sensing satellite. It can map the globe in 12 days. It provides data on the environment, ice mass, sea level rise, earthquakes and tsunamis

WAVES 'Create in India Challenge' Crosses 85,000 Registrations with 1100 International Participants



The Create in India Challenge (CIC) Season-1, launched as part of the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) set to take place at the Jio World Centre in Mumbai from 1st to 4th May, 2025, has achieved a new milestone of crossing 85,000 registrations including 1,100 International participants. Over 750 finalists, selected after a meticulous selection process, from across 32 diverse challenges, will get a unique opportunity to showcase the outcome and output of their individual challenge, their talent and skills, apart from networking opportunities with business leaders from their respective sector including pitching sessions, and learn from global stalwarts through masterclasses, panel discussions, conferences etc. The winners of the Create in India challenges will be felicitated with 'WAVES Creator Awards' in a grand ceremony at Mumbai. These challenges have made a powerful entry into the creative landscape, igniting a wave of innovation and engagement across India and beyond, emerging as a premier platform for creative talent on a global scale. Featuring 32 diverse and dynamic challenges including the high-energy Reel Making Competition, the solution-oriented Truth Tell Hackathon, the visionary Young Filmmaker's Challenge, and the imaginative Comics Creator Championship, CIC offers a unique opportunity for creators to showcase their skills. Other flagship events such as the A.I. Avatar Creator Challenge, WAM! Anime Challenge, Esports Tournament, Trailer Making Competition, Theme Music Competition, and the cutting-edge XR Creator Hackathon further establish CIC as a definitive launchpad for the next generation of storytellers, designers, and digital innovators.

HC issues notice to complainant in KCR's rail roko case

Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): It is known that former CM KCR has approached the Telangana High Court for the dismissal of the Rail Roko case registered against him during the separate Telangana State movement. On Tuesday, a hearing was held in the High Court on KCR's petition in the Rail Roko case. The lawyer for the former CM told the HC that KCR was not at the place where the Secunderabad rail roko incident took place on October 15, 2011. However, the public prosecutor told the court that the rail roko was carried out only on KCR's call. After hearing the arguments, the High Court ordered that a notice be given to the person who complained to the police about the rail roko incident. Following the orders, the High Court adjourned the further hearing of the case. The rail roko program was carried out in Secunderabad on October 15, 2011 as part of the separate Telangana movement. At that time, a case was registered and several people were arrested by the police. (NSS)

District Collector Dr Venkateswar distributed NTR Bharosa pensions in Narayana Vanam mandal



"April 1, (Indian Chronicle) Rayalaseema coordinator" District Collector Dr Venkateswar S said that the state government has increased the NTR Bharosa pensions to the eligible beneficiaries in a big way with the aim of the welfare of the poor people and is regularly distributing pensions to the eligible beneficiaries through the secretariat staff at their doorstep in the morning and is supporting the poor people and the NTR Bharosa pensions for the month of April are being distributed to 2,62,841 pensioners for the month of April. "On Tuesday morning, the NTR Bharosa Pension Distribution Program was inspected by collector in Narayanavanam along with DRDA PD Shobhan Babu. The Collector also distributed pensions to several beneficiaries. On this occasion, District In-charge Kona Shashidhar spoke to the concerned NTR Bharosa Pension beneficiaries through video call and inquired whether the Secretariat staff was distributing the pensions at the doorsteps of the beneficiaries. In this context, several beneficiaries told the District In-charge Special Officer and Collector that the Secretariat staff came to their homes early in the morning and distributed NTR Bharosa pensions, which was a great help to them. The Collector explained to the beneficiaries that the Chief Minister is providing NTR Bharosa pensions to the poor in our state, which have been increased to a level that is unmatched anywhere in the country. Several NTR Bharosa pension beneficiaries thanked the Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, saying that the pensions increased by the Chief Minister are very useful in supporting their lives. "MPDO Shekhar, Tahsildar Jayaramulu, Secretariat staff and other officials participated in this program.

Sri Ram Navami Asthanam at Srivari Temple on April 06 and Sri Rama Pattabishekam on April 07

April 1, (Indian Chronicle) Rayalaseema coordinator" A grand Asthanam will be held at the Tirumala Temple on April 06 to celebrate the Sri Ram Navami festival. On the auspicious occasion of Sri Ram Navami, Snapana Tirumanjanam will be performed to the Utsava deities of Sri Rama along with Sri Sita Devi and Sri Lakshmana Swamy at the Ranganayakula Mandapam on Sunday between 9am and 11 am. Hanumantha Vahana Seva will be held from 6.30 pm to 8 pm. After that, Sri Ramanavami Asthanam will be observed between 9 pm and 10 pm at Bangaru Vakili. "On April 07, between 8 pm and 9 pm, the Sri Rama Pattabishekam Asthanam will be observed.



will be held from 6.30 pm to 8 pm. After that, Sri Ramanavami Asthanam will be observed between 9 pm and 10 pm at Bangaru Vakili. "On April 07, between 8 pm and 9 pm, the Sri Rama Pattabishekam Asthanam will be observed.

Jana Reddy requests Congress leadership to give a ministerial post for Rangareddy district



retary KC Venugopal, Jana Reddy requested that a ministerial position be allocated to the combined Rangareddy district. He expressed that appointing a minister from Rangareddy district would not only be beneficial for the local people, but also enhance the Congress party's development and contribute to the overall progress of Telangana State. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is preparing for the cabinet expansion, with reports indicating that a list of candidates has already been forwarded to the high command. The cabinet expansion will proceed once approval is granted by the party leadership. On the other hand, MLAs representing the Madiga, Lambadi, and BC communities have also addressed letters to the party leadership, requesting representation for their respective groups. They have reached out to AICC leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, Mallikharjun Kharge, KC Venugopal, and Telangana in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan with their appeals. At present, there are six vacant ministerial positions within the State cabinet, and it is understood that four of these positions are likely to be filled soon. (NSS)

Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): Following discussions about a potential cabinet expansion, senior Congress leader and former minister K Jana Reddy addressed a letter to the party's high command on Tuesday. In his correspondence to AICC President Mallikharjun Kharge and General Sec-

Distribution of fine rice will increase self-esteem of poor: Komatireddy

Nalgonda, April 1 (NSS): Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy has stated that the State government's decision to distribute fine rice is a significant step toward enhancing food security for the underprivileged.

Addressing the media on Tuesday, he pointed out that the fine rice distribution initiative will bolster the self-esteem of the impoverished, and emphasised that the government is making strategic efforts to ensure better food availability for these communities. He noted that the government is committed to effectively implementing the fine rice distribution, which aims to provide quality rice to the needy and improve their quality of life. The Minister criticised the previous BRS government for its total failure in ration card distribution, its inability to offer quality rice to the poor, and its detrimental impact on ration shops. In reaction to Union Minister Bandi Sanjay's assertion that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's image should be on ration bags, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy remarked that the states are the primary source of income for the nation, and that the



income generated by the states contributes to the Union government's revenue. He pointed out that the economy relies on state taxes, arguing that if images are to be displayed, then those of State Chief Ministers should also be showcased prominently in various locations, as he criticised Bandi Sanjay's proposal. (NSS)

'Telangana Seed Festival' from April 4 to 6



Reddy district. The event will hopefully lay the foundation for ongoing sharing and cooperation – for wider dissemination of our seed wealth and biodiversity-related knowledge for inclusive, ecological self-reliance in harmony with nature; and for sustained peoples' pressure for public policy correction towards such purpose.

But alongside the challenges, we need to celebrate what we have. The First Telangana Annual Seed Festival will be vibrantly festive and colourful, with irrepressible energy. "Let us celebrate the infinite imagination of nature. Let us live and let live!" said Krishna Prasad, Director, Sahaja Samrudha Foundation, Dr (Prof.) Dhonti Narasimha Reddy, Policy Expert – Legal Framework on Seed Sovereignty, R. Dileep Reddy, Senior Advisor, Council for Green Revolution. Chairperson: Leela Laxma Reddy, President, Council for Green Revolution, Hyderabad. (NSS)

Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): Council for Green Revolution will be conducting the proposed 'Telangana Seed Festival', titled as "Vithanala Panduga" an endeavour and appeal for a united front and campaign, reflecting our shared concerns, to be jointly organised at Hyderabad from April 4 to 6 at The Earth Centre, Anumaspalli, Kadthal, Ranga

CP asks Arms Licence holders in city to deposit their weapons

Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): In view of the announcement of Biennial election to the Legislative Council from Hyderabad Local Authorities Constituency, C.V. Anand, IPS, Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad and Licensing Authority ordered that in the interest of public peace and tranquillity, all the Arms Licenses of the persons residing in twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad will be scrutinized by a Screening Committee. Based on the decision of the Screening Committee, the arms license holders will be informed as to whether they need to deposit their weapons with the Police Stations/authorized arms dealers or not, in connection with Biennial election to the Legislative Council from Hyderabad Local Authorities Constituency scheduled to be held on April 23. The decisions of the Screening Committee will be final. If the Arms License holders fail to comply with the decisions of the Screening Committee, penal action will be initiated against them by confiscating the weapons and also prosecuting them under appropriate provisions



of law. The weapons (in case deposited) may be taken back by the licence holders on or after April 29 after completion of the election process. (NSS)

Grant a 'Law College' to Satavahana University: Bandi Sanjay



Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar today requested Union Law Minister Arjun Meghwal to grant permission for setting up of university Law College within in Satavahana University in Karimnagar. Bandi Sanjay, along with the Vice Chancellor of Satavahana University Professor Umesh Kumar and former Mayor of Karimnagar Municipal Corporation Yadagiri Sunil Rao, met with the Union Minister Arjun Meghwal in Delhi today afternoon and submitted a request to this effect. He held discussions with the Union Minister for more than half-an-hour in Parliament. Speaking on the occasion, Sanjay reminded that he had previously submitted a memorandum to the Central government seeking permission to run a law college with 120 students under the jurisdiction of the Satavahana University for the next academic year. In this context, he said the Bar Council of India

had sought a report with explanations after conducting a virtual inspection. He said a detailed report had been sent as per the orders of the Bar Council of India. Keeping this in mind, he submitted a memorandum to grant permission for a three-year law course. Arjun Meghwal, who responded positively to Bandi Sanjay's request, assured that permission would be given to the law college affiliated to Satavahana University as soon as possible. The Union Minister instructed the officials concerned to take steps to start the law college from the upcoming academic year (2025-26). (NSS)

TPCC chief slams KTR for misleading students over HCU lands

Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President Mahesh Kumar Goud has charged BRS working president KT Rama Rao with attempting to manipulate political circumstances by stirring up student unrest regarding the lands of Hyderabad Central University (HCU). He accused BRS leaders of previously seizing lands valued in crores during the last administration and claimed their current expressions of concern over the HCU land are insincere. During a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan on Tuesday, the TPCC President emphasised that the State government has not intruded upon any land belonging to Hyderabad Central University.. (NSS)

SCR registers best-ever performance in freight business



Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): South Central Railway registered its best-ever performance in freight business during the last financial year 2024-25 by surpassing the previous best figures registered in 2023-24. The Zone registered 144.140 Million Tonnes freight loading which is 2% higher than the previous best freight loading i.e., 141.120 MTs registered during the financial year 2023-24. Similarly, in terms of freight revenue, the Zone registered Rs 13,825 Crores, which is also 2% higher than the previous best freight revenue of Rs 13,620 Crores registered during 2023-24. The record-breaking performance by the Zone was a result of the exceptional team work by the SCR's workforce and effective coordination between all the departments. The Zone has been giving a major thrust towards attracting new streams of freight business, while strengthening its exist-

ing freight basket. Special focus was given towards enhancing the infrastructure, work atmosphere at Freight terminals, improvements to Goods Sheds, etc. Simultaneously, regular communication is being maintained by the SCR officials with the freight customers so as to address the requirements of the freight. The buoyancy in the Zone's loading was witnessed across all commodity streams during the year 2024-25. The approximate freight loading of the different commodities transported by the Zone is as follows - Coal, the major commodity in the Zones freight basket, contributed 70.147 MTs of loading (vs 70.510 MTs in FY 23-24). Cement (along with Clinker) is the second largest commodity contributing 37.604 MTs in loading (vs 36.47 MTs in FY 23-24). The freight loading of other major commodities that contributed for the best ever loading include: Fertilisers (7.343 MTs vs 7.400 MTs), Foodgrains (6.658 MTs vs 7.390 MTs), Raw Material for Steel Plants (5.081 MTs vs 4.630 MTs), Iron Ore (5.892 MTs vs 3.750 MTs), Containers (2.547 MTs vs 2.390 MTs), POL (1.23 MTs vs 1.100 MTs) and other goods (7.638 MTs vs 7.48 MTs). Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, SCR has appreciated the efforts of the Operations and Commercial team on this stupendous achievement and advised them to maintain the same tempo in the current financial year. SCR achieving its best-ever freight performance by record-breaking loading and earnings, underscores the Zone's commitment to excellence and the special thrust given towards driving growth in this crucial segment, he added. (NSS)

Incidents of sexual assault will not be taken lightly: Seethakka



Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): In response to incidents of violence against women in the state, particularly the recent events in Nagarkurnool district and the attack on a German tourist in Hyderabad, Minister for Panchayat Raj Seethakka has adopted a strong position on the issue of sexual assault. The Minister has engaged with relevant police officers and women's welfare officials to inquire about the status of the investigations and the health of the victims. Seethakka has also communicated with Women

Safety Wing DG Shikha Goyal, Hyderabad Police Commissioner CV Anand, Rachakonda Police Commissioner Sudhir Kumar, and Women and Child Welfare department Director Kanti Wesley to discuss the particulars of these cases. She emphasised that, alongside providing comprehensive support to the victims, it is crucial to take decisive measures to ensure that those responsible are met with appropriate consequences. The Minister stated that the State government acted promptly upon learning of the incident and apprehended all individuals involved. She mentioned that the victims are currently sheltered at the Sakhi Center, which is managed by the State government, ensuring their well-being. Incidents of sexual assault will not be taken lightly. We will implement measures to ensure that those found guilty face severe penalties as mandated by law," Seethakka emphasised. The Minister expressed concern that drug use may have contributed to the sexual assault case, and noted that the State government is actively working to combat drug-related issues. She urged the police department to enhance patrolling efforts and instructed them to adopt stringent measures to prevent such occurrences in the future. (NSS)

CPM to hold State-wide protests against HCU land auction & police brutalities

Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): The State CPM today gave a call to hold a statewide agitation against the auction of the Kancha Gachibowli lands. A dharna was held at the main gate of the Hyderabad Central University, opposing the State government's decision to auction 400 acres of land belonging to Hyderabad Central University. CPI(M) leaders, Rangareddy district, Hyderabad South, Hyderabad Central city leaders and activists rescued the university in large numbers.

In a statement, CPM State Secretary John Wesley alleged that the police misbehaved with their party leaders and students who reached the university peacefully and arrested them. "They misbehaved with women activists. CPI(M) leaders and activists who went to announce a protest program in front of HCU today under the auspices of the party were arrested. CPI(M) State committee members Bhupal, J Venkatesh, P Jayalakshmi, R Aruna Jyothi, B Prasad, P Ashaiah, Udatha Ravinder, Anaganti Venkatesh, Kota Ramesh, Shobhan Nayak, Kadigalla Bhaskar, Shobhan, G Vitthal, Meena, Shravan Kumar, Kavitha, Sasikala, Prakash Karat, Krishna, Jagadish, Rudrakumar, Stalin, Shankar, and others were arrested during the program. Around 430 CPI(M) leaders and activists were arrested in all districts and mandals across the State," he alleged. He said the party's State committee was calling for protests across the State today to protest the State government's stance and oppose the police brutality.

"We appeal to the public to heed this call. The students opposing the auction process are being detained on a large scale. While they are protesting that the university lands should belong to the university and be needed by future generations, an SFI student named Naveen and an-



other student have been sent to jail on illegal charges. The rest of the students are being arrested. Classes are not being held. The police are going inside and creating a terrifying atmosphere there. They are imposing Section 144 and preventing protests. They are sending bulldozers to flatten the university lands and forests there. Birds and animals live there. They are committing acts that will harm the environment. We warn that if we try to suppress this movement through such detentions, it will only intensify.

The auction process of 400 acres of land should be stopped immediately. Section 144 and the illegal cases registered against the students should be cancelled," he demanded. He also demanded the immediate release of the arrested CPI(M) leaders and activists across the State. He alleged that the Revanth Reddy government, which had said that democracy would continue as a seventh guarantee along with the six guarantees, was resorting to increasing police detention, making arrests and committing anarchy in situations where protests cannot be tolerated. (NSS)

Kishan Reddy, Bandi meet Dharmendra Pradhan on Kanche Gachibowli lands issue



Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): Under the leadership of BJP State president Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of State for home affairs Bandi Sanjay and Telangana BJP MPs met with Union Human Resource Development Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on the Kanche Gachibowli lands issue today. They requested the Union Minister to intervene in the matter of the Kanche Gachibowli lands and protect them from the clutches of the State government. They also requested that the environment and heritage lands be protected. They said the Kanche Gachibowli lands were very beneficial for the environmental conservation balance of Hyderabad. They also said the entire area was filled with 700 types of medicinal plants and 220 types of birds. The BJP MPs explained to the Union Minister that the State government was looking to convert these lands into a real

estate project and earn thousands of crores of rupees as income. They said the entire people of Hyderabad, including HCU students, were opposing the State government's decision. They requested that the Central government intervene in the matter of the Gachibowli lands and take appropriate action immediately. The party MPs Konda Vishveshwar Reddy, Etala Rajender, Dharmapuri Aravind, and Nagesh were present in this meeting. (NSS)

Governor praises Odisha's rich cultural

Hyderabad, April 1 (NSS): Governor Jishnu Dev Varma attended the Odisha Foundation Day celebrations as the Chief Guest at Durbar Hall, Raj Bhavan on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor praised Odisha's rich cultural heritage, vibrant traditions, and diverse natural beauty. He highlighted the State's renowned temples, calling Odisha the "Temple State of India." The Governor noted the deep historical and cultural connections between Odisha and Telangana. He spoke about the four spiritual pillars of our great nation i.e. north, Badarinath, West, Dwara ka, South, Rameswaram and East Puri Jagannath. He also recalled the influence of the Vijayanagara Empire in Odisha.

Student killed, 3 injured amid clash during singer Masoom Sharma's concert at Panjab University



GNS News Agency, April 1

A student was stabbed to death while three other students sustained injuries in a clash that broke out during Haryana singer Masoom Sharma's concert at the Panjab University (PU) campus in Chandigarh Friday night. The police have registered a case of murder against unidentified assailants. The deceased was identified as Aditya Thakur, a second-year student of Computer Science Engineering at PU's University Institute of Engineering and Technology. Thakur was rushed to the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) along with the others but succumbed to the injuries.

Simrit Kahlon, dean of students' welfare at PU, said the boy hailed from Talwara and his family lives in Nalagarh. "The family was informed about the incident and they reached PGIMER last night. The post-mortem was conducted today (Saturday) and the family took the body to their native place. We are in touch with the family members in this hour of grief," Kahlon said. According to preliminary information from the police, around 9.30 pm, two groups of youths got into an argument behind the stage where Masoom Sharma was performing. This led to a fierce clash in which the youths were injured. Kahlon said: "It was a freak incident. We are looking into it. We just returned from PGIMER. We are in touch with the students and the Chandigarh Police, which is investigating the case." Investigators suspect the assailants might be from the slum areas in the neighbourhood who unauthorisedly entered the PU campus before attacking the students who were part of the audience. About the possibility of a security breach during the event, the dean said, "We had taken all required permissions from the Chandigarh administration. The permission to conduct the show at the Panjab University Campus extension in Sector 25 had come from the Deputy Commissioner's office. Adequate police and PU security arrangements were made but this incident took place. It is an extremely sad and unfortunate event."

Thanks to hydroponics, fresh veggies grown on board merchant ships are heralding a sea change in crew well-being

GNS News Agency, April 1

Addressing seafarers' long-standing need for fresh vegetables as they undertake long voyages across oceans, shipping companies have for the first time installed technology-driven vegetable growing units on board merchant ships. The move has ushered in a quiet revolution in the maritime world, transforming both the meals and morale of the crew. "It's been a game changer for us at sea. The units ensure a continuous supply of fresh greens, requiring minimal maintenance from the crew while significantly enhancing onboard nutrition. For vegetarians, especially, this is a breakthrough — fresh salads and herbs have always been a luxury on long voyages, as I have witnessed first-hand over the last 30 years of my career at sea," said Captain Rajesh K Verma, Master of the Synergy Marine group-managed Aframax tanker 'Effie Maersk'. Four of Synergy's merchant ships — 90 per cent of its 28,000-plus seafarers are Indian — had these hydroponics units installed last year.



Hydroponics involves growing plants in an artificial environment without soil and by using water-based solutions. The hydroponics units, which are about the size of standard refrigerators or wine coolers, use artificial intelligence, cameras and sensors to regulate environmental factors such as ultraviolet light, water, fertiliser and temperature, that remain controlled and unaffected by outside climatic conditions which may vary as the ships sail to different continents. The plants grow vertically without soil with a "virtual agronomist" constantly monitoring each plant and adjusting its parameters for best quality and yield. While many shipping companies are doing a trial run on a few of its vessels, Singapore-based Berge Bulk, which was the pioneer with the installations, has gone ahead to adopt the hydroponic practice in all 75 of its merchant ships. "Each of our vessels has two hydroponics systems — so, we have a total of 150 hydroponics systems fleetwide. Throughout 2024, our vessels harvested a total of 1.2 metric tons (1,248 kg) of fresh hydroponics veggies at sea," said Michael Blanding, head of Sustainability & Communications, Berge Bulk. The aim, Blanding said, was to cater to the physical well-being of their seafarers by taking care of their nutrition and to reduce food waste onboard. "A lot of food waste comes from expiration of food — so having veggies which are "always fresh" helps to reduce this waste stream," he added. Oren Saar, CEO of Agwa, an Israeli company and one of the manufacturers of the hydroponic units, said the system also cuts the companies' costs and helps the maritime sector's decarbonisation goals by reducing food transportation emissions and packaging waste. But the real benefit, perhaps, has come in terms of the response of the crew who can see greens sprouting in an otherwise harsh environment dominated by steel, cranes, containers and cargo holds. "Growing various plants and vegetables has been my stress reliever on board. Aside from providing sustainable produce for everyone, it also benefits crew wellbeing and mental health, which helps maintain high team morale," said Noli Paranda, the Captain of a Berge Bulk vessel who hails from the Philippines. "There is also active crew engagement with many of them getting together to do the harvesting," he added. "I have personally sown the seeds and watched them grow from seedlings to plants. They must

be handled with utmost care, and it is a pleasure to watch the plants grow," added another Master, Captain K K Subramaniam. The company has also created an online community for all of their Chief Cooks and Messmen where they share photos, recipes, tips, and tricks related to hydroponics. "It's an engaged group that is constantly exchanging ideas and sharing best practices," said Blanding, adding that Indians, Chinese and Filipinos are among the dominant nationalities on their vessels. While up to 36 varieties can be grown in the units, the most common vegetables are lettuce, bok choy, parsley, kale, cherry tomatoes and chillies. "The best part is that everything is managed by an agronomist from ashore. They take pictures of the running unit twice a day and they control and manage the nutrients' dosage from ashore. All you need is a Wi-Fi connection and a freshwater line connected to the unit. There is an iPad connected to the device and it shows symbolically which rack to harvest and what is the growing cycle stage of all the racks in the unit," said Dinesh Jairam, general manager, fleet personnel, Seaspan Crew Management India Private Limited. While Seaspan has 180 ships, with 40 per cent of its seafarers being Indian, the hydroponics experiment is currently running on three of their vessels. According to Jairam, cost-wise it usually works out to about USD 10,000 for three units plus an annual maintenance charge of USD 3,000 per year in which all services and seeds, etc are included, though these costs vary according to the company. "The units are placed in the messroom or other locations where everybody can see the change on a daily basis. The crew love this on board and they are conscious of eating fresh veggies which they are otherwise deprived of. Also, hydroponics greens and veggies are far superior to organic ones as these are grown in pods of water with temperature and light control, there is no soil and everything is automatic," said Jairam, adding that they plan to add strawberries to the produce once the system is perfected and ready for expansion.

"Our first commercial deployment was with Eastern Pacific Shipping Company in early 2023. Since then, we have expanded our presence across the maritime industry and now have more than 680 devices installed onboard a range of vessels owned by 12 major shipping companies, including Maersk, Eastern Pacific Shipping, Capital Shipping, and Anglo Eastern. Our ambition is to include as wide a range as possible of culturally diverse vegetables and herbs, given that commercial vessels often host multinational crews," added Saar.

On TDP foundation day, Chandrababu makes major announcement — conclave in former Jagan stronghold Kadapa

GNS News Agency, April 1

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) supremo N Chandrababu Naidu said Saturday that the party's conclave 'Mahanadu' will be organised at Kadapa — considered a former bastion of his rival and predecessor Jagan Mohan Reddy — this year. In a teleconference with over 60,000 TDP leaders and activists on the occasion of 43rd party foundation day Saturday, the party supremo felt that while various sections of the public celebrate different festivals, "the only one that they commonly observe is the TDP Formation Day". He also said that the party had crossed one crore membership. "The party has left an indelible mark in the hearts of the people. I bow my head before all the leaders and activists and salute those who have been sailing with the party for the past four decades." Informing the leaders and activists that the TDP is moving ahead with certain principles "that no other party has", he said: "We have been marching forward not for power or posts but with the sole aim of taking the Telugu community to much ahead of all and that the people should be first." Acknowledging that TDP has taken birth from the hardships of the people, Naidu recalled that the party founder and his father-in-law NT Rama Rao "had moved forward with the slogan of self-respect while I marched ahead with self-confidence". The TDP went from strength to strength "only due to the hard work of party activists", he said. "The yel-

low flag is an inspiration. The Telugu community should be viewed as pre and post formation of the TDP," he said, adding that party stood "solidly behind all the backward classes by bringing in social reforms". "After becoming the state's chief minister, NTR had introduced various welfare programmes such as Rs 2/kg rice, pension, Janata Clothes and Pucca Houses," he said, adding that it was his late father-in-law who created the welfare era in the whole country. Announcing that the 'Mahanadu' at Kadapa this year, Naidu said that the party "would always stand with the poor and said that the P-4 programme (Public Private People Partnership) is being launched as part of achieving this goal". "The primary objective of this programme is that those who are economically well off can extend a helping hand to the downtrodden sections of society for their elevation," he said. The Kadapa Lok Sabha Parliamentary seat was formerly considered a stronghold of former chief minister Jagan's father-in-law Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy, who represented the seats from 1989 and 1998. The seat was eventually represented by his brother Y. S. Vivekananda Reddy (1999 and 2004) and son and YSR Congress Party chief Jagan (2009 and 2011). Since 2014, the seat has been represented by YSRCP's Y. S. Avinash Reddy. In 2024, TDP's Reddeppagari Madhavi Reddy wrested the Kadapa Assembly constituency from sitting MLA Amzath Basha Shaik Repari, who has been representing the seat from 2014.

Trademark tickets of textile trade during British Raj on display at Bengaluru's Museum of Art and Photography



GNS News Agency, April 1

At the peak of the British Empire's strength, its life-blood was seaborne commerce and trade with the far-flung ports of its domain. For the Raj, India was its prize jewel, and also the primary market for textiles manufactured in hubs such as Manchester. But with trade moving in such quantities, merchants soon found the need to display the authenticity and origin of their goods. Thus originated the trademark ticket, with unique colours, art and designs printed upon them. These tickets and the associated trade are the focus of a new exhibit, 'Ticket Tika Chaap: The Art of the Trademark in the Indo-British Textile Trade' at Bengaluru's Museum of Art and Photography, curated by Nathaniel Gaskell, former director of MAP, and Shrey Maurya, research director at MAP Academy. Shrey Maurya said, "They arrived in India in the thousands...they came to the markets attached to cloth. A lot of counterfeiting

started to happen and the British Trademark Act was passed in the 1850s — this said that if you wanted legal recourse for your product in the market, you would have to register a unique word or symbol or both to be attached to the product."

Maurya noted that a parallel printing industry for these tickets cropped up in Manchester, the core of the British textile industry. She noted that all of the tickets (around 300 in number) on display at the museum were originally printed for the textile trade, as opposed to being duplicates or reproductions. Maurya said, "Where were they getting these images from? They were happy to imitate or appropriate images circulating in the world at the time. Whether they were images in India, or elsewhere in the world, everything was being co-opted by the Manchester printing industry." Over time, merchants began to look far and wide for new and exotic designs, as active ones could not be reused. Shrey Maurya also pointed out that the creation of the technique of chromolithography allowed the mass printing of these tickets in the thousands. The tickets on display reflect, in vivid detail and artistry, the changing times and the idea of what the designer thought of India — one might see a deity, an Indian royal such as Tipu Sultan, a print of a Ravi Varma painting, or even, perplexingly to the modern eye, a radiator. Maurya added, "These were some of the first targeted advertisements...the idea of tradition, gods, mythology, opulence — these are still attractive today. The new is also attractive. The world is at the brink of modernity at this time. You also have themes of modernity appearing on tickets."

Closed since 2016, Pune's Bahinabai Chaudhary Zoo still under renovation, likely to be opened next year

GNS News Agency, April 1

The Bahinabai Chaudhary Zoo in Pimpri Chinchwad, a seven-acre facility, has remained closed for renovation since 2016. After spending Rs 20 crore so far, a proposal for another Rs 24 crore investment to undertake the last phase of renovation is raising concerns about its future. Amid criticism from the public, authorities said the zoo will be ready for visitors by October next year. "The standing committee has approved the Rs 24 crore proposal, and the work order will be issued soon, starting the work by mid-April. The delay is due to some tweaks in the Central Zoo Authority's (CZA) norms causing reworking on the newly built infrastructure. Also, there were lacunas, such as enrichment requirements in the previous tenders, prompting the issue of this new order. If everything goes as per plans the renovation works will be completed by October 2026," said Manoj Sethia, Joint City Engineer, PCMC.

The officer said the new plan will have dedicated sections for snakes, turtles, birds, crocodiles, and gharial based on Central Zoo Authority guidelines and will include beautification and landscaping work both from within and outside the zoo. Shubham Pande, president of World for Nature NGO, slammed the government's inefficiency for the prolonged delay. "Setting up cages, capacity building, and landscaping of a zoo facility of just seven acres should not take more than two years, but it has been around a decade now since the facility is closed. I believe that the ineffective governmental oversight over private contractors has cost crores of taxpayers' money. In this process, even the animals have suffered neglect, causing illness and eventual mortality," Pande pointed out.

Meanwhile, Rs 8.61 lakh has been recently approved for procuring mice to feed the snakes of the zoo, amid rising criticism from residents and wildlife enthusiasts highlighting escalating costs and prolonged delays. "The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation's (PCMC) veterinary department had floated a tender for the supply of white mice



for the snakes in Bahinabai Choudhary Zoo. The lowest bid of Rs 159 per mouse was accepted from Sam Enterprises, with a cost of over Rs 8.61 lakh to be supplied for the next two years. PCMC Commissioner Shekhar Singh has approved the tender through the standing committee. Mice procurement has been a routine exercise continuing for many years. Moreover, the outlay has been reduced from Rs 167 per mouse previously," said Sandeep Khot, Deputy Municipal Commissioner. "Every week, we procure 100 white mice for 52 snakes in the zoo. We have 8 Oriental rat snakes of bigger size that consume the maximum share. Additionally, we have birds and turtles for which vegetables are supplied from outside. And 5 kg of chicken is needed for crocodiles every week," said Yogesh Kanjawane, animal keeper at Bahinabai Chaudhary Zoo. "Previously, there was a mice breeding facility inside the zoo. I believe that if a dedicated staff is appointed to see into this, it would be a cost-effective option than outsourcing, as mice multiply faster," said Shubham Pande. PCMC established the Bahinabai Chaudhary Snake Park and Zoological Museum in 1989 on seven acres of Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) land in Chinchwad. Ever since its renovation began in May 2016, Rs 20 crore has been spent on its beautification in two phases.

BJP MP Udayanraje Bhosale calls for law against insulting Shivaji Maharaj: 'If Centre does not...means they want insult to be heaped'

GNS News Agency, April 1

BJP MP Udayanraje Bhosale on Saturday urged the Narendra Modi government to hold a special Parliament session and enact a law against insulting national icons like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj. If a special session is not called, it would mean the government "wants the insult to be heaped" on the Maratha warriors, Bhosale said, adding that it was Chhatrapati Shivaji who gave the call for 'Sarva Dharma Sambhav' or secularism. Bhosale, the direct descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Satara MP, made the remarks after paying respects at the samadhi of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj on his 336th death anniversary at Vadu Budruk in Pune district on Saturday. "If they (Centre) do not want to convene the special session, it would mean that they want, from the bottom of their heart, the insult to be heaped on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj... And then people should show them their place," Bhosale said. Bhosale told The Indian Express that he had not criticised the central government. "I have placed the facts before the people... I hope the government will convene a special session to enact a law to stop the repeated insult of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj," he said.

Speaking to reporters, Bhosale said that not a single rupee had been spent to construct an international-level memorial in honour of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. "Political parties mouth words like pillar of strength, yugpurush, mahapurush, etc. for Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, but not a single rupee has been spent for setting up an international-level memorial for Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj... Even till date, a government-approved history of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj has not been published. And because of this, people are taking cinematic liberty and writing and spreading wrong history... The censor board should have historians who will help avoid causing bitterness in society after a film is released," the BJP MP said.

Bhosale said it was Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj who brought forth the idea of secularism. "It is 'Sarva Dharma Sambhav' which will keep the country united. It is 'Sarva Dharma Sambhav' which will take the country on the path of secularism. And that is why India will emerge as a superpower... Shivaji Maharaj brought people of all religions

together. It was Shivaji Maharaj who placed forth the idea of people's participation in governance. It means Shivaji Maharaj laid the foundation of democracy," Bhosale said. "We have not seen God, but in the form of Shivaji Maharaj, the people of those days or our ancestors got the opportunity to see God. Shivaji Maharaj was a yugpurush (man of the era), and the same yugpurush is now being targeted, made fun of, and being insulted repeatedly. Cheap remarks are being made against our national icons. How long are we going to tolerate such insults? There are laws to protect the image of national icons born after Shivaji Maharaj. However, despite a call from different quarters, including myself, a law has not been enacted to stop the insults being heaped on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Rajmata Jijau (Jijabai) and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj. To make a law, there is no need for budgetary provision," he added. Bhosale said he need not repeat the same demand. "Don't they understand? Are they kids? Insulting statements are disturbing the peace and leading to violence. Can't they see when the insults are hurled? Violence takes place, people lose their lives. Who is responsible for this? If they do not pass the law, they will all be responsible for whatever happens," Bhosale said.

Bhosale said he has already informed Union Home Minister Amit Shah about the need to convene a special session. "But these are not things to be told. All this should come from the bottom of the heart. Like the MCOCA [Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act] and the Atrocity Act [Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act]... who is stopping them from making a similar law? The law should stipulate strict punishment, like for 10 years, on those who insult Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj... but such a law has not been passed," he said. Bhosale pointed out that political parties have also been demanding such a law. "Political parties say Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is our deity. Then, why did they not pitch for a law? Do they feel like Shivaji Maharaj should be insulted? I don't think they feel so... But they should show their intention through their action by getting a law enacted," he said. He also said that if anyone kept a photo of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb on their WhatsApp status, they should be sent to other countries. "He (Aurangzeb) does not deserve to be glorified," Bhosale said.

'Deliberately tarnished India's reputation': Stop Mamata Banerjee from travelling abroad, Suvendu Adhikari writes to S Jaishankar



GNS News Agency, April 1

West Bengal Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari wrote to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday, urging him to prevent Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee from travelling abroad in the future "to ensure she does not get the opportunity to undermine India on foreign soil". After completing a six-day London visit, Banerjee is set to return to Kolkata on Saturday. In his letter, Adhikari accused Banerjee of undermining India on the international stage and bringing shame to the country during her UK visit. Referring to Banerjee's speech at a business event where she spoke about West Bengal's "emotional" and "historical relations" with the UK, Adhikari said that the state had been at the forefront of the Independence movement, resisting British rule.

"Bengalis fought the British Raj tooth and nail, stood

up to their political oppression, and laid down (their) lives opposing their cruelty. The British were forced to shift their capital from Calcutta to Delhi because they were concerned about the rising nationalist movement in Bengal and wanted to steer clear of the growing political unrest. Singing paeans for the subjugators known best for their tyranny and economic exploitation of India is like public renouncement of the sacrifices made by our freedom revolutionaries," Adhikari said. Adhikari also criticised Banerjee for her statements at Oxford University's Kellogg College, where she allegedly "downplayed" India's economic growth. As one of the speakers highlighted that India had overtaken the UK as the world's fifth-largest economy and was projected to become the largest economy by 2060, Banerjee disagreed. Adhikari alleged that her response was an "embarrassment for every Bengali and Indian". He alleged that Banerjee had "deliberately tarnished India's reputation on foreign soil" and accused her of "opposing the country's economic rise". "Banerjee has a problem with India becoming the world's largest economy. This is not only shameful but a disgrace to the constitutional office she holds," Adhikari said, urging the external affairs ministry to conduct a "thorough probe" into her remarks. "As you are the custodian who has control over the matter, it becomes your responsibility to ensure that she does not get the opportunity in the future to undermine India on foreign soil. I hope you will consider my request and conduct a thorough probe to ascertain the anti-India pitch made by Banerjee in the UK and make sure that it is not repeated in the future," Adhikari said in the letter.

'Sardesai Wada' in Sangmeshwar lies in tatters, but plans to build Sambhaji memorial raises hope



GNS News Agency, April 1

SARDESAI WADA, the historic landmark located in Sangmeshwar taluka of Ratnagiri district where Mughal forces had captured Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj on February 1, 1689, is lying in a dilapidated condition for years. It seems to be slowly but surely falling apart, with every portion, be it the walls, doors and roof in absolutely tattered condition. The wada, stacked with all kinds of old, decaying broken material and located amid thick growth of vegetation with falling roof, is in such a state that it might crumble anytime in the monsoon, fear local villagers.

The wada was being used by its owners and their extended families until some 15 years ago. Now the family lives in their home next door and wada lies unused. The wada is located on a five-acre land surrounded by houses of villagers. In its vicinity are several temples, including the famous Karneshwar temple made from black stones. A life-size statue of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj stands tall at the entrance of the village, highlighting the significance of the place. After Vicky Kaushal-starrer, 'Chaava' was released recently, the historic landmark has suddenly come to life with Chhatrapati Sambhaji's followers constantly making a trip to the Kasba village to have a dekho at the place where their 'deity' was captured after a battle. People not only from Konkan but even across Maharashtra are daily seen going inside out and around the wada, taking pictures and videos for uploading it on the social media. The followers are, however, stumped by the pathetic state of the historical structure. "It pains to find the wada in such a precarious state. This is the same wada where Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj was captured... It has a significant place in our history. This wada needs to be preserved. A memorial should be set up here so that our future generations get to know about the historical happenings," said Shivprasad Mane, who had come all the way from Kolhapur. Roshan Parkhande of Karjat said, "Yes, I have come to see the wada after watching 'Chaava'. I thought the wada will be in somewhat better shape. But it is in a real bad shape. I hope the government at least will wake up now to renovate it and preserve it." Rakesh Chavan, a local villager, said, "Thanks to Chaava, at least the government has woken up to the bad state of a historic structure and has announced plans to set up a memorial. Our villagers had been demanding that the government should take over the wada and build a memorial befitting the Maratha warrior king." As the wada is owned by a private party, the state government has already started holding negotiations with the owners, the Sardesai family, to hand over the wada to the state government. The issue first cropped up during the current session of state legislature when Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis announced the government's intention to build a grand memorial to Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj. "In view of the historical significance of the wada, the government will build a

grand memorial of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj is a symbol of bravery and valour... He was 'Dharmveer' and 'Swarajya Rakshak' and therefore a memorial befitting his stature will come up in the village," the chief minister had said. Shiv Sena leader Ramdas Kadam, said, "It was Minister Yogesh Kadam who had first gone to the village and held talks with the Sardesai family for taking over the wada by the state government. So far, the Minister has held three meetings with the owners. The owners have promised to hand over the wada to the state government."

When approached for his comments, Subash Desai, the owner of the wada, said, "We have no objection to handing over the wada to the state government. We are the owners of the wada since 11th century. However, it will depend on the terms and conditions of the agreement drafted by the government. Let the government first come up with the terms and conditions of the agreement, then we will take the call." The Sardesai family said though they are ready to hand over the wada to the state government to honour the memory of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, there is a hitch in the deal. "The state government is asking us to hand over the part of our house where we are living. In such a condition, where will we go? The government wants us to go elsewhere and live... We cannot, we have been living here for centuries, the government can't throw us away from here." When asked about the compensation amount offered by the state government, Sardesai said, "Amount is not important, the terms and condition of the agreement will matter."

Sudhir Bhosale, a follower from Chiplun, said, "The historic wada has been lying neglected for years. It is in such a bad shape that it might collapse to the ground any moment. The government move to build the memorial in Kasba village has been hailed by villagers. However, we have heard that efforts are being made to set up the memorial almost one km away from the Sardesai Wada, which is not acceptable to us. It should be set up at the same spot." Historian Shrimant Kokate said, "The demand of villagers and followers of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj is that the memorial should be built at the same spot where the Maratha king was captured. And it is rightly so. It does not make sense to have memorial some distance away from the historical site. It is sad that a movie had to jolt the government out of its stupor. Otherwise, no one cared, no one even thought of preserving and protecting it." Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, who was captured on February 1, 1689 by Aurangzeb's forces, was executed on March 11, 1689. Today is his 336th death anniversary. His Minister Kavi Kalash was also executed the same day.

Kokate said there are several historical evidences which reveal that Muqarrab Khan, the Mughal commander and his forces, had captured Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj after they put up a strong resistance. "I don't think Sambhaji Maharaj was kept in the wada after his capture. He was immediately taken away by the Mughal forces to Ahilyanagar (earlier Ahmednagar) and then to Tulapur in Pune district where he and his minister Kavi Kalash was brutally and in most inhuman manner done to death," he said. Denying that Shirkes had helped Muqarrab Khan in capturing Sambhaji Maharaj, Kokate said, "Why would Shirkes turn against Sambhaji Maharaj when they were close relatives? It is wrong to say Shirkes conspired against the king. Contemporary historical evidences do not support this theory though the movie has depicted it." Satish Lingayat, a priest from Kasba village, said, "Sambhaji Maharaj had come to resolve a dispute between Yadav brothers of Karad. He had decided to postpone the decision-making and head for Raigad. However, the Yadav brothers wanted solution to their grievance the same day. So Sambhaji Maharaj stayed back. In the meantime, his agents tipped off Muqarrab Khan, whose forces then launched an attack on the wada and captured the Maratha warrior king." Tourism Minister Shambhuraj Desai said a government-appointed committee will inspect the wada and then a decision to purchase the land will be taken. "If we face difficulty in taking over the land, then we will acquire it through the district collectorate," he said. The Sardesai family, however, insists that they are ready to hand over the wada on terms which are acceptable to them.

Haryana cracks down on drug trade: 71 repeat offenders detained under PITNDPS Act

GNS News Agency, April 1

The Haryana Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has intensified its fight against drug abuse by launching a statewide crackdown focused on repeat offenders, detaining 71 people under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PITNDPS) Act in the last 60 days.

Senior police officers told that they have prepared dossiers on 25 more hardened criminals who will be picked up in four weeks. "Legal formalities are being completed. The 25 repeat offenders will also be picked up and put behind bars," a senior police officer said. The PIT-NDPS Act allows the preventive detention of habitual offenders for up to one year without trial. "These 71 individuals, many of whom have been arrested multiple times, are cumulatively involved in 337 NDPS cases. Despite repeated arrests, they continued trafficking by taking advantage of legal loopholes—particularly those that differentiate between small, intermediate, and commercial quantities. Many of these traffickers know the law better than most," O P Singh, Director General of Police and Haryana Narcotics Control Bureau chief, said.

They deliberately stay under the commercial threshold because it helps them secure bail and avoid serious jail time. We are using the PIT-NDPS Act to shut that door. Unlike conventional prosecution, often delayed or derailed by bail, the PIT-NDPS Act allows police to isolate repeat offenders based on their past conduct," Singh added. Fatehabad (11), Kaithal (10), Faridabad (7), and Rewari (7) districts have seen the highest number of such detentions. Among those detained are Makhan Singh of Dabwali, who is involved in nine NDPS Act cases, and Gurmukh Singh of Fatehabad, who is facing six FIRs for drug trafficking. Police sources say both are considered "key players in long-standing drug networks." "This is the layer we needed to remove—the ones who keep the machinery running. Once they are out of circulation, the networks start to collapse. Since the crackdown, many districts have reported a noticeable drop in trafficking activity. The threat of preventive custody has forced repeat offenders to rethink their risk," another senior officer said. "As Haryana tightens the noose around repeat drug offenders, the message is clear: the era of revolving-door arrests is over. With each preventive detention, the state is not just removing a trafficker, it is dismantling a network. Backed by intelligence, legal tools, and political will, Haryana is aim-



ing not merely to curb the drug trade but to break its spine," Singh said. "The next round of detentions is likely in April. District police units and the NCB are working closely to compile evidence and act quickly. This is not a one-off exercise. We are in this for the long haul. Every preventive detention sends a message: habitual trafficking will have lasting consequences," Singh told The Indian Express.

Graduation ceremony held at ATCOTE

Hyderabad: A graduation ceremony was organised on successful completion of the No-150 Air Traffic Surveillance Services (ATSS) course and No-113 Air Traffic Management & Air Laws [ATM A & L (B)] course at Air Traffic Control Officers' Training Establishment (ATCOTE) here on Friday. Air Force Academy (AFA) Commandant Air Marshal S Shrinivas who was the reviewing officer (RO) acknowledged the vital role played by ATCOTE in training military air traffic controllers and highlighted the importance of the 150th ATSS course as a significant milestone for the establishment. In his address, Air Marshal Shrinivas stressed the need for the air traffic controllers to be good professionals, as safe and efficient air space management rests on effective decisions made by the ATC officers. The RO reiterated that there were additional responsibilities on military air traffic controllers as more military aerodromes have now been opened for civilian use and a large number of civil aircraft operate in the restricted airspace controlled by the IAF, due to successful assimilation of flexible use of airspace policy.

Attempt-to-murder case: TMC's Kakali Gupta gets 3 years' jail, dozen other party leaders get 10 years each

GNS News Agency, April 1

A West Bengal court on Friday sentenced Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader and chairman of the Bardhaman Development Authority Kakali Gupta to three years' rigorous imprisonment in connection with a 2017 case in which party leader Debu Pal was grievously attacked. In addition, a fine of Rs 5,000 was imposed on her. The court also pronounced the sentence for 12 other convicts in the case, including TMC leaders Kartik Bagh and Sheikh Jamal, and the party's Bardhaman-1 block youth president Manas Bhattacharya. They were awarded rigorous imprisonment of 10 years each.

Bardhaman fast-track court judge Aurobindo Misra ordered the arrest of the 13 leaders, who were pronounced guilty in the case TMC leader Debu Pal was attacked in connection with a clash within the party on September 5, 2017, in the Narigram Das area of West Bengal's Purba Bardhaman district. His wife Sandhyarani Pal subsequently lodged a case in which she alleged that her husband was seriously injured in one eye in the attack. The accused were charged under multiple sections, including attempt to murder. On the day they were pronounced guilty, Gupta, Bhattacharya, Bagh and Jamal fell ill on their way to the court. They were taken to the emergency department of



Burdwan Medical College. Gupta was later shifted to Burdwan Wings Hospital. The court then deferred the pronouncement of sentence considering the condition of the accused. On Friday, the judge talked to the convicts, including Kakali Gupta, through video conference before awarding the sentence by night. Responding to the court's verdict, Debu Pal's son Jiban said, "We are not at all happy because father was injured in an attack where all attackers are known to us and are leaders of the same party. But this incident has proved that during Mamata Banerjee's regime, criminals are not spared even if they are from the ruling Trinamool Congress."

How a fire and subsequent rework by a socialite made this North Indian restaurant in South Mumbai talk of the town

GNS News Agency, April 1

Owning an MF Husain painting is one thing; having the celebrated artist create his masterpieces within your premises is another. At Khyber, a 68-year-old dining establishment in Kala Ghoda, South Mumbai, it was the latter. "MF Husain first painted a wall, but Parmeshwar Godrej (a renowned socialite known for her keen design sensibility and influential presence in India's elite circles, who was tasked with redoing Khyber in the late 1980s) wasn't impressed, so she asked him to create these three paintings," shared Sudheer Bahl, as his eyes travelled to the three large Husain paintings—an Urdu calligraphy surrounded with bold colours, a painting of a begum holding a chilam, and a self-portrait in royal attire—that adorn this room. The room, aptly called The Husain Room, has just reopened for diners after four months of renovation.

Although it retains its old essence, the walls are now painted lighter, a new Italian marble floor replaces the old, the lamps have changed from black to antique gold, the teak wood tables now boast a walnut brown polish, and the upholstery has a rich shade of maroon. The room overall looks brighter. "It has been nearly four decades since this place was renovated. While it has a timeless appeal and we wanted to retain its DNA, there was a need to give it a fresher look," shared Roshni Bahl, Sudheer's wife, who co-manages the business. They will be taking on one section after another, giving the entire space a fresher look by January 2026. The renovation, or rather sprucing up, aligns with the brand's plan to celebrate its 65th year and revive the establishment to its heyday glory. Even as it turns 68 this year, the Bahls are marking its 65th anniversary, factoring in the three years it remained closed during the lockdown. Khyber was started in 1958 by Om Prakash Bahl as a restaurant serving food from the North West Frontier as well as continental fare—imagine everything from butter chicken to French onion soup.

"It started as a small 25-40 seater restaurant on the ground floor of this building. It was the only place my father could afford to rent," shared Sudheer Bahl, adding that back then, Kala Ghoda wasn't the bustling art district it is today but an area known for pickpockets. The restaurant became a success, and gradually, his father not only bought the space he initially rented but also acquired nearby premises. Slowly and steadily, he came to own the entire building. "But in March 1985, there was a massive fire, and everything was burnt to the ground," recalled Sudheer, who was then a fresh graduate ready to join the family business. The incident became a turning point for Khyber, as they took the unfortunate event in stride and planned their next step. They brought Parmeshwar Godrej on board to redesign the restaurant.

"She decided the entire layout, and if you look closely,



it resembles the old Godrej house where she resided," shared Sudheer, adding that the restaurant is not one expansive floor space but a cluster of multiple spaces acquired over time. "Since there are multiple rooms, she saw an opportunity—not just for grand dining areas but for intimate private spaces. She added mirrors to enhance the sense of grandeur. For arches, she hired artisans from Rajasthan to hand-carve stones to create the jali and included Urdu calligraphy—not just random text but poetry—to add to the visual appeal," said Sudheer. Recalling an anecdote, he shared how they were taken back when Godrej suggested having paintings by MF Husain and Anjolie Ela Menon. "We were facing losses, our investors no longer believed in Khyber, so we had to buy them out, and the restaurant was shut for a while... There was no way we could afford Husain and Anjolie Menon, but Parmeshwar, being their friend, got them on board," he shared, adding that he remembers seeing them inside the premises, painting on-site. Apart from the Husain Room, another room displays Menon's artworks. "The blue you see on the walls is from the smoke. Both Parmeshwar and Anjolie insisted that we retain the burnt walls as they were, and because the paintings looked new, they manually scraped them to give them an aged look," he said, adding that they paid the artists "a pittance" compared to their usual charges. "It was all because of Parmeshwar," he recalled. Godrej's influence in her social circles helped Khyber's reopening as a North Indian fine diner become an instant success, with everyone wanting to dine there.

Over the decades, Khyber has hosted a roster of distinguished guests, from royalty to Hollywood icons. "Brad Pitt was here just two years ago. He walked in with a list of dishes to try, and at the top was baingan bharta," shared Sudheer. Other notable diners include Henri, Grand Duke of Luxembourg (then Prince), Kuwait's royal family, Beatles' Sir Paul McCartney, business magnate Richard Branson, and actors Amitabh Bachchan, Amir Khan, Demi Moore, and fashion designer Wendell Rodricks, among many others. The menu, Sudheer shared, has largely remained the same with a few additions over time. "Our guests here have been dining with us for years."

Earthquake in Thailand: Indian CEO, journalist recall terrifying moments as Bangkok shook



GNS News Agency, April 1

Indian CEO Ajay Mahajan initially thought it was something to do with the air pressure in the tyres of his car. Moments later, he realised that the entire bridge over which he was travelling was swaying. Mr. Mahajan, who heads Aditya Birla Chemicals Thailand, had just left a lunch meeting Friday (March 28, 2025) in Bangkok when a 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck neighbouring Myanmar, sending tremors across Thailand. The earthquake, with its epicentre in Mandalay city, struck at midday at a depth of 10km, according to the United States Geological Survey. The powerful tremor left at least 144 dead and 730 injured in Myanmar. In Thailand, at least three people died and dozens were buried when an under-construction skyscraper collapsed in Bangkok following the powerful earthquake, according to the Bangkok Post. When the tremors of the earthquake were felt in Bangkok, Mr. Mahajan had just left a lunch meeting and was on a bridge in the Thai capital. Thai rescue teams provide aid at a construction building collapse in Bangkok's Chatuchak area on March 28, 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand. Vehicles make their way near a road damaged by an earthquake on March 28, 2025, in Nanyitaw, Myanmar. Damaged pagodas are seen after an earthquake, Friday, March 28, 2025 in Nanyitaw, Myanmar. In this image provided by The Myanmar Military True News Information Team, victims caused by an earthquake is seen compound of government hospital on March 28, 2025, in Nanyitaw, Myanmar. In this image provided by The Myanmar Military True News Information Team, Myanmar's military leader Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, center, inspects damaged road caused by an earthquake Friday, March 28, 2025, in Nanyitaw, Myanmar. Soldiers from the Royal Thai Army with the K-9 Unit for search and recovery at the site of collapsed construction building on March 28, 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand. Rescue workers take work outside of the site of collapsed construction building in Chatuchak area on March 28, 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand. Volunteers look for survivors near a damaged building on March 28, 2025, in Nanyitaw, Myanmar. Rescue workers conduct a search and rescue operation for the people who are trapped within the rubble of a collapsed under-construction skyscraper in the Chatuchak area during the night on March 29, 2025, in Bangkok, Thailand. Rescuers resume operations at the Chatuchak site of a skyscraper collapse on March 29, 2025

in Bangkok, Thailand. In the aftermath of the 7.3 magnitude earthquake that struck Myanmar, Bangkok finds itself in an unprecedented state of paralysis in Friday evening. "Our car was swaying... I said what is happening? Is there enough air pressure in the car tyres, or not? And then I saw other cars in front of me swaying," he told PTI Videos. "That is the time when I saw the whole bridge swinging," he added.

Mr. Mahajan said he saw a lot of people rushing out from their offices when his car came down the bridge, "And that is when we realised that there was an earthquake." Emphasising the severity of the quake, Mahajan said, "In hindsight, Bangkok was just lucky—this was a massive earthquake." Mr. Mahajan said he feared for the factory, worried about his family, and wondered if everyone was safe. "We run a chemical factory and we have to be very careful that everything was okay and there was no structural damage," he said. He added that the Thai government issued a lot of circulars urging people to prepare for aftershocks, especially those living in multi-storey buildings. Patralekha Chatterjee, a journalist currently based in Thailand, said in an interview with PTI Videos that "everything is swaying". Initially attributing it to vertigo, she realised it was an earthquake when she went to her balcony and saw everybody from her apartment downstairs. Grabbing her phone, she ran down the stairs. She said that from what she saw, there were no "actual damages and injuries" in her immediate neighbourhood. Ms. Chatterjee noted that it was heartening to see people supporting one another in that moment. Talking about the civic sense in the people, she said, "There was all this crowd, but nobody pushed. Nobody shouts." She added that while there was some panic, it didn't lead to people prioritising themselves over others or pushing through at others' expense. "Coming from India, I think that they are very considerate people... How a society is during non-disaster times will show also during an extreme (event), something like this," she said. She explained that if people are generally chaotic and self-centred in normal situations, they don't suddenly become disciplined during a crisis. Speaking after an urgent meeting in Phuket, Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra called for calm from the public after the quake shook the country, according to the Bangkok Post. In Myanmar, the head of the country's military government Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing said that the death toll and injuries are expected to rise.

Growth in most southern States is concentrated in a few districts: Data



Various southern States have tabled their Budgets and Economic Surveys this year. An analysis of their Surveys shows that economic growth in all of these States lagged behind India's economic growth in 2023-24. And despite having a significant proportion of the population in the labour force, the rates of unemployment in these States remain a point of concern. Tamil Nadu's economy grew at 8.2% and Telangana's at 7.4%. Karnataka, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh have each grown at over 6%. The Indian economy grew at 9.2% in 2023-24 (First revised estimates) according to the latest data (Chart 1).

Despite these States having higher per capita incomes than the Indian average, the economic advantages are highly concentrated in a handful of districts within the States. Only eight of the 38 districts in Tamil Nadu had a higher per capita income than the State average of ₹2.8 lakh in 2022-23. Income levels in the Chengalpattu district were more than double the State's figures. Only three of the 33 districts in Telangana, which has the highest income level in all the southern States, had a higher per capita income than the State average of ₹3.1 lakh. The per capita income of the Rangareddy district is more than thrice the average of Telangana's. Similarly, just four districts of Karnataka had higher income levels than the State average of ₹3 lakh. Kerala is the only southern State with a more equitable distribution — seven of its 14 districts had a per capita income that was above the State average, while the rest fell below it (Table 2).

Charts 3 and 4 show that despite a huge chunk of the population seeking work, unemployment is a pressing concern for the southern States. Though the unemployment rates of all these States declined compared to 2017-18, barring Karnataka they all had an unemployment rate higher than the Indian average in 2023-24. The average labour force participation rate (LFPR) in India in 2023-24 was 60.1%. While Andhra Pradesh and Telangana had an LFPR of more than 60% in 2023-24, the LFPR of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala was 58.8%, 56.8%, and 56.2% respectively.

In general, across the southern States, there has been a sizeable shift out of casual labour and an increase in the share of those in self-employment — mostly because of an

increase in those working as helpers in household enterprises. There was barely an increase in the share of those working in regular salaried jobs between 2017-18 and 2023-24. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, the share of casual labourers fell from 33.5% in 2017-18 to 31% in 2023-24, while the proportion of self-employed workers rose from 32.8% to 34.2%. The share of those in regular employment remained unchanged at 34%. In Telangana, the self-employed category grew by 8 percentage points to 55.9%, while the share of casual labourers declined by 5.7 points to 18.7% in the same period.

Table 5 shows the sectoral composition of the States' economies. It is evident that the services sector, which contributes over 50% of the economic output in these States, is playing a larger role in driving the economies of the richer southern States. The only exception is Andhra Pradesh where the contribution from the services sector declined in the decade between 2014-15 and 2023-24. The contribution of agriculture to Andhra's economic output increased in the decade under consideration from 30% to over 34%. Manufacturing drives less than a fifth of all the southern economies. This includes Tamil Nadu where the sector's share in the State's economy did not see a concomitant increase in the last decade, despite a strong industrial push.

Burglars strike in six places in Bellampalli; decamp with 17 tolas gold

GNS News Agency, April 1

Mancherial: In six different incidents, unidentified persons decamped with 17 tolas of gold, 1.5 kilograms of silver and four motorcycles from four houses in Bellampalli late on Friday.

Bellampalli Two Town Inspector Afzaluddin said that in the first incident, the burglars stole gold and 1.5 kilograms of silver by breaking open an iron almira in BRS leader Shruvan's house at Caltex area in the town at around 3 am. In the second instance, burglars made away with 3 tolas of gold from the house of Sudhakar, a government teacher when he was asleep in the wee hours in Caltex. Meanwhile, miscreants lifted four bikes parked in front of four houses in the same area. Police gathered clues by pressing CLUES team and sniffer dogs. Cases were booked. Investigations were taken up.



'We gave you visa to study... not to become social activist': Rubio on revoking visa of detained Turkish student

GNS News Agency, April 1

The U.S. Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, said that the visa of Turkish student Rumeysa Ozturk has been revoked due to her engagement in activities beyond the scope of her student visa. While addressing a joint news conference with Guyanese President Irfaan Ali in Georgetown, Guyana, Mr. Rubio said, "We revoked her visa... We gave you a visa to come and study and get a degree, not to become a social activist that tears up our university campuses." Mr. Rubio emphasised that the U.S. expects international students to adhere to the terms of their visas. "If we've given you a visa and then you decide to do that, we're going to take it away," he stated. On Tuesday (March 25, 2025), an international student in a graduate program at Tufts University was taken into federal custody outside an off-campus apartment building, according to the university's president and an attorney representing the student, The New York Times reported. The student, Rumeysa Ozturk, a Turkish citizen, had a valid student visa as a doctoral student at Tufts, according to a statement from her lawyer, Mahsa Khanbabai. According to The New York Times, Ms. Ozturk, who is Muslim, was heading out to break her Ramadan fast with friends Tuesday (March 25, 2025) night when she was detained by agents from the Department of Homeland Security near her apartment in Somerville, Mass, Khanbabai said.

"We are unaware of her whereabouts and have not been able to contact her," the lawyer said. "No charges have been filed against Rumeysa to date that we are aware of." A statement attributed to a senior spokesman for Homeland Security claimed on Wednesday (March 26, 2025) that Ms. Ozturk had "engaged in activities in support of" Hamas considered "grounds for visa issuance to be terminated." Late on Tuesday (March 25, 2025), Judge Indira Talwani of the Federal District Court in Massachusetts had ordered the government not to move Ms. Ozturk out of the state without advance written notice to the court. It was not immediately clear on Wednesday (March 26, 2025) whether the



government had provided written notice of her removal from Massachusetts. Ms. Ozturk filed a court petition asking a judge to determine whether her detention was lawful, and it named as respondents Patricia Hyde, the acting director of the I.C.E. field office in Boston, and other agency officials, as per The New York Times. On Tuesday (March 25, 2025) night, the president of Tufts, Sunil Kumar, wrote in an email to the university community that administrators had no prior knowledge of the plan to detain the student and that they did not share any information with federal authorities ahead of time. "We realize that tonight's news will be distressing to some members of our community, particularly the members of our international community," Mr. Kumar wrote. Ms. Ozturk was listed as one of several authors of an opinion essay published last March in the Tufts student newspaper. The essay criticized university leaders for their response to demands that Tufts "acknowledge the Palestinian genocide" and divest itself from companies with ties to Israel. She is one of several students who have been targeted for deportation by the Trump administration. Alireza Doroudi, an Iranian citizen and doctoral student at the University of Alabama, was detained off campus by federal immigration officials, the school said in a statement on Wednesday (March 26, 2025). It was not clear why the student was targeted, and US immigration officials did not immediately respond to questions

India, U.S. officials conclude round of talks on proposed trade pact: Sources

GNS News Agency, April 1

India and the visiting U.S. officials have concluded a round of talks on Saturday (March 29, 2025) for the proposed bilateral trade agreement, government sources said. A team of U.S. officials, headed by Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for South and Central Asia Brendan Lynch, was here for negotiations on the proposed agreement. On Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "very smart man" and a "great friend of mine" while emphasising that tariff talks would "work out very well between India and our country". The remarks assume significance since Mr. Trump has repeatedly criticised the alleged high tariffs charged by India and other countries on American goods. He has announced plans to impose reciprocal tariffs on its key trading partners, including India, on April 2. "India is one of the highest tariffing nations in the world. It's brutal, it's brutal. They're very smart. He [Modi] is a very smart man and a great friend of mine. We had very good talks. I think it's going to work out very well between India and our country," Mr. Trump said. The U.S. has already imposed duties on China. Besides, higher import duties of 25% are imposed on steel and aluminium from March 12. On March 26, Mr. Trump announced a sweeping 25% tariff on completely built vehicles (CBUs) and auto parts, a move set to take effect on April 3.

Mr. Trump has also said he would impose a 25% duty on all imports from any country that buys oil or gas from Venezuela. India is a buyer of oil from the South American country. Tariffs are import duties imposed and collected by the government and paid by the companies to bring foreign goods into a country. India and the U.S. are aiming to conclude the first phase of the agreement by the fall of 2025 (September-October). They have also set a target to more than double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030 from the current over \$190 billion. While the U.S. has demanded duty concessions in sectors like certain industrial goods, automobiles, wines, petrochemical products, dairy, agriculture items such as apples, tree nuts, and alfalfa hay; India may look at duty cuts for labour-intensive sectors like textiles. Indian industry and exporters have asked the government to protect them against the USA's reciprocal tariffs. They have sought exemption from those tariffs as it would hurt them severely as the U.S. is India's largest trading partner.

Amid pressure from the U.S., India in February reduced import duties on bourbon whiskey from 150% to 100% and lowered tariffs on certain varieties of wines. The duty on wines made from fresh grapes, vermouth, certain other fermented beverages, and unadulterated ethyl alcohol with 80



per cent strength has been reduced to 100%. The customs duty reduction announced in the Budget on products such as motorcycles and synthetic flavouring essences would also benefit American exports. India has also recently announced the scrapping of the equalisation levy on tech giants like Google. The Reliance Industries' digital services company Jio Platforms Ltd and Bharti Airtel have signed an agreement with SpaceX to offer Starlink's broadband internet services to its customers in India. The U.S. is pushing India to negotiate a large and grand bilateral trade agreement while seeking to open the agriculture sector for American businesses. According to experts, India is unlikely to include dairy and agriculture in trade negotiations as it is a politically sensitive sector.

The U.S. agri exports to India was \$1.6 billion in 2024. Key exports include almonds (in shell — \$868 million); pistachios (\$121 million), apples (\$21 million), ethanol (ethyl alcohol \$266 million). In June 2023, India announced removal of retaliatory import duties on eight U.S. products, including chickpeas, lentils, and apples, which were imposed in 2019 in response to America's measure to increase tariffs on certain steel and aluminium products. In 2024, India's main exports to the U.S. included drug formulations, biological (\$8.1 billion), telecom instruments (\$6.5 billion), precious and semi-precious stones (\$5.3 billion), petroleum products (\$4.1 billion), gold and other precious metal jewellery (\$3.2 billion), ready-made garments of cotton including accessories (\$2.8 billion), and products of iron and steel (\$2.7 billion). Imports included crude oil (\$4.5 billion), petroleum products (\$3.6 billion), coal, coke (\$3.4 billion), cut and polished diamonds (\$2.6 billion), electric machinery (\$1.4 billion), aircraft, space crafts and parts (\$1.3 billion), and gold (\$1.3 billion). In 2023-24, the U.S. was the largest trading partner of India with \$119.71 billion bilateral trade in goods (\$77.51 billion worth of exports, \$42.19 billion of imports, with \$35.31 billion trade surplus).

Indian tourists return to Delhi from Bangkok after earthquake; recount harrowing experiences

Following the 7.7 magnitude earthquake, which was felt across Myanmar, Thailand, China, and Vietnam, Indian tourists in Bangkok returned safely to New Delhi Airport on Saturday and recounted the difficulty they faced in trying to return home. Bharati Khurana told ANI that due to the emergency closure of all commercial spaces, they were not able to get taxis to the airport to return home at first. "The situation is fine now, but yesterday it was very bad. where we went out in the market as well, but they had closed it due to the emergency, we could go to market. We had a lot of trouble there, then we could not get any taxi at that time. Even emergency vehicles were not found. Before, we could not even get a taxi to come to the airport," the tourist told ANI at Delhi airport.

Pranav, another Indian tourist who went to Bangkok, remembered how everyone started running away when the hotel they were in started to shake violently. "When we were inside the building, the entire building was shaking, then everyone ran away. Everyone was sitting for at least two hours in the situation. We were in the Prince Pace hotel on the 24th floor, and the building started shaking violently," he told ANI. Another international tourist who was in Chinatown in Bangkok at the time told ANI how everyone was panicking the second the tremors were felt. "I was actually in Chinatown, which is another place to shop. All of a sudden, the floor started moving, so I was looking down, and then everybody started screaming, panicking, and everybody



tried to exit the market in these little narrow passages," the tourist, John said. Remembering the collapse of buildings around them, he added, "We were all pretty scared, running, screaming, pushing to get out of the building. Nothing happened in that market in Chinatown. But as we can see here in Chatuchak, it was a different story... I'm not too sure what building that was. It was under construction and, I guess, 30-storey high. We saw the pictures of the collapse, so I'm sure there's a lot of people under this rubble." Earlier, the under-construction building collapsed in front of JJ Mall in Chatuchak market in Thailand's capital after the 7.7 earthquake which occurred in Myanmar's Mandalay, and felt across Thailand.

ChatGPT's viral Studio Ghibli-style images highlight AI copyright concerns



Fans of Studio Ghibli, the famed Japanese animation studio behind "Spirited Away" and other beloved movies, were delighted this week when a new version of ChatGPT let them transform popular internet memes or personal photos into the distinct style of Ghibli founder Hayao Miyazaki. But the trend also highlighted ethical concerns about artificial intelligence tools trained on copyrighted creative works and what that means for the future livelihoods of human artists. Miyazaki, 84, known for his hand-drawn approach and whimsical storytelling, has expressed skepticism about AI's role in animation. Janu Lingewaran wasn't thinking much about that when he uploaded a photo of his 3-year-old ragdoll cat, Mali, into ChatGPT's new image generator tool on Wednesday. He then asked ChatGPT to convert it to the Ghibli style, instantly making an anime image that looked like Mali but also one of the painstakingly drawn feline characters that populate Miyazaki movies such as "My Neighbor Totoro" or "Kiki's Delivery Service." "I really fell in love with the result," said Lingewaran, an entrepreneur who lives near Aachen, Germany. "We're thinking of printing it out and hanging it on the wall." Similar results gave the Ghibli style to iconic images, such as the casual look of Turkish pistol shooter Yusuf Dikec in a T-shirt and one hand in his pocket on his way to winning a silver medal at the 2024 Olympics. Or the famed "Disaster Girl" meme of a 4-year-old turning to the camera with a slight smile as a house fire rages in the background.

ChatGPT maker OpenAI, which is fighting copyright lawsuits over its flagship chatbot, has largely encouraged the "Ghiblification" experiments and its CEO Sam Altman changed his profile on social media platform X into a Ghibli-style portrait. In a technical paper posted Tuesday, the company had said the new tool would be taking a "conservative approach" in the way it mimics the aesthetics of individual artists. "We added a refusal which triggers when a user attempts to generate an image in the style of a living artist," it said. But the company added in a statement that it "permits broader studio styles — which people have used to generate and share some truly delightful and inspired original fan creations." Studio Ghibli hasn't yet commented on the trend. The Japanese studio and its North American distributor didn't immediately respond to emails seeking comment.

As users posted their Ghibli-style images on social media, Miyazaki's previous comments on AI animation also began to resurface. When Miyazaki was shown an AI demo in 2016, he said he was "utterly disgusted" by the display, according to documentary footage of the interaction. The person demonstrating the animation, which showed a writhing body dragging itself by its head, explained that AI could "present us grotesque movements that we humans can't imagine." It could be used for zombie movements, the person said. "Every morning, not in recent days, I see my friend who has a disability," Miyazaki said. "It's so hard for him just to do a high five; his arm with stiff muscle can't reach out to my hand. Now, thinking of him, I can't watch this stuff and find it interesting. Whoever creates this stuff has no idea what pain is." He said he would "never wish to incorporate this technology into my work at all." "I strongly feel that this is an insult to life itself," he added. Josh Weigensberg, a partner at the law firm Pryor Cashman, said that one question the Ghibli-style AI art raises is whether the AI model was trained on Miyazaki or Studio Ghibli's work. That in turn "raises the question of, 'Well, do they have a license or permission to do that training or not?'" he said. Weigensberg added that if a work was licensed for training, it might make sense for a company to permit this type of use. But if this type of use is happening without consent and compensation, he said, it could be "problematic."

Weigensberg said that there is a general principle "at the 30,000-foot view" that "style" is not copyrightable. But sometimes, he said, what people are actually thinking of when they say "style" could be "more specific, discernible, discrete elements of a work of art," he said. "A 'Howl's Moving Castle' or 'Spirited Away,' you could freeze a frame in any of those films and point to specific things, and then look at the output of generative AI and see identical elements or substantially similar elements in that output," he said. "Just stopping at, 'Oh, well, style isn't protectable under copyright law.' That's not necessarily the end of the inquiry." Artist Karla Ortiz, who grew up watching Miyazaki's movies and is suing other AI image generators for copyright infringement in a case that's still pending, called it "another clear example of how companies like OpenAI just do not care about the work of artists and the livelihoods of artists." "That's using Ghibli's branding, their name, their work, their reputation, to promote (OpenAI) products," Ortiz said. "It's an insult. It's exploitation." Ortiz was further enraged when President Donald Trump's administration jumped into the meme trend Thursday, using the White House's official X account to post a Ghibli-style image of a weeping woman from the Dominican Republic recently arrested by U.S. immigration agents. The White House and OpenAI didn't immediately respond to requests for comment on how the image was made. "To see something so brilliant, as wonderful as Miyazaki's work be butchered to generate something so foul," Ortiz wrote on social media, adding that she hoped Studio Ghibli sues OpenAI for this.

Uncounted lives at tribal heartland in Andhra Pradesh



Six-year-old Kosayya plays with a group of children amid the mud huts in their settlement at Jaggaram, the dust kicked up by their excited feet melds with the evening sun. Kosayya and many others like him used to study Class 1 at a Non-Residential Special Training Centre (NRSTC), a temporary facility run by the Department of Education to offer primary education to children of migrants, at Jaggaram. The centre was shut down in February on expiry of its six-month service. Now, he accompanies his father, Kovvasi Mangayya, to the chilli fields on the banks of the Godavari River around six kilometres away, along the Andhra-Telangana border in the morning and returns with him in the evening. An interaction with his parents, who belong to the Muria tribe, suggests that the hard life of a farmhand awaits him, too. As far as the government is concerned, Kosayya and many other children in the settlement do not exist, for they have no birth certificate, no Aadhaar or any other identification document. In the same settlement, Madakam Devi sits in front of her hut. "No family in our habitation felt the need to register births; same with deaths. Our lives revolve around our settlement and the nearby forest," says the 32-year-old. "No family in our habitation felt the need to register births; same with deaths. Our lives revolve around our settlement and the nearby forest" Madakam Devi Resident of a Muria settlement at Jaggaram.

She cares for her sister Madakam Bheeme's three children—six-year-old Mani, four-year-old Mooda and three-year-old Venela—while their mother works in the chilli fields. None of the children has a birth certificate. The Murias, now an Internally Displaced People (IDP), fled the Naxal-hit Sukma district of Chhattisgarh two decades ago and formed a settlement at Jaggaram, deep inside the reserve forest on the tri-state border of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Chhattisgarh. A view of Jaggaram settlement of Muria tribals who fled Sukma district in Chhattisgarh two decades ago when conflict between security forces and Left Wing Extremist groups intensified.

Falling under the Yetapaka mandal of Alluri Sitharama Raju (ASR) district, Jaggaram is home to 46 Muria families. It is nearly 75 kilometres from the administrative headquarters of Chintoor Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) and over 250 kilometres from the district headquarters of Paderu. The hostile terrain and a meandering path strewn with stones make it almost impossible for any vehicle, let alone an ambulance, to trek up the settlement. As such, births mostly happen at home and are assisted by women in the community. In official terms, it is called 'non-institutional delivery'. And the children born this way do not have a birth certificate, critical for enrolment for Aadhaar, which has become a key document to avail of government schemes aimed at tribal uplift. A Muria woman returning home from a Chilli field, at Jaggaram settlement.

Thirty-year-old Veko Lakke, another resident and mother of three children, says that it was a Vidya Volunteer (teacher) at the now-shut NRSTC who first told them about the importance of enrolling their children for Aadhaar. "Seven out of the 22 children enrolled at the NRSTC did not have Aadhaar," says Seemala Ramu, a member of the Koya tribe who was a teacher at the centre. Currently, the Muria settlement at Jaggaram has 37 children between the ages of 0 and 6 without Aadhaar. It is one of the 53 IDP settlements dotting Chintoor ITDA, with nearly 2,000 households scattered across densely forested areas. Owing to a general lack of awareness about identity documents and a dearth of adequate help to obtain them, these tribal families may be unwittingly depriving their children of the benefits and the help they are entitled to now and in the future. Aadhaar is key to getting admission to the Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV), two premier Centrally funded institutions aimed at providing quality education to children from Scheduled Tribes and girls from disadvantaged communities, according to ASR District Education Officer P. Brahmaji Rao. The district has eight EMRSs and 19 KGBVs spread across Paderu, Rampachodavaram and Chintoor ITDAs, and these schools can transform the lives of children like Kosayya, if only they can get in.

Venkaatesh Jatvati, a Chintoor-based activist working for the IDPs, says that in Chintoor ITDA limits, 70% of the children without Aadhaar are from the IDPs. The rest belong to the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of Konda Reddi and Porja tribes and Koyas. "The absence of the birth certificate prevents their Aadhaar enrolment." A circular issued by ITDA Project Officer Apoorva Bharat on

March 13 sharpens the perspective: of the 7,868 children aged 0-6 at Chintoor ITDA limits, 2,585 don't have Aadhaar while 1,299 don't have birth certificates.

In the circular, Bharat says 33% of children in the agency area can't avail of welfare schemes and 50.25% of children couldn't enrol in schools and claim various identity documents because they lack Aadhaar. They may also become ineligible for Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) schemes and the health services offered by the government, adds Bharat. With 3,035 applications for birth certificates under review, the officer urges all mandal revenue, development, education and tribal welfare officers to expedite Aadhaar enrolment and birth certificate issuance. Across the district, children (0-6 years old) without birth certificates number 32,000, says District Women and Child Welfare and Empowerment Officer N. Surya Lakshmi. "Recently, the government slightly relaxed the rules. Children up to a year old can be given the birth certificate upon recommendation by the district medical and health authorities," added Lakshmi.

As for children over one year old, the Village Revenue Officer should conduct an inquiry (Panchanama) before making a recommendation to the Mandal Revenue Officer for issuance of the birth certificate, which the Sub-Collector should approve. It's a process beyond the means of the tribespeople. These communities who live deep inside the forest and will only venture out to visit the weekly shandy on Fridays. "Traversing the forest, I visited the village secretary-cum-Aadhaar centre, the Primary Health Centre and revenue officials twice to get a birth certificate for my three-year-old daughter, says 28-year-old Vetti Peesamma, a Muria from Chukkallapadu settlement. "I gave up; it's too tiring," she adds. Six kilometres from Edugurallapalli village secretary and 30 km from the mandal headquarters of Chintoor, this settlement of 34 Muria families has 14 children without birth certificates. As of December 19, 2024, 72,529 children (aged 0-6) enrolled in the 3,214 Anganwadi centres did not have Aadhaar in ASR district, says Lakshmi in an official circular. A woman of Kondh community getting ready her day's work at Donkarayi area in Sileru Agency. In Araku Valley, children of 0-6 age group from the tribes of Kondh (PVTG), Konda Dora and Bagatha are among those without Aadhaar cards. In Sileru region, children from the tribes of Porja (PVTG), Bagata, Konda Dora, who migrated from Odisha for the construction hydroelectric power projects on the Sileru river in the 1970s, do not have Aadhaar, according to sources. Like the Murias, these tribespeople, too, prefer births at home owing to a lack of emergency healthcare facilities and road connectivity to their villages. Awareness makes the difference.

Rampachodavaram Sub-Collector K.R. Kalpasri highlighted the lack of awareness about birth registration among the tribespeople. Rampachodavaram ITDA covers the entire stretch of Konda Reddi tribal pocket adjoining Odisha. She says she disposes of at least 150-200 birth certificate applications a day. "We rely on decade-old data on pregnant women from government hospitals as well as vaccination records with medical and health officials to trace the birth of the children; any data from government records will be useful to approve the application," adds Kalpasri.

The Aadhaar Enrolment Operator of the village secretary at Edugurallapalli is in charge of Aadhaar registration at Edugurallapalli and Pega gram panchayats along the Chhattisgarh border, which together have 19 IDP settlements, 19 revenue villages and 22 Konda Reddi tribal villages on the hills. These localities often see clashes between Left-Wing Extremist groups and paramilitary forces. But on March 22 (Saturday), the official, Ravi Teja, was nowhere to be found. None of his colleagues knew his whereabouts, and he was unreachable over the phone for the next 72 hours. Attempts to contact him over the phone on March 27 (Thursday), too, went in vain. "Women and child development officials and ASHA workers should be tasked with helping those without birth certificates to get them" Venkaatesh Jatvati Activist working for IDPs.

His colleague and Agriculture Assistant Anigi Saritha, a member of the Koya tribe, claims that the Murias and Konda Reddis visit the office birth certificates and Aadhaar enrolment only on Friday, the weekly shandy day. However, security forces take down mobile and internet connectivity the same day for their combing operations, bringing their work to a halt, she claims. "The tribals will not turn up for any task the next day," she adds. ASR District Aadhaar Centres Coordinator P. Ravi Kumar says that without a birth certificate, it is not possible to get a child enrolled for Aadhaar. "Without the birth certificate, the data seeding will not move further," he says. The ASR district has 133 Aadhaar enrolment centres. A Konda Reddi artisan at work at Chintoor agency in Alluri Sitharama Raju district. Activist Venkaatesh Jatvati spares families like Vetti Peesamma's the gruelling trek through the forest. For the hill tribes, particularly the Konda Reddis, communication with and accessibility to Aadhaar centres remain a major problem. "Before this, women and child development officials and ASHA workers should be tasked with helping those without birth certificates to get them," added Venkaatesh.

'Tyagi' Balu, a communist revolutionary from Madurai who lived and died for his ideals

On the morning of February 22, 1951, the air around the Madurai Central Prison was charged with emotion. The slogans, "Comrade Balu Zindabad!" and "Communism Zindabad!", reverberated as the life of 'Tyagi' Balu, a staunch communist and revolutionary, came to an end at the gallows. His death marked not only the loss of a man but also the culmination of a life dedicated to fighting for equality and justice. Born Baluchamy in the remote hamlet of Karuveppilai near Usilampatti in Madurai district around 1920, Balu was the fourth child of Karuppa Devar and Veeramal. His early life was shaped by hardship. "Though the family owned two acres of land, water scarcity forced them to migrate to Sellur when Balu was about 10 years old," recalls K. Rajendran, CPI(M) Madurai rural district secretary. This marked the beginning of a journey that would see Balu rise from humble beginnings and become a symbol of resistance to oppression. With limited formal education — he studied only up to grade five — Balu began working at a shop at Vetrilapettai before joining Harvey Mills as a temporary worker at the age of 15. Within three years, he became a permanent employee. However, his life took a decisive turn during the Second World War. "In 1939, as Adolf Hitler's actions triggered the war, the British government conscripted people from its colonies, including India," I. Mayandi Bharathi recounts in his book, Thookumedai Tiyagi Baluvin Irudhi Natkal (Martyr Balu's Last Days). The conscription sparked widespread resentment among nationalist organisations in Madurai, including the Congress, the Forward Bloc, and the Communist Party. Balu's disillusionment with the British policies deepened when Harvey Mills sacked

26 permanent employees in 1942 for disobedience. "Infuriated by this injustice, Balu resigned even before he could be sacked," says Mr. Rajendran. Inspired by communist ideology, Balu began organising workers and peasants while participating in union activities. White sergeant attacked in 1945, Balu joined the reserve police force but remained committed to his communist ideals. He often clashed with senior officers over their mistreatment of junior personnel. In one instance, he struck a white sergeant who had humiliated a junior colleague. Although an inquiry was initiated, Balu was pardoned by the British government, which understood his motive. Despite being part of the police force, Balu refused to suppress protests by workers at the Dindigul leather factory or farmers in the present-day Telangana. "He educated and advised police teams sent to Telangana to control farmers' protests," Mayandi Bharathi says in his book. After Independence, as communists were targeted with new laws, Balu continued to stand against police brutality and the inhumane treatment of prisoners. In this turbulent period, a constable named Shenbagam, tasked with monitoring communists in Madurai, was murdered under mysterious circumstances. The authorities linked the murder to Balu and five others: Mottaiyan, David Rajamani, Madurai, Veeraiyah, and Joseph. All six were arrested and charged with murder. The Madurai Sessions Court awarded them the death sentence. However, on appeal, the High Court commuted the sentences of the five others to life imprisonment. Only Balu's death sentence was upheld. According to Mayandi Bharathi's account, thousands gathered outside the prison on February 21, 1951 to bid farewell to their comrade.

'We gave you visa to study... not to become social activist': Rubio on revoking visa of detained Turkish student

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The U.S. Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, said that the visa of Turkish student Rumeysa Ozturk has been revoked due to her engagement in activities beyond the scope of her student visa. While addressing a joint news conference with Guyanese President Irfaan Ali in Georgetown, Guyana, Mr. Rubio said, "We revoked her visa... We gave you a visa to come and study and get a degree, not to become a social activist that tears up our university campuses." Mr. Rubio emphasised that the U.S. expects international students to adhere to the terms of their visas. "If we've given you a visa and then you decide to do that, we're going to take it away," he stated. On Tuesday (March 25, 2025), an international student in a graduate program at Tufts University was taken into federal custody outside an off-campus apartment building, according to the university's president and an attorney representing the student, The New York Times reported.

The student, Rumeysa Ozturk, a Turkish citizen, had a valid student visa as a doctoral student at Tufts, according to a statement from her lawyer, Mahsa Khanbabai. According to The New York Times, Ms. Ozturk, who is Muslim, was heading out to break her Ramadan fast with friends Tuesday (March 25, 2025) night when she was detained by agents from the Department of Homeland Security near her apartment in Somerville, Mass. Khanbabai said, "We are unaware of her whereabouts and have not been able to contact her," the lawyer said. "No charges have been filed against Rumeysa to date that we are aware of." A statement attributed to a senior spokesman for Homeland Security claimed on Wednesday (March 26, 2025) that Ms. Ozturk had "engaged in activities in support of" Hamas considered "grounds for visa issuance to be terminated." Late on Tuesday (March 25, 2025), Judge Indira Talwani of the Federal District Court in Massachusetts had ordered the government not to move Ms. Ozturk out of the state without advance written notice to the court. It was not immediately clear on Wednesday (March 26, 2025) whether the government had provided written notice of her removal from



Massachusetts.

Ms. Ozturk filed a court petition asking a judge to determine whether her detention was lawful, and it named as respondents Patricia Hyde, the acting director of the I.C.E. field office in Boston, and other agency officials, as per The New York Times. On Tuesday (March 25, 2025) night, the president of Tufts, Sunil Kumar, wrote in an email to the university community that administrators had no prior knowledge of the plan to detain the student and that they did not share any information with federal authorities ahead of time. "We realize that tonight's news will be distressing to some members of our community, particularly the members of our international community," Mr. Kumar wrote. Ms. Ozturk was listed as one of several authors of an opinion essay published last March in the Tufts student newspaper. The essay criticized university leaders for their response to demands that Tufts "acknowledge the Palestinian genocide" and divest itself from companies with ties to Israel. She is one of several students who have been targeted for deportation by the Trump administration. Alireza Doroudi, an Iranian citizen and doctoral student at the University of Alabama, was detained off campus by federal immigration officials, the school said in a statement on Wednesday (March 26, 2025). It was not clear why the student was targeted, and US immigration officials did not immediately respond to questions on Wednesday (March 26, 2025) evening.

North Korea's tests new reconnaissance and attack drones

Seoul: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un observed tests of newly developed reconnaissance and attack drones this week and called for their increased production, State media said on Thursday. Kim has been emphasising the development of drones and the tests were the latest display of his country's growing military capabilities. Photos released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency showed Kim observing what appeared to be a large reconnaissance

Other images showed exploding drones crashing into military vehicles used as targets. The agency said the test demonstrated the reconnaissance drone's ability to track multiple targets and monitor troop movements on land and at sea, potentially enhancing North Korea's intelligence-gathering operations and ability to neutralise enemy threats.

The report said the new exploding drones are designed for various attack missions and feature unspecified artificial intelligence capabilities. Kim expressed satisfaction with the drones' performance and approved plans to expand production, emphasising that drones and AI should be "top" priorities in efforts to advance his armed forces and adapt them to modern warfare. KCNA said. The agency said the tests took place as Kim visited a drone technology com-

plex and an electronic warfare research group on Tuesday and Wednesday.

South Korea's Defence Ministry didn't immediately comment on the North Korean report. Kim previously inspected other demonstrations of drones that explode on impact in November and August last year. North Korea also last year accused South Korea of sending its own drones to drop anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets over the North's capital of Pyongyang and threatened to respond with force if such flights occur again. South Korea's military refused to confirm whether or not the North's claims were true.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have escalated recently as Kim continues to expand his military capabilities, which now includes various nuclear-capable weapons targeting South Korea and intercontinental ballistic missiles potentially capable of reaching the US mainland.

Kim is also aligning with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the war in Ukraine, sending troops and military equipment to support Russia's efforts. This has raised concerns that he may receive Russian technology transfers in return, further strengthening the threat posed by his nuclear-armed military.

A global polio resurgence and the need to reevaluate the basics



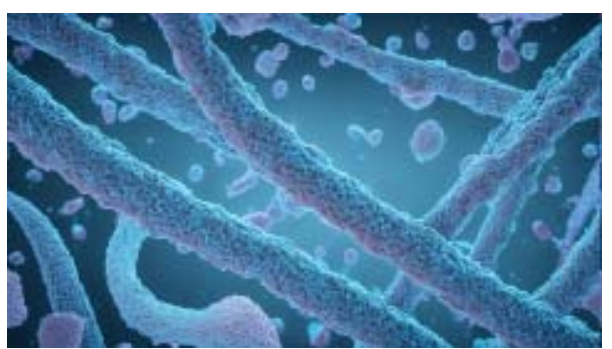
tory transmission based on the epidemiological features of polio, before later studies shifted the focus to the faecal-oral route, primarily due to research on virus shedding in the gut. The polio Sabin vaccine, also known as the oral polio vaccine (OPV), is a live-attenuated vaccine that was developed by physician and microbiologist Albert Sabin. It was adopted by the WHO because of the efficacy in administering the vaccine and given the mammoth task in front of the world at that time. The flip side, however, was that oral polio vaccine allowed vaccine-derived polioviruses to infect children.

A recent paper, 'The Respiratory Route of Transmission of Virulent Polioviruses', by T. Jacob John, Dhanya Dharmapalan, Robert Steinglass, and Norbert Hirschhorn, in the peer-reviewed journal Infectious Diseases, presents a thorough analysis of the transmission routes of poliovirus, particularly wild polioviruses (WPVs) and circulating vaccine-derived polioviruses (cVDPVs). They make the case that the transmission of virulent polioviruses (WPV and cVDPV) is via the respiratory route, like other contagious childhood infectious diseases such as measles, rubella, varicella, diphtheria, and pertussis. But the systems of virus amplification and transmission are different in that silently reinfected individuals can transmit virulent polioviruses but not the pathogens of these other childhood diseases. "Poliovirus does not replicate in the environment nor in contaminated food — hence, faeces has to be consumed to become exposed. If faeces were consumed at high dosage and frequency to saturate children or cause outbreaks of polio, certainly one would expect many other diseases to occur *pari passu* with polio. They don't. Conversely, one would expect polio to be a regular part of outbreaks of enteric diseases following contamination of drinking water; it isn't," the paper rationalises.

Respiratory transmission?

The paper explores the long-standing debate over whether poliovirus is primarily transmitted via the faecal-oral route or the respiratory route. Historically, the faecal-oral route was widely accepted, particularly after the introduction of the oral polio vaccine. The authors argue that available evidence leans strongly towards respiratory transmission as the primary route. While poliovirus is known to shed in both the throat and stool, the paper challenges the assumption that the faecal-oral route is the dominant means of transmission. Instead, the authors emphasise that virus shedding in the throat is critical for transmission, and this shedding supports the respiratory transmission theory. The authors say continuing to distribute OPV is the wrong path to polio eradication. On the other hand, vaccination with Injunctable Polio Vaccine will expedite the eradication of WPV and cVDPVs, Dr. Jacob John argues. The earlier OPV is replaced with IPV, the faster the world will reach global polio eradication. Since IPV is non-transmissible, the OPV-to-IPV switch should be planned/implemented country by country until OPV is no longer used anywhere. That is the only way the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) can avoid causing polio in the name of eradication. The paper discusses how initial studies pointed to respiratory transmission based on the epidemiological features of polio before later studies shifted the focus to the faecal-oral route, primarily due to research on virus shedding in the gut. Dr. John, a retired professor of virology from Christian Medical College, who also served as an expert member on the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, has always been forceful about his view that OPV could be used only for "polio control" but not for "polio eradication". Without global use of IPV and without global withdrawal of OPV, the polio eradication project cannot even begin. The authors argue that the widespread assumption of faecal-oral transmission has led to the exclusive use of the oral polio vaccine (OPV) in the GPEI. However, the authors suggest that, based on their findings, a shift towards the inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) would be more effective in preventing polio transmission, particularly in regions where respiratory transmission is the main route.

Rwanda and WHO declare end of Marburg outbreak after no new cases reported



Ghana. The virus was first identified in 1967 after it caused simultaneous outbreaks of disease in laboratories in the German city of Marburg and in Belgrade in the former Yugoslavia. Seven people died after being exposed to the virus while conducting research on monkeys.

Our dial-a-quote saviours

The scientist, J.B.S. Haldane, was a darling of journalists and would be ready to comment on anything under the sun, from weather to submarines. | Photo Credit: The Hindu Archives At the end of the year, newsrooms are generally half-empty. Many journalists happily go away on holiday, leaving news editors patrolling deserted aisles and staring at empty news lists and blank pages, wondering how to fill them. The panicked editors sometimes terrorise the few unfortunate reporters left behind, who then furiously start working the lines. It is especially at this difficult hour that people with capacious minds and precise memories come to our rescue. They have no billowing capes, no colourful spandex costumes, no shields, and no swords, but they are our saviours. In a reporter's lexicon, they are 'dial a quote' sources — subject experts who can weigh in on any problem and provide context for stories. Two days ago, I went around the newsroom speaking to reporters. My colleagues said they swear by a student leader-turned-activist-turned-politician, who is now an academic, for quotes on anything from the travails of the homeless in Delhi's bitter cold winters, to trade union protests, to trouble at universities. For the security beat reporters, former officers of the Army, Air Force, and Navy are the go-to guides. They explain the topography of a border area where a conflict has broken out or the torturous process of buying weapons that may span over decades. Their on-the-record comments add gravitas to the story. Then there are historians. Every time a road is renamed or a heritage structure comes crumbling down, they take us through the dusty bylanes of a bygone era. Without them, our stories would have no roots and simply become dull. 'he said, she said' exchanges. While writing about rural development, I lean on activists who spend months in the field and are in touch with the workers every day. They trawl through the gigabytes of data on government websites to spot trends. Often, I feel guilty for sponging off their hard work, but we reporters draw solace from the fact that as the medium, we have successfully managed to put the message across. Political commentators are always ready to talk. Generally, the more they are sidelined within their party, the more enthusiastic they are to be quoted. 'Dial a quote' is not a new fad; it is as old as newsrooms. The scientist, J.B.S. Haldane, was a darling of journalists and would be ready to comment on anything under the sun, from weather to submarines.

Health Matters newsletter: sleepless nights heres a drug to help



We've said this before, but it bears saying again on those cheery Tuesdays, when we at the health desk are able to bring some good news to start this newsletter. Believe me, there's nothing else we like doing more.

This week, the good news is for those who find their sleep is disrupted, as the U.S. approves first drug treatment for obstructive sleep apnoea. OSA is a dangerous condition in which breathing stops intermittently while a person sleeps. Sufferers wake up repeatedly during the night because of a blocked airway, preventing them from reaching the deep, refreshing stages of slumber. The condition is linked to a higher risk of high blood pressure, stroke and depression. Zepbound, the drug approved by the FDA recently, works by activating receptors of hormones secreted from the intestine... to reduce appetite and food intake. By reducing body weight, it also improves OSA. We have brought news from Africa repeatedly about the Marburg virus, including explainers. Now, what we are hearing is what we might want to hear: Rwanda and WHO declare end of Marburg outbreak after no new cases reported. The country first declared the outbreak on September 27 and reported a total of 15 deaths and 66 cases, with the majority of those affected healthcare workers who handled the first patients. Without treatment, Marburg can be fatal in up to 88% of people who fall ill with the disease. Symptoms include fever, muscle pains, diarrhea, vomiting and, in some cases, death through extreme blood loss.

I write about a family in Chennai coming up with a composite child survival and health index to monitor performance of States, Union Territories in India. This takes into account 11 parameters, each of them given equal weightage, and with data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), is used to evaluate the performance of various states in the country. This will also provide a ready tool to keep track of surveillance and monitoring in the country. Also, ICMR has reportedly developed an AI tool to predict IVF outcomes in men with infertility. It predicts sperm retrieval rates and success rates of assisted reproductive technology in men with 'Y' chromosome microdeletion. And in case you were not aware, in nearly 50% of couples experiencing infertility, the problem is with the male partner. Another healthcare institution in the public sector AIIMS says its doctors are in process of developing low cost adaptive cellular therapy for treatment of multiple myeloma. We will continue to follow any developments on this. Bindu Shajan Perappadan brings us some sobering information, with reference to healthcare costs: Soaring inflation pushes up health insurance premiums; makes standardised care costlier. Healthcare market experts note that this level of escalation is unsustainable, and market correction should be kicking in soon. Speaking to The Hindu, Sumit Bohra of the Insurance Brokers Association of India (IBAI) said in India, rising healthcare costs and growing health insurance premiums are feeding each other. Health activist Arun Gupta said accessing assured, quality health care is now not a matter of right but a matter of having the 'right' insurance cover.

Here is definite cause for concern: 1,394 batches of drugs recalled in 2023-24 for failing quality tests: Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel told the Parliament. While India aspires to become a leader in pharmacology in the global arena, quality and standards are still far from ideal, and the attention should be paid to these two sectors, with an urgency not yet apparent. Staying on pharma, Aditya Sinha makes a case for Making affordable generics more reliable. Bioequivalent to branded drugs, generics offer cost-effective alternatives. India leverages economies of scale and low production costs to supply affordable medication

How to overcome brain rot

Do you obsessively watch videos of skateboarding dogs till four in the morning — even when you know you have to be up by six, no matter what? And when you do wake up at six, instead of rolling out of bed, do you end up scrolling again? Do you walk purposely from the living room to the kitchen, open the fridge, pick up a cauliflower, and realise you've no clue what's in your hand or why you came to the kitchen? Do you sometimes read an entire paragraph from a book of moderate difficulty — say, Well Done, Secret Seven — and comprehend nothing because your brain is still 'buffering'? If you answered 'yes' to any of the above, then you have 'brain rot' — the Oxford University Press' (OUP) word of the year for 2024. Unfortunately, there is plenty of fake news about brain rot, its causes, symptoms, and cure. In service of public interest, let me set the record straight.

The first symptom of brain rot is trouble remembering basic things, like, for instance, why you became the chief justice of India — is it to talk to god or to uphold the Constitution? If you have brain rot, your brain would be unable to recollect which one it is. Nobody is at fault. Another key symptom: reduced attention span. Example: have you seen our MPs in action? If yes, have you ever seen them sitting down and quietly listening when somebody is speaking? They never do. They inevitably interrupt and start yelling and screaming. Why? Degraded attention spans. It's the same reason they can't listen to your problems. But it's not their fault — it's just brain rot. This column is a satirical take on life and society.

The third major symptom is difficulty organising information. Have you ever filed an RTI requesting some basic information, such as, for instance, "How many years have passed since Jawaharlal Nehru stopped being the Prime Minister of India?" If you did, you may have received a reply stating, "This information cannot be provided because it would take too much time to collate the data." That's a classic brain rot response. Such brains have lost the capacity to organise the past as a linear progression in the direction of the present. Instead, they get stuck in the past, and they stay there, gathering rot. Now, thanks to the OUP, the rest of the world has woken up to brain rot. But it has been endemic in India for a long time. I would date its onset to the rise of WhatsApp culture in the country, especially the infestation of 'good morning' messages, typically adorned with images of flowers, babies, sunsets, or all three. Try and imagine the kind of brain a person must have to want to wake up at 4.30 in the morning and spend the next 45 min-

domestically and internationally. Ensuring the quality of generic medicines in India is vital to make them affordable and effective as innovator drugs. Delhi AQI's stays in 'severe' category; remains India's most polluted city for third day in a row. Even as we despair at that, there's worse: The air pollution is over 16 times the limit prescribed by the World Health Organization (WHO), according to official data. Severe level air pollution "affects healthy people" and "seriously impacts" those with existing diseases, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Dyuti Sen explains The challenges of enforcing universal health coverage while emphasising the pressing need to do so, given the vast differences that exist regionally and State-wise, in terms of what is available to the people.

We had told you earlier about The Hindu-Naruvu Hospitals, Vellore tie up for Healthy India, Happy India, to help create awareness on health conditions, treatments and preventive actions that can be undertaken. Here is the first online webinar in that series: Urinary tract infections are common in women, thanks to their anatomy, say doctors. Do watch this space for more. Shonali Muthalaly writes from the recent nutrition conference in Sri Lanka about the importance of food diversity. Food diversity is crucial to human and environmental health, she says, quoting chef Thomas Zacharias, who spoke on initiatives to champion local and seasonal food, archive culinary knowledge, and build awareness around where food comes from. Rijo M. John talks of the movement that calls to Levy a higher GST rate on tobacco, sugared beverages. Over the past seven years, there have been no significant increases in GST rates on harmful products such as tobacco and sugar-sweetened beverages, except for two minor hikes on tobacco. This has made these products more affordable, undermining efforts to curb their consumption. The Group of Ministers (GoM) has now proposed to raise the highest GST tier on tobacco and sugar-sweetened beverages from 28% to 35%. Serena Josephine M. reports on the Tamil Nadu health department's move to call on the Centre to Add mumps vaccine to universal immunisation programme, in the light of a sudden resurgence of infections. And Sujatha R. talks of the emotional, and yet necessary task of Learning to accept end of life care and palliative support. This week's story for this section is the one by Jack McBride and Tesla Monson, harking back as it does to new glimpses into birthing patterns, back when early ancestors actually had a tail. Primates often gave birth to twins 60M years ago: new research, they say. Several of the wet-nosed primates — including lemurs, lorises and galagos — and almost all of the marmosets and tamarins from South America give birth to twins. Prior to the writers' work, researchers thought these distinctive twin-bearing primates must be different, from the more common, ancestral trait. "But our research flips that narrative on its head: It's actually the singleton-bearing primates that are derived and distinctive. Further back in evolution, two babies at once was the norm. Our ancient primate ancestors gave birth to twins," the article says. We have a bunch of explainers this week on a range of subjects, do hit the link on those you want to read on. Flora Hui advises: Here's how to choose the right pair of sunglasses. Zubeda Hamid writes: Ustad Zakir Hussain died of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. What is this lung condition? and explains Why some packaged foods are under the scanner?

Here, read about How sugar restrictions in early life could reduce risk of diabetes later on. Aravinda introduces the concept of Never events: unacceptable failures in implementing patient safety protocols. Monisha Madhumita writes on Navigating the risks of massages and beauty treatments. Aditya Ansh tells the leprosy story: India's path towards a stigma-free society. If you have a few extra moments, do also read the following stories: Afshan Yasmine writes: In Karnataka, where C-section delivery figures have jumped, State to now audit all such procedures. Prasad asks Does 2022 H5N1 bind, replicate better in the respiratory tract? Soibam Rocky Singh reports from the Delhi High Court: Hospitals cannot refuse free medical treatment to rape, acid attack victims. Disability and queer health in medical education — India under the lens. FSSAI seeks quarterly data on expired and rejected food items. 36 crore beneficiaries verified; 8.39 crore hospital admissions worth over ₹1.16 lakh crore authorised under PM-JAY: Minister. Retail prices of 65 new drug formulations, ceiling prices of 13 for-



utes on their smartphone searching online for images of 'good morning' greetings and sending them to 50 different groups, of which many would contain members in time zones where they're about to fall asleep but thanks to the ping of these 'good mornings', they would now pick up the phone they had put away, and spend the rest of their night scrolling away until it's their turn to spam the universe with 'good morning' messages. Under such sustained assault, even Einstein's brain would've turned into mental goo. Science has no clue

Strangely enough, medical science still has no clue what causes brain rot. Other than some research linking it to excessive screen time, there is nothing. But unless we identify the cause, how can we find the cure? Well, this is where I can help. As someone who has been a student of brain rot for close to two decades, I believe I have zeroed in on the single biggest factor responsible for it: the brain. Take away the brain, you take away brain rot. This is such an elegant and obvious solution to a global health emergency, I am amazed no one has thought of it already. But I guess that's what brain rot does even to the sharpest of brains. Anyway, if we can make a brain-shaped thingie that combines the latest ChatGPT engine with Elon Musk's Neuralink and a miniature CCTG camera, we should be able to do away with the brain while retaining its core functionalities — interfacing with screens and generating an endless stream of data.

Vaping is not an approved way to quit smoking, it is in fact, far more harmful



cigarettes. This includes both the complete product and its parts. Generally, a smoker absorbs between 1 milligram and 2 mg of nicotine from a single cigarette. Although there is between 8 mg and 20 mg of nicotine, only a fraction is inhaled — generally thought to be about a tenth. Various factors alter this — the strength of the filter, each person, and how much is lost in the smoke — but this amount is a general rule of thumb. Regular cigarettes lead to the inhalation of about 1.2 mg of nicotine per cigarette or 24 mg of nicotine per 20 pack.

Most popular vapes that are illegally sold in India come in nicotine strengths of 10 mg/ml, 20 mg/ml, and 40 mg/ml, so a 2 ml vape typically contains 10 mg to 40 mg of nicotine and allows for between 600 and 800 puffs. A 20 mg/ml vape, with 40 mg of nicotine, is therefore the equivalent of smoking one or two packs of 20 cigarettes. This shows the addictive and harmful nature of vapes isn't vaping just water vapour? -- No. Despite the name, vaping doesn't make water vapour. It actually creates an aerosol (or mist) that contains small particles of nicotine, metal and other harmful substances. What is in the e-liquid (e-juice)? -- E-liquid, also called e-juice or vape juice, usually contains flavoring to mask the harshness of nicotine. Nicotine is the addictive and harmful substance in cigarettes and other tobacco products. It also contains propylene glycol and glycerin, to create a vapor.

What is the effect of vaping on the lungs?

Vaping can cause inflammation (swelling) and irritation of the lungs leading to scarring and narrowing of the tubes that bring air in and out of the lungs. Vaping leads to EVALI (e-cigarette, or vaping, product use-associated lung injury). EVALI is a serious lung condition that vaping causes. It causes widespread damage to the lungs and lead to symptoms like coughing, shortness of breath and chest pain. EVALI can be fatal. Vaping isn't approved as a way to quit smoking. Approved methods include patches, inhalers, lozenges, and gum. Tobacco cessation clinics and National Tobacco Quit Line Services (NTQLS) - 1800 112 356 can guide people on the proper ways to quit smoking.

India is one of the few countries that has completely banned the sale of e-cigarettes to protect young people from e-cigarette-related harms. This is especially notable given that India has a young population, with 65% of people in the country being below the age of 35 years. Around 27% of the Indian population uses tobacco in some or other form (World Health Organization, 2017). The misconception that e-cigarettes are an effective tool to quit smoking might stir controversy, especially as vaping is being promoted as less harmful than smoking, and vaping products come in the most popular flavours (tobacco, mint, and chocolate). Its users are often well-educated and come from privileged backgrounds, allowing them the financial means to afford vaping. Many also seek to align with vaping communities on social media, where they can connect with peers and showcase their lifestyle.

The Indian government, in 2019, enacted the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage, and Advertisement) Act to protect public health and banned the production, sale, and advertisement of electronic cigarettes. The Act, which came into effect on September 18, 2019, aims to curb growing concerns about the harmful effects of electronic cigarettes and similar devices. Under the law, no individual or entity is allowed to produce, manufacture, import, export, transport, sell, or distribute electronic

Debt, despair and the dark side of online gambling in Telangana

Tears brim in Edire Laxmi's bloodshot eyes as she stands outside the gate of the house where her son took his last breath. "I cannot open the door and see inside. It is too traumatic," murmurs the frail 39-year-old from Pochamma Basti, Maheswaram, about an hour's drive from Hyderabad. Unable to return home, she now stays at her mother's house in a maze of narrow lanes lined with small dwellings in the prosperous village. Inside a cluttered room filled with rice sacks, utensils and a faded calendar, Laxmi squats beside her mother, staring blankly at her phone. Memories flood in — of her quiet, brooding son, Sai Kiran, juggling three mobile phones, worrying constantly about money, and rarely meeting friends.

December 19 had started like any other day. That morning, her 21-year-old son skipped college and stayed home. "I made him breakfast and left for the farm around 9 a.m.," she says. Then came the call. Her son had set himself on fire. When she reached home, she found thick grey smoke pouring from the house, the acrid stench of burning flesh and petrol filling the air. Neighbours threw water, but inside, Sai Kiran sat still — legs stretched out, hands slightly raised, body burnt beyond recognition. Against the soot-stained wall, he remained unmoving. Laxmi's mother trembles as she recalls his final words: "I have a lot of debt. I can't take it anymore," he had whispered through scorched lips. The day before, he was seen with a friend. He later stepped out to buy petrol for his motorcycle, but instead he doused himself in it and set himself ablaze. Financial struggles weighed heavily on him. His father, a groundskeeper in Shankarpally, couldn't afford medical college, so he switched from engineering to a commerce degree in Hyderabad's Narayanguda. But money woes followed him.

He persuaded his family to buy him a ₹2-lakh motorcycle, promising to handle the payments. What they didn't know was that he had taken loans against it, leading to relentless calls from lenders. "I assumed it was just ₹16,000 in monthly installments," Laxmi says, adding, "But later, I found out he had taken a ₹1-lakh loan on it. He borrowed another ₹40,000 from a friend. He never told me the full story. The debts kept piling up. Sai Kiran had borrowed 50,000, ₹20,000, ₹30,000 and ₹15,000 from different sources to buy an iPhone and other devices. When the pressure mounted, he admitted he couldn't go on. Laxmi borrowed ₹2 lakh from a village elder to clear his debts, thinking it would end there. "I told him to stop taking loans, to focus on studies, that we would get him married at the right time. But he wanted to earn. Money came and went. What was the point?" The last time his father saw him, he gave him ₹200. It was their final conversation. Moments before his death, Sai Kiran told his grandmother he was drowning in debt. Police linked his suicide to online betting, but Laxmi isn't convinced. "At the morgue, police said his friends mentioned gaming and betting. That's what went into the report, but no one ever told me. If he had, I would have done anything to save him." Sai Kiran wasn't alone. Since 2020, Telangana has recorded 42 gambling-related deaths, eight in 2025 alone. Illegal betting spikes during IPL season, indicating a surge in market activity. Just days before Sai Kiran's death, Chenamani Shivalingam, 28, of Thulekalan village in Telangana's Ranga Reddy district met a similar fate. On December 15 last year, he stepped out of home, doused himself in diesel, and set himself ablaze. His family managed to put out the flames and rushed him to Osmania General Hospital, but he succumbed after three days. His brother later revealed Shivalingam had been trapped in online betting, buried under debt he couldn't escape. Like Sai Kiran, Shivalingam showed no signs of struggle until it was too late. Lured by the promise of quick money, both fell into a system designed to keep players chasing losses. What seems like chance is, in reality, a rigged game where the house always wins. Illegal betting platforms use sophisticated algorithms to create an illusion of near-wins, keeping players hooked while pushing them deeper into debt. With instant loans just a click away, many don't realise the trap until they are drowning in losses. For families like Laxmi's and Ramalingam's, the realisation came too late. Their sons, once full of promise, are now just statistics in a growing crisis. As illegal betting thrives, fuelled by aggressive ads and an unchecked digital ecosystem, one question lingers: How many more lives will it claim before action is taken?

Hooked to the high-gambling addiction among Telangana's youth is rising, driven by easy access to online platforms. Once confined to matka dens, betting now requires nothing more than a smartphone, making it danger-



ously convenient. Diana Monteiro, a Hyderabad-based counseling psychologist who has seen a surge in young clients struggling with gambling-related debt, says: "More people are coming in with major financial stress, and it's only going to grow. The lure of fast money makes gambling seem like an easy solution." She links the problem to a digital upbringing that fosters instant gratification. "From birth, they have been exposed to quick rewards — games, social media, entertainment. Gambling operates on the same principle: thrill, anticipation, and the rush of winning. Their brains are wired to seek these highs, making addiction almost inevitable." Academic, professional and social pressures add to the problem. Many struggle to keep up — chasing the latest gadgets, social status or even family expectations to earn early. Purnima Nagaraja, a psychiatrist in Hyderabad, says, "This pushes them toward quick money-making methods, and gambling becomes an easy escape." Dr. Monteiro warns of another alarming trend: "Young people are bombarded with offers of instant loans — no paperwork, no questions asked. This ease of access to both gambling and quick money is a dangerous mix." The warning signs are often clear. Addicts may withdraw socially, take loans, steal money or sell valuables. "If someone constantly talks about quick money, borrows frequently or has extreme mood swings, they might be struggling. Lying to family, risking jobs or relationships, and chasing losses — these are all red flags," she says.

Financial stress from gambling can spiral into severe mental health issues, including depression, anxiety and suicidal tendencies. Many fall into massive debt, even selling family valuables. "I have seen cases where people sold their sister's wedding jewellery. Some turn to nerve-calming drugs, making recovery even harder," points out Dr. Nagaraja. Certain personality traits such as impulsivity, thrill-seeking and low self-esteem heighten vulnerability. Those with anxiety, depression, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or a history of substance abuse are at greater risk. "It is not just about willpower; some people are wired to be more susceptible," Dr. Monteiro explains. Regulating online betting remains tough. "I don't think it can truly be controlled. Like porn sites, people will always find a way around restrictions. We have strong cyber laws, but enforcement is a challenge," she says even as she stresses the need for early intervention. "Certain habits must be monitored from childhood. Parents can use site-blocking tools, but more importantly, children must be taught the value of money and the dangers of easy wealth." An illegal betting boom in India's online skill-gaming sector is worth \$3 billion, but the illegal offshore betting market dwarfs it at \$20-30 billion annually with some estimates even putting it at \$100 billion. UNICEF estimates that children in India collectively spend over \$1,000 daily on online gambling, while a study in south India found 19.5% of college students gamble, with 7.4% showing signs of addiction. Weak enforcement has made India a hotspot for offshore betting, costing the economy billions. These platforms attract users with 'No GST' claims and higher payouts, exploiting the 28% tax on domestic gaming firms while evading regulations like KYC and responsible gaming. Technology lawyer Dhruv Garg says the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology amended intermediary rules in 2023 to regulate skill gaming, but poor enforcement has blurred the lines between legal and illegal platforms. "Without clear regulations, users can't tell the difference between legitimate skill-gaming apps and offshore betting sites," he says. A major enabler of illegal betting is its offshore setup. "These operators run from jurisdictions like Curaçao, Malta, Cyprus, China and Dubai, making them nearly impossible to track — just like cybercriminals," Garg explains. The October 2023 GST mandate requiring offshore betting platforms to register with Indian tax authorities has been ignored. By December 2024, none had complied, prompting probe into 658 non-complaint entities for tax evasion.

The urgent need to tackle heat stress effects — not just heat — this summer



A sweltering April is almost here, and temperatures across India are steadily rising this summer, a year after the hottest recorded year on Earth so far, that also saw heatwaves arrive early and for longer durations. Heat can have a number of effects on the human body. Experts are now calling for close monitoring of the heat stress index in order to frame policies to safeguard public health. Heat stress happens when the body cannot get rid of excess heat, causing its core temperature to rise, and the heart rate to increase. High temperatures combined with moisture can make it feel even hotter, as increased humidity makes it harder for the body to cool itself through sweating.

A study published in *Natural Hazards* by T.V. Lakshmi Kumar, who is now with Jawaharlal Nehru University, found that coastal cities in India are more vulnerable to heat stress due to climate change. Cities like Chennai, Nellore, Puducherry, and Kochi are expected to see a drop in work performance in the coming decades. People working in these cities may need longer breaks during work hours to prevent heat-related issues.

Experts note that while the India Meteorological Department defines heatwaves based on temperature, there isn't enough focus on heat stress, which involves both temperature and humidity. For instance, the wet-bulb temperature, one of the measures that combines both the air temperature and humidity, provides an indication of heat stress on the human body. While we usually cool down by sweating, when the wet-bulb temperature reaches a certain point, this method no longer works effectively. As a result, our body temperature continues to increase. This marks the threshold beyond which humans cannot adapt to extreme heat. If we can't escape these conditions, our core temperature can rise to dangerous levels, potentially leading to organ failure. Vidhya Venugopal from Sri Ramachandra In-

stitute of Higher Education and Research, who studied occupational health risks for outdoor workers, explains that heat stress occurs when the body fails to control its internal temperature. She led a study on salt pan workers from 2017 to 2020, where many workers reported symptoms like heat strain, dehydration, and urinary tract infections, likely caused by excessive sweating, limited water, and no access to toilets during long shifts. The wet-bulb globe temperature often exceeded safe levels in salt pans during summer. Another study on cashew nut workers also revealed that heat stress takes a heavy toll on them. "It is generally thought that heat stress affects only outdoor workers. That is not the case," she said.

A recent study by Sustainable Future Collaborative (SFC) included cities like Surat, Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru. The findings highlighted the need for long-term actions focused on the health system to address the growing risk of heatwaves. Improving health system preparedness is vital, but experts argue that more actions are needed to prevent the effects of heatwaves before they become overwhelming. Tamanna Dalal, an author of the SFC study, pointed out that important actions, such as providing cooling systems for homes and workplaces, developing insurance for lost work, and improving fire management and electricity grids during heatwaves, are not being fully implemented. Additionally, some cities are lacking critical measures like local weather stations and mapping urban heat islands. The short-term rapid response guidelines currently being implemented in various States are inadequate and fail to address the full scope of the challenges posed by extreme heat events, the SFC study noted. These guidelines need to be more comprehensive and better tailored to effectively manage and mitigate the impact of heatwaves and related risks, said Ms. Dalal.

Prof. Venugopal said that heat stress has to be tackled in a serious manner going forward. "While measures have been taken in Ahmedabad, and Tamil Nadu to a certain extent, things are still moving slowly. This is an area where moving slowly can be detrimental," she added. Ms. Dalal also noted that heat action plans in many cities are not effective because they lack legal backing. Many departments do not even have a copy of the plans. There is a need for localised solutions for vulnerable groups, and heat action plans should be better enforced and supported, she said. "We should not think about heat on April 1, as we usually tend to do," said Prof. Venugopal, and urged governments to plan ahead to ensure prevention of heat-related health complications among the public.

Life's essential eight: a blueprint for optimal health

Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) have reached epidemic proportions, accounting for nearly 30% of all deaths worldwide. The majority of the alarming 21 million annual fatalities occur in developing and developed countries. Urbanisation, lifestyle changes and genetic predisposition have compounded the crisis, with Indians, in particular, being affected at a younger age—often five to 10 years earlier than other populations. This not only disrupts families but also impacts national productivity. To combat this growing health challenge, experts have outlined Life's Essential 8, a comprehensive framework designed to promote cardiovascular health.

What is 'Life's Essential 8'?

Endorsed by leading scientific bodies like the American Heart Association, Life's Essential 8 encompasses key lifestyle habits and health factors that contribute to cardiovascular wellness. These are: a healthy diet, physical activity, no smoking or nicotine exposure, quality sleep, mental and emotional well-being, a healthy body weight, optimal blood glucose levels and balanced cholesterol and blood pressure.

Diet: what should you eat?

A heart-healthy diet consists of: whole grains, legumes, fresh fruits, nuts, and at least 3-4 servings of vegetables per day. Avoiding processed foods, sugary beverages, excess salt, and red/processed meats is vital. Following structured diet plans like the Mediterranean or DASH diets may be considered. Before making any drastic changes however, consult a healthcare professional.

Exercise: how much is enough?

Sedentary lifestyles contribute to nearly 20% of all CVD deaths, often termed the Sitting Disease. To counteract this: engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of intense exercise per week. Activities like brisk walking, cycling, jogging and swimming are highly beneficial. Meditation and yoga can supplement physical activity for overall well-being.

Smoking: cutting down is not enough Nicotine in any form—tobacco, vaping, or second-hand smoke—is the leading preventable cause of CVD. To quit effectively, follow the Five As: Ask about smoking habits, Advise quitting with clear, personalised messages, Assess willingness to quit, Assist in quitting, Arrange follow-ups and support. Seek medical help if quitting is challenging. Sleep hygiene: why it matters Poor sleep quality and duration increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Maintain good sleep hygiene by: setting a regular sleep schedule, avoiding long daytime naps, creating a comfortable sleep environment, reducing screen time at least one hour before bed and avoiding caffeine and heavy meals late at night. Regular health checks

CVD risk factors like hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol often remain silent until they cause major complications. Even if you feel healthy, regular screenings are essential. Blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol levels and BMI (body mass index) should be monitored periodically. Early detection is the key to prevention and timely intervention.

Cooking oils: does quality matter?

While certain oils like coconut, vanaspathi and palm oil should be minimised due to high cholesterol content, it is not just about the type of oil you use in cooking—it is about how much and how you use it. Healthier options include soybean, sunflower and other kinds of oils (when used in moderation). Avoid deep-frying and excessive oil consumption. Supplements and medications Routine vitamin and antioxidant supplements are not recommended for heart disease prevention. Aspirin should only be taken under medical supervision in individuals with diagnosed CVD or high-risk factors. Always consult a doctor before starting any supplements or medications. Know your numbers Regular health checks should include: Blood sugar levels (FBS/PPBS), blood pressure (BP), LDL & HDL cholesterol, triglycerides as well as waist circumference and BMI. The biggest risk is not knowing your health status. Early awareness allows for better control and prevention of life-threatening conditions. Adopting Life's Essential 8 can dra-



matically reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease and improve overall well-being. Small lifestyle changes, when implemented consistently, can lead to significant health benefits. Prevention is always better than cure—start today for a healthier tomorrow!

Karimnagar girl selected for Japan-Asia youth exchange programme in science



KARIMNAGAR: A child scientist and a young innovator from Karimnagar, Shubhashree Sahu has been selected to participate in the Japan-Asia Youth Exchange Programme in Science (also known as the Sakura Science Exchange Programme).

A week-long international programme is scheduled to be held in Japan from June 15 to 21, this year. Youth from 14 Asian countries are invited to participate in this prestigious programme initiated by the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) in collaboration with the Department of School Education and Literacy, Government of India, which perfectly aligns with the experiential learning aspect of the NEP 2020. A 11th NLEPC Inspire Manak Awardee, Shubhashree Sahu, has designed an innovative agricultural machine for the sake of the farmers during her schooling at Paramita Heritage School. She won multiple honours and awards for her scientific innovation.

The main purpose of the youth exchange programme is to facilitate short-term visits to Japan for young people from Asian countries and allow them to experience Japan's advanced science and technology while immersing them in Japanese culture.

Current account deficit widens to \$11.5 billion in October-December quarter: RBI



India's current account deficit (CAD) widened to \$11.5 billion, or 1.1 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), in October-December 2024 quarter led by an increase in merchandise trade deficit, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data showed. In the October-December 2023 quarter, the current account deficit stood at \$10.4 billion, or 1.1 per cent of GDP.

During the April-December 2024 period, the current account deficit widened to \$37 billion, or 1.3 per cent of GDP, from \$30.6 billion (1.1 per cent of GDP) in the same period of 2023. The current account deficit is the difference between exports and imports of goods and services. It is a key indi-

cator of the country's external sector. In Q3 FY2025, merchandise trade deficit increased to \$79.2 billion from \$71.6 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal. Net services receipts increased to \$51.2 billion in the third quarter of the current fiscal, compared to \$45 billion a year ago. Services exports have risen on a year-on-year basis across major categories such as business services, computer services, transportation services and travel services.

During the reporting quarter, personal transfer receipts, mainly representing remittances by Indians employed overseas, rose to \$35.1 billion, as against \$30.6 billion in Q3 FY2024. In the financial account, foreign direct investment recorded a net outflow of \$2.8 billion in Q3 FY2025 as against an inflow of \$4 billion in the corresponding period of 2023-24, the RBI data showed. Foreign portfolio investment recorded a net outflow of \$11.4 billion as against an inflow of \$12 billion in Q3 FY2024. Net inflows under external commercial borrowings (ECBs) to India amounted to \$4.3 billion in the reporting quarter, as against an outflow of \$2.7 billion in the corresponding period a year ago. Non-resident deposits (NRI deposits) recorded a net inflow of \$3.1 billion, lower than \$3.9 billion a year ago. On a balance of payments (BoP) basis, there was a depletion of \$37.7 billion to the foreign exchange reserves in Q3 FY 2024-25, as against an accretion of \$6 billion in Q3 2023-24.

With round 2 deadline nearing, PM Internship Scheme candidates attend open house to clear queries

Technical, policy, and process-related queries for the PM Internship Scheme were addressed by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs as 700 attendees participated in the third 'Candidate Open House for the PM Internship Scheme' it organised on Thursday, with the deadline for applying in the second round of the scheme nearing on March 31.

Officials guided candidates on how to utilise the portal's features to select opportunities that align with their educational background, while also exploring new areas and diverse locations. The weekly open house session, the third in the series, was attended by 684 participants, including officials from the ministry, three panelists who are currently interning under the scheme, and Don Lewis, who leads skill development and education at Mahindra & Mahindra's farm division.

The second round of the scheme, currently in its pilot stage, began in January, with around 1.18 lakh internship opportunities up for grabs, spread across 735 districts. "More than 1,765 questions submitted through an online link were addressed live by members of the PMIS team. The queries mainly revolved around selection criteria, eligibility requirements, and sector-specific opportunities within the scheme. Questions raised through the chat box were also answered promptly during the session," a press release by the ministry on Friday said. The weekly session, held to "serve as a vital touchpoint for aspirants navigating the application process", also included three current interns under the scheme. "Their stories highlighted the power of opportunity, proving that language, location, and background are no barriers to pursuing one's dreams," the release said. For instance, Ankit Kumar, who only spoke Haryanvi, took up an internship as a painter with Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd in Maharashtra's Nashik.

"He openly discussed the challenges he faced initially, particularly as he only spoke Haryanvi, but appreciated the support he received from his mentors and supervisors, who made him feel welcome. (He) also highlighted the valuable experiences he gained during the internship, from hands-on learning on the shop floor and in-depth familiarisation with cars he had previously only heard about," according to the release. Another intern, Shweta Joshi, who relocated from Madhya Pradesh is currently interning with Tech Mahindra as an associate software intern, the release said, adding that she is learning new tools including SQL, AWS CloudWatch, and analytics.

The prospective candidates also raised other queries like a request to relax the age limit from 24 to 25 years, enquired about employment prospects after the internship, and highlighted few openings in the information technology sector. The Indian Express reported on Thursday. Lewis, who was the industry expert on the panel, highlighted how an internship in a top company can significantly enhance the employment prospects of a candidate. "He also advised the candidates to be proactive during the selection process and encouraged them to keep visiting the portal for regular updates," the release said.

RBI allows hike in ATM cash withdrawal charges by banks



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to raise the ATM transaction fee from Rs 21 to Rs 23 with effect from May 1, 2025. Moreover, the RBI has said the ATM interchange fee — the charge a bank pays to another bank for offering ATM services — will be as decided by the ATM network. Customers are eligible for five free transactions (inclusive of financial and non-financial transactions) every month from their own bank ATMs, the RBI said. "They are also eligible for free transactions (inclusive of financial and non-financial transactions) from other bank ATMs viz. three transactions in metro centres and five transactions in non-metro centres," the RBI said in a notification. "Beyond the free transactions, a customer may be charged a maximum fee of Rs 23 per transaction. This shall be effective from May 01, 2025," it said.

Interestingly, the RBI said the ATM interchange fee will be as decided by the ATM network. In 2021, the RBI allowed increase in interchange fee per transaction from Rs 15 to Rs 17 for financial transactions and from Rs 5 to Rs 6 for non-financial transactions in all centres. This was effective from August 1, 2021. India's ATM network, a vital part of the banking infrastructure, is primarily managed by the National Financial Switch (NFS), a leading multilateral



During the session, an attendee asked whether the current cap of three applications per candidate is permanent or subject to change. In response, an official associated with the implementation of the scheme said, "For this round of the pilot phase of the scheme, you can apply for 3 internship opportunities. For subsequent rounds, the appropriate information will be conveyed to you in due course." Attendees from remote regions also participated in the session, and requested to create more awareness on the scheme. "The people of Gurez and Tangdar (Jammu & Kashmir) are completely unaware of the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme. Despite its potential benefits, there is little to no awareness about this opportunity in these regions," an attendee said. The PM Internship Scheme was announced as part of the Prime Minister's Package for Employment and Skilling announced in the Budget for 2024-25. Under the scheme, an amount of Rs 4,500 will be provided per month by the Government of India to selected candidates through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), with an additional Rs 500 offset to be provided by the company's CSR (corporate social responsibility) funds.

The government also provides a one-time grant of Rs 6,000 per annum for incidentals to cover miscellaneous expenses incurred by selected candidates during their internship. In the first round of the scheme that started in October last year, over 1.27 lakh internship opportunities were provided by companies in 745 districts across the country, as per official data shared with the Parliament's Standing Committee on Finance. Around 6.21 lakh applications were received from more than 1.8 lakh candidates. Over 82,000 internship offers were made to around 60,000 candidates. Out of this, over 28,000 candidates accepted offers to join the internship but only around 8,700 candidates ended up joining. The top five companies that have offered internship opportunities under the first pilot round of the scheme are: Jubilant Foodworks Limited (14,263 internship opportunities), Maruti Suzuki India Limited (12,444), ONGC Limited (6,020), Reliance Industries Limited (5,000), and Eicher Motors Limited (4,260). As per the region-wise breakup of the 8,725 interns in the first round, Uttar Pradesh led with 1,234 interns, followed by 994 interns in Assam, 715 in Bihar, 693 in Madhya Pradesh and 467 in Odisha.

ATM network operated by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). According to the RBI, it was observed that the last change in interchange fee structure for ATM transactions was in August 2012, while the charges payable by customers were last revised in August 2014. A substantial time has thus elapsed since these fees were last changed. The hike was announced "given the increasing cost of ATM deployment and expenses towards ATM maintenance incurred by banks / white label ATM operators, as also considering the need to balance expectations of stakeholder entities and customer convenience".

State Bank of India (SBI) is raking in substantial revenue from ATM cash withdrawals, while other public sector banks are struggling to stay afloat in this area. SBI's extensive network of around 65,000 ATMs across the country has enabled it to earn a profit of Rs 331 crore from ATM cash withdrawals in the fiscal year ended March 2024, the government said in the parliament.

However, other PSU banks collectively incurred a loss of Rs 925 crore during the same period. Bank of Baroda made a loss of Rs 212 crore and Union Bank's loss was Rs 203 crore. Over the last five years, SBI made a staggering profit of Rs 2,043 crore from ATM cash withdrawals, while nine PSU banks have suffered a collective loss of Rs 3,738 crore. The only other two PSU banks that managed to make a profit from ATM cash withdrawals in last five years are Punjab National Bank (PNB) and Canara Bank, with profits of Rs 90.33 crore and Rs 31.42 crore, respectively. SBI's success in generating revenue from ATM transactions can be attributed to its large network and structured fee policies. However, other PSBs are struggling to balance operational costs with declining transaction volumes and fee structures. As the banking landscape continues to evolve, PSU banks will need to rework their ATM strategies to sustain operations and improve financial viability.

Understanding bipolar disorder: Here's how a 32-year-old learnt to live with it



Jagdish, 32, sitting on the couch opposite me, had an answer to every question. His parents had got him to my OPD, saying he had been aggressive, abusive and occasionally violent over the past two weeks. "That's because I had multiple work projects to finish," he shot back. When they told me that he was reckless in his driving, he justified it, saying, "That's because of my need for speed." His irritation and anger level increased whenever he was challenged about his abnormal behaviour. He defended them with flimsy counter-arguments. Such sparring behaviour is typical of bipolar disorder, a mental health condition characterised by extreme mood swings which interfere with a person's ability to function rationally. Those suffering from this condition often rationalise their emotional response but the reasons behind them aren't linear. What they feel may not make sense or appear logical to you. But to them, it feels like you are not "getting them" and they become angrier.

I traced back Jagdish's symptoms to a couple of months ago and found that he had a manic increase in energy levels, decreased need for sleep (averaging 2-3 hours per night), and a heightened sense of being right, always. He had shown "risky behaviours" like online gambling and reckless driving. He had extreme emotional surges and troughs, classic signs of bipolar disorder, and his parents told me that his performance had declined drastically due to his restlessness and high distractibility. He had been sent home from work quite a few times due to his "intolerance towards colleagues". His family reported that he had been engaging in impulsive decision-making, excessive spend-

ing in online gambling and uncharacteristically increased social interactions. His speech was rapid and circumstantial, and Jagdish expressed unrealistic plans of becoming an "overnight multimillionaire." At times he seemed euphoric, at times fidgety.

What were his triggers?

Jagdish had no significant medical conditions. But like most bipolar patients, he had a genetic history of mental health disorders. His mother had once been treated for depression while his maternal uncle had been treated for an unspecified mood disorder. So he had a family history which flared up in his adult years. Approximately a year before this episode, he had a six-month period of low energy and social withdrawal, which his parents attributed to his "break-up." But that could very well have been the trauma that triggered his flare-up and behavioural change and caused an imbalance in brain neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin.

Which therapy works?

Bipolar Disorder is a lifelong condition but it can be managed with drugs and psychotherapy. We initially put Jagdish on antimanic and mood stabilising drugs. That helped Jagdish realise that he had a problem. Then we started cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) or talk therapy to change his thought patterns and help him with coping strategies in the real world. We also trained Jagdish's family so that they could monitor his medications and sense potential depressive episodes. Jagdish followed a structured lifestyle routine of diet, exercise and sleep. Though he was an occasional drinker, we advised him to go off alcohol which depresses the patient more than elevating them. After three months, Jagdish had fewer mood swings and could even control them. Then we put him on mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques like meditation. After a few weeks, Jagdish himself enrolled in an online support group and regained his normal rhythms. He could sense warning signs. His attendance and productivity at work improved, too. However, periodic relapses are always possible, so patients have to be on therapy and medications for an extended period of time, necessitating regular follow-ups and long-term monitoring. But they could do without stigma that only fuels their anxieties and makes them the guilty party.

400 essential drug prices set to rise from April 1: Here's all you need to know

The prices of nearly 400 essential medicines — needed for treatment of infections, diabetes, heart diseases among others — will increase by 1.74 per cent, beginning April 1. This is a routine change in prices of essential medicines, which is carried out every year to ensure they keep up with the market. The prices of all essential medicines are fixed by the government's National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA).

Why have the prices been increased?

With the prices of all medicines listed in the government National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) strictly controlled by NPPA, the prices are changed every year in accordance with previous year's Wholesale Pricing Index (WPI). "...the annual change in WPI works out as (+) 1.74028% during the calendar year 2024 over the corresponding period in 2023... the manufacturers may increase the maximum retail price of scheduled formulations on the basis of this WPI and no prior approval of the government in this regard shall be required," read the recent office memorandum from the NPPA.

What is NLEM?

The NLEM is curated by the government to include medicines that are most needed for healthcare priorities of a majority of the population. This includes drugs that are best and cost-effective for the treatment of the most common ailments in India. India framed its first NLEM in 1996, which has been revised four times since — in 2003, 2011, 2015, and most recently in 2022. The list is periodically revised keeping in mind the changing profile of diseases in the country, newer therapies becoming available, or drugs becoming obsolete or being banned. The list not only ensures that these medicines remain affordable, it also cre-



ates a procurement framework for governments. The drugs included in the NLEM are marked as P, S, or T depending on whether they should be available at centres providing primary, secondary or tertiary care. It also helps create drug policies on which medicines should be used. Take for example the NLEM 2022, which switched up several antibiotics depending on the resistance pattern, including a strong, broad-spectrum antibiotic Meropenem in the list. Once a drug is brought under NLEM, the NPPA calculates a ceiling price determined by taking the average price to retailers of all generics and branded generics with market share of more than 1 per cent and then adding a small retailer margin to it.

How are the prices of other medicines controlled?

While the prices of the drugs listed in the NLEM are set by the NPPA, the increase in prices of non-scheduled drugs is also overseen by the authority. The prices of the non-scheduled medicines cannot be increased by more than 10% of its price during the previous year.

Lancet study finds plant foods are best for gut health: What are takeaways for Irritable Bowel Syndrome?



A diet rich in whole cereals and unprocessed plant-based foods can help lower inflammation, minimize flare-ups and even reduce the need for surgical intervention in cases of abscess, enlarged colon, fistula and bleeding. A diet rich in whole cereals and unprocessed plant-based foods can help lower inflammation, minimize flare-ups and even reduce the need for surgical intervention in cases of abscess, enlarged colon, fistula and bleeding. (If you are prone to diarrhoea, stomach cramping, bloating and lack of appetite every other day because of inflammation in the gut — what is called Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) — try bottle gourd, ridge gourd, pumpkin and carrots. In other words, shift to a plant-based diet or even khichdi, they being gentler on the gut.

A study published in The Lancet Regional Health, Europe found that eating a healthy plant-based diet may reduce the risk of developing IBD and the need for surgery in those already diagnosed with the condition. It analysed data from more than half a million people enrolled in the UK Biobank (UKB, 2009–2022) and the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC, 1991–2010). According to Dr Sudeep Khanna, senior consultant, gastroenterology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, the study

makes another case for relying on a balanced, healthy, plant-based diet and going back to traditional foods we have been used to. A diet rich in whole cereals and unprocessed plant-based foods can help lower inflammation, minimize flare-ups and even reduce the need for surgical intervention in cases of abscess, enlarged colon, fistula and bleeding. Traditional meals, when prepared with fresh ingredients and mild spices, align well with this approach. Spices like turmeric, cumin and fennel have digestive and anti-inflammatory properties that may help in symptom management. Avoiding refined flour, deep-fried snacks and sugary sweets can improve gut health. However, since IBD symptoms vary from person to person, it is essential to monitor food tolerance.

What should people with IBD eat?

IBD patients should focus on easy-to-digest, nutrient-rich meals. Eggs, dairy, lentils such as moong dal and masoor dal, and light khichdi provide essential nutrition without straining digestion. Vegetables should be well-cooked, with options like bottle gourd, ridge gourd, pumpkin, and carrots being gentler on the gut. Fermented foods such as home-made curd and buttermilk can support gut health.

Cheteshwar Pujara says Chennai Super Kings middle order does not look 'completely ready' after loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru



GNS News Agency, April 1

Former Chennai Super Kings (CSK) player Cheteshwar Pujara said that the Chennai team might lack the firepower in their middle order which might come back to haunt them in a tournament like the Indian Premier League (IPL). This was after CSK had lost by 50 runs to Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) in Chepauk on Friday, their heaviest ever home defeat while chasing. "There is a lot of concern in the batting line-up outside of Rachin Ravindra,

Ruturaj Gaikwad because their middle-order will have to click at some point," Pujara said in an interaction with ESPNcricinfo.

"They will have to start scoring runs quickly. They rely heavily on their middle-order. Yes, their top-order is their strength, but when they don't perform well that's the time the middle-order has to step up, it doesn't look like they're completely ready for it. It looks like they'll need better surfaces to get back into form and when they start playing at home again, they'll be able to perform well," he added. The veteran batter who was with CSK in the 2021 season, said that the die-hard CSK fans would be hurt after such an abject surrender in the match against RCB. "There's a lot to learn for CSK," he said. "I've been part of the franchise. If you're a CSK fan, you'd really be disappointed today. You tend to lose, but the way they lost this game will put a lot of dents in the dressing room," he added. In the match, chasing a target of 197, CSK ended up at 146 for 8 in 20 overs, their first defeat to RCB at Chepauk since 2008. Opener Rachin Ravindra top-scored for CSK with 41 while the next best batter was former captain MS Dhoni who remained not out on 30 off 16 balls.

Cheteshwar Pujara surprised with Stephen Fleming's comments on Chepauk, says CSK always made pitches according to their strengths

GNS News Agency, April 1

CSK RCB Cheteshwar Pujara Team CSK celebrating the wicket of Virat Kohli of Royal Challengers Bengaluru during the IPL match at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai. With Chennai Super Kings (CSK) coach Stephen Fleming saying that there's no 'home advantage' for the Chennai Super Kings while playing in Chepauk after their 50-run loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Friday, veteran batter Cheteshwar Pujara, who spent one year at the franchise in 2021, said he found Fleming's comments surprising. "... at CSK, you can't complain. It's one franchise where they've been preparing pitches according to their strengths.



"If you speak about MI, CSK, KKR - I don't think that's the case [them not getting pitches they ask for]. Any other franchise, I can still understand. Those (three) franchises make sure they get what they want. Their strength has been when they play at home," he added. There have been a lot of controversies recently over teams not getting pitches which would play to their advantage in their home grounds with reports suggesting that Eden Gardens pitch curator Sujjan Mukherjee denying requests from Kolkata Knight Riders captain Ajinkya Rahane for the pitch to support more spin in the clash against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the March 22 opener. Fleming also expressed his unhappiness over the conditions at Chepauk, saying there's no 'home advantage' for the Chennai Super Kings while playing there. "Well, as we've been telling you for a number of years, there was no home advantage at Chepauk," Fleming said. "We've won away from home a couple of times. And we haven't been able to read... we've been really honest with you. We haven't been able to read the wickets here in the last couple of years. So, it's not new. We are trying to come to grips each day with what we get, and we don't know."

'Can't hide when facing India in five Tests': Joe Root on England's upcoming home series

GNS News Agency, April 1

Former England captain Joe Root has batted for consistency to counter India in the upcoming five-Test series, starting in June, affirming that "there's no hiding place" when it comes to facing such an indomitable opponent. After missing out on a World Test Championship final ticket in the 2023-25 cycle with their Border-Gavaskar Trophy defeat earlier this year, India will commence the 2025-27 edition of the WTC in England, the first Test slated to begin in Headingley on June 20. The 34-year-old Root, who is on the cusp of scaling up to the second spot among Test cricket's highest run-getters this year, is gearing up for the gruelling challenge after a fine Champions Trophy series as a batter.



"We are good in our own conditions but with India coming over for a five-match series there's no hiding place. It's a long old slog, you've got to be consistent. You've got to put in those match-winning performances time and time again," Root told Sky Sports. Root has led England to the most victories during his five-year tenure as Test captain, winning 27 of the 64 matches. However, a difficult period in 2021, where the team won just one of 17 matches and suffered an Ashes debacle Down Under, led to his decision to step down from the role. Root, nevertheless, continues to be the batting mainstay of the side, which was yet again fortified by his performance in the recently-held Champions Trophy, where he was the fourth-highest run-getter with 225 runs in three innings. Root could, however, not prevent England's debacle.

"The Champions Trophy was disappointing. We didn't

TT legend Sharath Kamal's career ends with R16 singles defeat to doubles partner Snehit in Chennai

GNS News Agency, April 1

Indian table tennis legend Achanta Sharath Kamal brought the curtain down on his illustrious career in an emotional farewell at the WTT Star Contender in Chennai on Saturday. The 42-year-old bowed out after a 0-3 loss to compatriot Snehit Suravajjula in the Round of 16 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, marking the end of a journey that spanned over two decades. A pioneer of Indian table tennis, Sharath's impact goes far beyond the scoreline. Seven gold medals in the Commonwealth Games and two Asian Games bronze medals later, it's safe to say that Sharath has been a catalyst for Indian table tennis's meteoric rise over the past decade. His farewell match, played in front of his friends and family, was truly an emotional moment and a testament to his career. Though he couldn't script a dream ending, the fact that he lost to another Indian youngster, who ironically partnered him in doubles at this tournament, just goes to show that he's left the sport in good hands.



WTT Contender Chennai: Sharath Kamal's farewell match, played in front of his friends and family, was truly an emotional moment and a testament to his career.

His medals don't do justice to the impact he's had on the sport in India. He's had to struggle to break barriers throughout his career, so he knows exactly what athletes go through. He deserved his role as co-chair of the International Table Tennis Federation's (ITTF) Athletes Commission since he has always looked out for players. I'm sure he has great post-retirement plans," he told The Indian Express earlier this month.

More than his medals, Sharath must be remembered for how his drive and love for the sport constantly drove him to break the toughest of barriers. The younger players are now reaping the huge benefits of those barriers broken by him. TTFI secretary Kamlesh Mehta said that while Sharath may be retiring from the sport, he has and will always support table tennis away from the table. "As a player,

Four coaches fired in three years: Brazil sack Dorival Jr days after Argentina thrashing



GNS News Agency, April 1

Moments after Brazil were humiliated 1-4 by bitter rivals Argentina in Buenos Aires — the Selecao's heaviest defeat in World Cup qualifiers — Vinicius Jr. called for a 'total reset'. On Friday night, the Brazil Football Confederation (CBF) began that process by sacking coach Dorival Junior. The CBF President Ednaldo Rodrigues, who was re-elected to the top post on Monday, said the process to find Dorival's successor is now underway. "The confederation announces that Dorival Junior's cycle is over," Rodrigues was quoted as saying by the Associated Press.

"From now on, we will work in the search for a substitute. Much has been said about (the confederation) contacting A, B or C coach, but I should say that (comment) was never coming from this president or anyone that the president authorized."

In 2023, Rodrigues pushed for Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti to take over the Selecao. The Associated Press, citing local media, reported that Rodrigues will make another approach to Ancelotti. Al-Hilal coach Jorge Jesus, too, is being considered. Either the Italian or the Portuguese coach would become Brazil's first-ever foreign coach if a deal is reached. Brazil are fifth in the South American qualifying competition for the 2026 World Cup. While there is no imminent danger in terms of their qualification — the top six make the cut automatically — the results under Dorival have been disappointing. Under the 62-year-old, Brazil won seven matches, drew another seven, and lost two. However, they won only one of their last four games. The team scored 25 goals and conceded 17. In the Copa America last year, Brazil were eliminated in the quarterfinals by Uruguay on penalties. Dorival's sacking means Brazil have now fired four coaches in three years — Tite (2022), Ramón Menezes (2023), Fernando Diniz (2023-2024) and Dorival (2024-2025).

Delhi Capitals' Vipraj Nigam confident ahead of clash against Sunrisers Hyd

GNS News Agency, April 1

Visakhapatnam: We have a plan and hope to execute it against the formidable Sunrisers Hyderabad, says Vipraj Nigam of Delhi Capitals on the eve of the match against the Hyderabad franchise in the IPL league match here on Saturday. "We are aware that SRH has a very good batting line-up. We have plenty of balance in our team, especially with KL Rahul back in the team," he said.

Reflecting on his first match against Lucknow Super Giants here when he came up with a cameo, Vipraj said there was no such plan when he batted with the star performer Ashutosh Sharma. "We have been training together a lot and played a lot of practice games. We just wanted to keep doing the same in the match without feeling any pressure," he said. "Playing the first match and winning it gives a lot of confidence when you look ahead," Vipraj said. Vipraj said he was grateful to the Delhi captain Axar Patel and the



entire support staff for the kind of support they extended to me," Vipraj said. "Yes, being all-rounder, I hope to keep scoring runs and help the teams cause," he said.

Telangana Rifle Association honors veteran shooters with Lifetime Achievement Award



GNS News Agency, April 1

Hyderabad: Mr. Amit Sanghi, President of the Telangana Rifle Association (TRA) and Vice President of the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), have launched a prestigious recognition programme to honor veteran shooters who have made extraordinary contributions to the

sport. The first-ever Lifetime Achievement Award under this initiative was conferred upon Nawab Shafath Ali Khan of Hyderabad at a grand ceremony hosted at the Army Marksmanship Unit (AMU), Mhow, on Saturday.

Mr. Khan, a stalwart of Indian shooting, began his competitive journey in 1968 and today holds the distinction of being the longest-serving shooter in the country. His legacy stands as a testament to five decades of relentless passion, service, and excellence in marksmanship. This inaugural recognition not only celebrates Mr. Khan's phenomenal journey but also marks the beginning of a historic tradition—one that will ensure the contributions of India's veteran shooters are honored and remembered for generations to come. "We wholeheartedly congratulate Mr. Shafath Ali Khan on this well-deserved honor and extend our deep appreciation to Mr. Amit Sanghi for his unwavering commitment to promoting the sport and preserving its rich heritage," Amit Sanghi said. "Let us stand united in saluting the heroes of Indian shooting and building a culture of respect and remembrance for those who paved the way," he said.

WTT Star Contender Chennai: Sharath Kamal's two-decade long journey comes to end with a loss



GNS News Agency, April 1

Sharath Kamal's two-decade long journey has come to an end at the Nehru Stadium when he lost in the pre-quarterfinals of the WTT Star Contender Chennai at the Nehru Indoor Stadium on Saturday (March 29, 2025). A journey that began in 1999 in the Asian juniors — he lost in the qualifying — in Chennai has ended in the same city. In his farewell tournament, the 42-year-old lost to 24-year-old SFR Snehit bringing an end to what has been an illustrious career.

The last-16 match, as such, didn't reach any great heights as both played cautiously, close to the table playing an attacking brand of TT scarcely. Trailing by two games, Sharath fought back briefly in three games but couldn't assert his authority. His trademark whiplash backhand and forehand drives from the back of the table were absent on the day. Whenever there was an attacking duel between the two, it was his younger rival who, mostly, had the last laugh. Sharath waved his hands to his fans, who had come in quite a large number to see their star play his last match. Billed as the favourite, Sharath said he knew that it would be a tough contest. "Everybody thought I was the favourite, but I knew the fact that it's going to be very tough. I was not in the best physical shape having played two matches. But personally, for me, I would have loved to play a foreigner here. Also, for the fact that, you know, then I can go full guns blazing. Against Snehit there's a lot happening mentally and I am bit of mentor to him," he said.

The 10-time senior National table tennis champion praised Snehit and believed that he's a great talent and insisted that a solid group of younger group of talented paddlers knocking on the doors. "I think Snehit will probably break into the world's top 100 soon (now he's ranked 123).

His international performances in the last few months have been really good. He's been doing extremely well. It's good to have so many of these younger talents push each other. There's Sathyan, Harmeet Desai in seniors and there is Manav Thakkar, Manush Shah, Payas Jain and Ankur Bhattacharjee. There's a good bench strength. And I'm pretty sure I'm leaving it in very safe hands," he said. Sharath said he couldn't have asked anything better than playing in front of the home crowd. "I didn't expect much from the tournament. But I played in the men's doubles semifinals and singles pre-quarterfinals. The fans were fantastic," he said.

Delhi Capitals eye second win as K.L. Rahul returns against wounded Sunrisers

Fresh from their morale-boosting win over LSG and bolstered by the return of India wicketkeeper-batter KL Rahul, Delhi Capitals will look to build on the momentum when they take on formidable Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL in Visakhapatnam After a thunderous start to their campaign, SRH lost to Lucknow Super Giants by five wickets on Thursday (March 27, 2025), as the defeat showed that their explosive batting line-up can be reined in.

Going out of their den, the pressure will be on skipper Pat Cummins to inspire a turnaround. Delhi, on the other hand, will be strengthened by the return of Rahul, who missed the season opener against LSG due to the birth of his first child. A key architect of India's Champions Trophy triumph in Dubai earlier this month, Rahul was picked by Delhi Capitals for Rs 14 crore. Despite his experience, he chose not to lead the side, entrusting the responsibility on Axar Patel.

Once considered an all-format mainstay for India, Rahul was not a part of India's T20 World Cup-winning squad last year and struggled to impress during his IPL stint with LSG, leading to his non-retention. His tense on-field exchange with Sanjiv Goenka, where the team owner looked visibly frustrated, became one of the talking points last season. Rahul will be eager to let his performances do the talking in a fresh start at a new franchise. "I've been out of the T20 team for a while. I know where I stand as a player, and I know what I need to do to get back.

'Ajay Devgn wasn't presentable, Raveena Tandon had 12 flops', recalls Dilwale director: 'Shah Rukh Khan said change the ending'



Ajay Devgn and Raveena Tandon-starrer Dilwale was one of the biggest hits of 1994, however, director Karan Razdan's first choice for the film was Shah Rukh Khan. In a recent interview, Karan recalled that Shah Rukh decided not to do the film because he did not like the ending, and shared that even filmmaker Subhash Ghai wasn't convinced by it. Speaking with Siddharth Kannan, Karan revealed his original casting plan and said, "The role that I gave to Ajay Devgn in the film Dilwale,

was originally wrote for Shah Rukh Khan. I had gone to his house to narrate the story and he had liked the script. He just told me one thing, 'Karan, at the end, the heroine should go with the other guy.' I refused to change my film's end. He refused to do it." Before Ajay landed this role, he was already a part of the film's cast but was doing the other role, that was eventually done by Suniel Shetty. "I went to Ajay's set, and told him to do the other role. He readily accepted it. We then cast Suniel Shetty for the second hero role," he said. After shooting almost 80 percent of the film, Karan decided to show it to filmmaker Subhash Ghai but the filmmaker's reaction left him shocked. "He told me, 'If you want to cry, cry right now, because you are anyway going to cry on the film's release day.' I asked why? He asked me, 'Do you have any grudge against Ajay Devgn? He is not even presentable as a mad person.' He couldn't comment much on Suniel Shetty as he was relatively new in the industry. On the other hand, Raveena Tandon had delivered about 12 flops. People used to tease me, saying, 'Tervi aapki hogi (13th will be yours)'." After much to and fro, Karan decided to stick to his plans and the film turned out to be a hit. "First day first show, the film was a super hit. Subhash Ghai called to congratulate me," he said and recalled that when Shah Rukh met with him, he admitted that his suggestion wasn't great and Karan did the right thing by sticking to his plans.

'You're a 10th fail, I'm a graduate':

What Poonam Dhillon told 'irritable' Rishi Kapoor when he'd pretend to be well-read

Rishi Kapoor made up words during Scrabble and Poonam Dhillon was quick to call him out. Rishi Kapoor made up words during Scrabble and Poonam Dhillon was quick to call him out. Late actor Rishi Kapoor often spoke about what a misfit he was in the film industry, playing romantic heroes at a time when action was the preferred genre. However, Rishi made a place for himself and continued to play romantic lead roles until the 1990s, and switched to playing supporting roles when he became older. During his innings as a lead hero, Rishi worked with many female actors, and in a recent interview, his co-actor Poonam Dhillon, who worked with him in films like Yeh Vaada Raha, Biwi O Biwi, Zamana, remembered him as an "effortless" actor who would sometimes be very "irritable" on set.



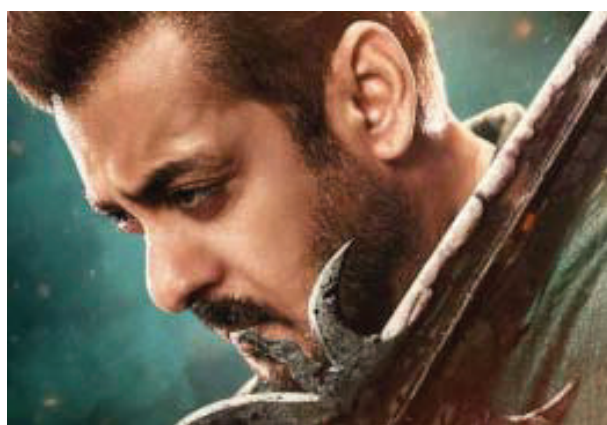
Talking to Hindi Rush, Poonam said that Rishi was an "understated, natural actor." Poonam said that she would sometimes complain about Rishi to his wife Neetu Kapoor, who also worked as an actor before getting married in 1980. "I used to complain to Neetu because he would get so irritated, scold us. Because we were kids in front of them," she said. Poonam was 10 years younger than Rishi, although they played romantic couples in their films. She recalled that Rishi would show off his language skills as he often assumed that people around him were not well versed with English.

"He was this very English type... He would pride himself on his English. He would read TIME magazine. So, he would often think that I am the only well-read person on this set. At first, we were scared of him. Later, when I got a little comfortable with him, and I gained some confidence. Then I would tell him 'Listen, you are 10th fail, I am a graduate.' He had not even finished his 10th standard. So I would tell him, 'Don't show off your English,'" she recalled with a smile.

Poonam said that they would often play Scrabble on set and many of his female co-actors would be impressed

by his vocabulary, but she was the only one who'd notice that he was making up words. "We used to play Scrabble on set and he would show off his English, that I know more than you and maybe. Some heroines, who didn't know, were impressed with him. I used to argue with him that 'there's no such word'," she said. Poonam recalled him as someone who was "irritable sometimes, but in a good way, not in a nasty way" and added that his wife Neetu described him as "sadu (bitter)". While recalling her memories of him, Poonam shared that while he was writing his memoir 'Khullam Khulla: Rishi Kapoor Uncensored', he called her to thank her for her contribution in his career. "He said 'I just wanted to thank you'. I asked 'for what?' He said 'I am actually writing my book and I am recalling all the heroines I have worked with, they all contributed to my life, to my career, to everything so I just wanted to thank you for being part of my journey'. This was so sweet. I was so touched about it."

Salman Khan-Rashmika Mandanna's film targets Rs 23 crore debut



Sikandar Box Office Collection Prediction Day 1: Salman Khan is all set to return to the big screen for the first time since his 2023 film Tiger 3. Like that film, his latest offering, Sikandar, will be released across India on a Sunday. While this strategy didn't quite work out for Tiger 3, which ultimately under-performed at the box office, Salman is confident about Sikandar. According to industry tracker Sacnilk, the film has sold about 2.2 lakh tickets already, and this is just for the Hindi version. This translates to around Rs 6.46 crore. Including blocked seats, which is otherwise known as self-buying, the film has earned about Rs 13.53 crore. Sikandar has over 8,000 shows in Hindi across India.

Current projections put the film's opening day haul at Rs 28 crore. This is about Rs 18 crore less than the opening day collections of Tiger 3. But, it's better than the opening day collections of his film Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan, which under-performed as well. In fact, Salman hasn't had a clean hit in theatres since 2017's Tiger Zinda Hai. The actor desperately needs a win, especially after having braved years' worth of negative comments about his stardom, and its perceived decline.

Salman is synonymous with the Eid festival, and his fans turn out in droves to catch his movies on the big screen. And although he can guarantee decent openings, it's the quality of the movie itself that will define its future. And in recent years, his fans have been disappointed by his creative output. Salman is also a fixture on television; he hosts the reality show Bigg Boss. Many have attributed his de-

clining box office returns to some form of over-exposure on television. Unlike Salman, his co-star Rashmika Mandanna has been on a dream box office run. Her last three films were Animal, Pushpa 2: The Rule, and Chhaava. Combined, the three movies have made over Rs 3,400 crore worldwide. Sikandar, directed by Ghajini's AR Murugadoss, also features Kajal Aggarwal, Sathya Raj, Sharmen Joshi, and Prateik Babbar. Salman is putting together follow-ups to his hit films Kick, and Bajrangi Bhaijaan. He is also expected to reprise his role as Tiger in future installments of the spy franchise.

Pierce Brosnan: I've always had my eyes on Dumbledore

Los Angeles: Hollywood star Pierce Brosnan says he has "always had (his) eyes" on playing the Hogwarts headmaster Dumbledore in a 'Harry Potter' remake and would "probably" say yes if he was asked to be involved in the upcoming series. The 72-year-old actor has been backed by fans to play the wise and powerful character in the upcoming TV adaptation of J.K. Rowling's beloved wizarding saga. He told the Daily Telegraph newspaper: "I've always had my eyes on Dumbledore as my hair has gotten greyer and the maturity of life is now upon my visage and shoulders. It's a joke with my family, the Dumbledore thing - that I'll go into my Dumbledore years. I don't want to go there ... particularly right now, but if I was asked (to play the part) I probably would say yes." The star recently wrapped up work on five movies and said he was determined to make the most of opportunities that came his way in the wake of the 2023 Hollywood strikes, reports femalefirst.co.uk. He said: "A year and a half ago, there was nothing on the horizon. I was saying to my wife, 'I'm not sure where we're going here.' There was such a thump of anxiety within the business." "Sometimes you have choices as an actor, sometimes you don't, but you have a wife, children, a nice house, a piece of property, so money is still going out the door. Luckily, I have good agents, and they put me out there." Brosnan, who played James Bond in four films between 1995 and 2002, won't be taking on the role of spymaster M in the next film in the franchise, despite speculation linking him to the role.

Inside Ram Charan's epic birthday celebrations with Upasana Konidela, Chiranjeevi, Nagarjuna.



Two days after Ram Charan's 40th birthday, his wife Upasana Kamineni shared a series of pictures from his birthday celebrations. Upasana shared photos from three different parties, posing with his friends and family. Present at the parties were Ram's father Chiranjeevi, and actor Nagarjuna, among others. Taking to her Instagram handle, Upasana captioned her post: "March 27th - Forever grateful. Thank u all for making it so special."

In one of the pictures, Ram Charan posed with his parents: Chiranjeevi and Surekha Konidela. In the picture, the actor wore a navy blue shirt, while his wife complimented him in a soft pink dress. The family smiled for the camera. In the background, the text read: "Happy Birthday RC." In another picture, Ram Charan could be seen wearing a casual white shirt paired with blue denim pants. He accessorised his look with a cap. The picture also included

Upasana, who wore a white casual dress for the party.

Another photo included Nagarjuna. They were all seen having fun while trying to fit in the frame with a wide smile on their faces. At his third party, Ram Charan wore a striped shirt paired with black pants. Ram and his wife posed with a bunch of their friends. The photo showed him having a candid conversation with his friends. Ram Charan was recently seen in the film Game Changer, alongside Bollywood star Kiara Advani. The film underperformed at the box office. The RRR actor is currently shooting for Buchi Babu Sana's film Peddi, alongside film after Devara. The first look poster of the film was released on the actor's birthday on March 27. The film will also star Shiva Rajkumar, Jagapathi Babu, and Divyendu Sharma, among others. The film is being bankrolled by the makers of Pushpa, Mythri Movie Makers.

Samay Raina, Tanmay Bhat appreciated my comedy, says Rajiv Thakur: 'I won't do uncensored material'



The situation is not conducive right now for stand-up comics in India, after what happened to the likes of Samay Raina and Kunal Kamra. The offended brigade are on an overdrive, and unfortunately, controversies surrounding them are showing no signs of slowing down either. In this atmosphere, it is tough for comics to ply their trade. In an appearance on the Dostcast podcast, actor-comic Rajiv Thakur, known for his stellar work on the various iterations of The Kapil Sharma Show, opened up about how he has adapted to a new 'Gen-Z' audience, and how he has been received by the younger lot like Samay and Tanmay Bhat.

"I am having a lot of fun after adapting to a new format. When I readied my 90s Banda show, it was Samay who gave me a slot to perform," said Rajiv, adding that he realises that they occupy opposite ends of the comedy spectrum. "We came from different worlds, had different styles and thoughts, and the audience were from different ages. Although he was very happy to see me kill the show, I did understand that my audience is different. That's when I made a new set, and pushed myself to cater to the new audience. It's all about reading the room, right?" Rajiv opened up about how he still gets confused about what works and what doesn't, and that's where his TV training comes in handy. "I am confused at times, but comics like Vipul Goyal, Tanmay Bhat and Samay praise me for being fast with churning out scripts for entire sets. In television, you have to constantly do something new every time we are on air. In stand-up comedy, you can repeat, and you have a chance to polish your material. That is not the case in television at all," pointed out Rajiv, who reiterates how it is all about challenging oneself when it comes to comedy. "If I can surprise myself, then I am pretty sure the audience would be in for a surprise too. Plus, I like how you can perform a show for hundreds of times before putting that set online. And once the audience knows the kind of comic you are, they will come to watch your show," said Rajiv. Known for his 'clean' comedy, Rajiv pointed out that he isn't someone who is comfortable doing 'uncensored' material. Explaining why his shows will not have him indulge in that brand of humour, Rajiv said, "I feel that whatever I am doing will resonate with my audience. So, I don't think I would do uncensored comedy. Also, people haven't heard me speak in such a way during my 15-17 years in television, and they might get offended if I try such humour."

Poverty forced Rajiv Thakur to share 50-gram Amul butter with siblings, but he won't settle for anything less than hotel suite and business class seat now

The Kapil Sharma Show has emerged as a cornerstone of Indian television. Comedian Rajiv Thakur, who has been part of the show's various iterations since 2016, shared how his life changed post-success, and how he refuses to compromise on luxuries now. He talked about his relationship with Kapil, and recalled how tight money was when he was growing up in Amritsar. In an appearance on the Dostcast podcast, he said that he'd never travelled abroad until he was well into his professional life. "In the same year I went to America, Australia, Canada and the UK, and it was my first time going to any of these places. Kapil said that I didn't fly abroad for shows all those years, but this time I was travelling four times a month," he said. He recalled his childhood struggles, and said that he doesn't compromise on luxuries at this stage in his career, even if it means turning down money. "I have always been fond of Amul butter, and every Sunday we would get one 50 gm packet, and I used to share that with my brother and sister. Because I have seen those difficult times, and because now I am in a better position, I always have butter." He said that he made ends meet by working in his father's shop, and teaching theatre in colleges. He continued, "If I perform for a friend, I can do the show for free or take a pay cut, but I won't compromise on a business class ticket and suite to



stay in. That experience is more valuable to me than money. I love going to the business lounge; it has its own charm," said the comedian. "We used to see characters in film who were successful, the way they would conduct themselves, the way they would sit and the way they would order something for themselves. I don't want money; I want that feeling." Explaining his relationship with money, he said, "We were taught from the beginning by our parents that money is earned by working hard."