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TOMCOM invites applications for overseas jobs

Hyderabad, April 8 (NSS): Telangana Overseas Manpower Company Limited (TOMCOM), is a registered recruitment agency under the Department of Labour, Employment Training and Factories, Government of Telangana with a specific mandate to facilitate overseas placement to qualified skilled and semiskilled workers from Telangana. There are vacancies for Welder (SSC or ITI pass with minimum 8-10 years' experience), Pipe Fitter (SSC or ITI pass with minimum 8-10 years' experience) in Slovenia. To apply for these jobs candidates must have between 24 and 45 years of age, 8 to 10 years experience certificates, good communication skills in English, skilled in reading & working with isometric plans.

DGP Dr Jitender to address interactive session at FTCCI on innovation in Vigilance & Public Safety

Hyderabad, April 8 (NSS): The Federation of Telangana Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FTCCI) is set to host an interactive session with Dr Jitender, Director General of Police, Telangana State, on Wednesday, at 3.30 pm at FTCCI's Surana Auditorium.

The theme of the session is "Innovation for Better Vigilance and Public Safety." The dialogue aims to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the business community by fostering collaborative approaches toward enhanced vigilance and public security.

Telangana HC upholds death penalty for five in 2013 Dilsuknagar bomb blasts case



GNS News Agency, April 8

Hyderabad: The Telangana High Court on Tuesday upheld the death sentence to five convicts, including the banned Indian Mujahideen's (IM) co-founder Yaseen Bhatkal and a Pakistani national, in the 2013 Hyderabad bomb blasts. A division bench of Justice K. Lakshman and Justice P. Sree Sudhha dismissed the appeals filed by the convicts challenging the order of a special NIA court pronounced in 2016.

Apart from Bhatkal alias Ahmed Siddibappa Zaraqar and Pakistani national Zia ur Rehman alias Waqas, Asadullah Akhtar alias Haddi, Tahseen Akhtar alias Monu, and Aizaz Saeed Shaik alias Ajaz Shaikh were sentenced by the NIA court for offences, including waging war against the nation, criminal conspiracy and murder. The twin blasts in the Dilsuknagar area of Hyderabad on February 21, 2013, killed 18 persons, including one unborn child in a mother's womb, and injured 131 others. All five were convicted for offences, including waging war against the nation, criminal conspiracy and murder. The death sentence was pronounced under sections 302 A and 121 of the Indian Penal Code, section 3B Explosive Substance Act and section 16 of the Unlawful Activities Act. The counsel for one of the convicts, Ajiaz Shaikh, said they would file an appeal in the Supreme Court. He said they would file an appeal after going through the High Court order.

Two of the convicts are lodged in Cherlapally Jail in Hyderabad, while others are lodged in other jails in the country as they are facing trial in other terror cases. Yaseen Bhatkal is brother of Riyaz Bhatkal, the brain behind the blasts and the main accused, who is absconding and suspected to be hiding in Pakistan. The NIA has already issued an Interpol Red Corner notice for him. Bhatkal brothers are from Bhatkal town of Karnataka, while Rehman is from Mustafabad of Pakistan's Punjab province, Asadullah Akhtar from Uttar Pradesh while Tahseen Akhtar and Aizaz Saeed are residents of Bihar and Maharashtra respectively.

BRS silver jubilee fete: Party to hold constituency-level meetings in GHMC limits from April 9



Hyderabad: BRS MLAs, MLCs, other elected representatives, and party functionaries from the GHMC limits, who had a preparatory meeting on Tuesday ahead of the party's silver jubilee celebrations, called for effective involvement of the party's rank and file for large-scale mobilisation for the grand public meeting scheduled at Warangal on April 27. Preparations for this event will begin with constituency-level meetings on Wednesday. Addressing the meeting, former Minister and Sanathnagar MLA Talasani Srinivas Yadav announced that the BRS would celebrate its foundation day in a festive atmosphere. Those who attended the meeting included MLCs Surabhi Vani Devi, Shambhipur Raju, Dasoju Sravan, and MLAs Kaleru Venkatesh, Mutha Gopal, Madhavaram Krishna Rao, along with constituency in-charges and other party leaders.

Telangana posts just 5.1 per cent annual growth in GST collections

Hyderabad: In a clear indication of a sharp economic slowdown in the 2024-25 financial year, Telangana recorded just 5.1 per cent growth, well below the national average of 10 per cent. This comes shortly after it was revealed that the State posted zero per cent growth in GST collections for March 2025 compared to the same month last year. According to official figures, Telangana's total GST collections from April 2024 to March 2025 stood at Rs.62,987 crore. Central GST grew by a modest 6.6 per cent while State GST saw a paltry 3.7 percent increase compared to last fiscal. T

PM Modi lauds Dubai's 'key role' in advancing India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

GNS News Agency, April 8

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday met Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in New Delhi, asserting that Dubai has played a "key role" in advancing the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Prime Minister Modi hosted a working lunch for the visiting dignitary who had arrived in New Delhi earlier in the day at his invitation. "Glad to meet HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Crown Prince of Dubai. Dubai has played a key role in advancing the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. This special visit reaffirms our deep-rooted friendship and paves the way for even stronger collaboration in the future," Prime Minister Modi posted on X after the meeting. This is Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed Al



Maktoum's first official visit to India as the Crown Prince of Dubai and he is accompanied by several ministers, senior government officials and a high-level business delegation. "It was a pleasure meeting the Prime Minister Narendra Modi today in New Delhi. Our conversations reaffirmed the strength of UAE-India ties which is built on trust, shaped by history, and driven by a shared vision to create a future full of opportunity, innovation, and lasting prosperity," he posted on X after meeting PM Modi. The Crown Prince also held meetings with External Affairs Minister (EAM)

S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. "Delighted to welcome Crown Prince of Dubai and DPM & Minister of Defence of UAE HH Hamdan Mohammed at the start of his first official visit to India. Value his positive sentiments for our wide-ranging cooperation and vibrant ties," said EAM Jaishankar. Defence Minister Rajnath also said that he had a "productive meeting" with the Crown Prince of Dubai. "For India, the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with the UAE is of immense priority. In the coming years, we are eager

to work closely in areas such as defence cooperation, co-production and co-development projects, innovation and technology. Both India and the UAE are committed to work towards peace and prosperity in the region," Singh posted on X.

After Delhi, the Crown Prince will visit Mumbai and will also participate in a business roundtable with prominent business leaders from both sides. The interaction will strengthen India-UAE economic and commercial cooperation across traditional and futuristic areas. "Traditionally, Dubai has played an important role in India's commercial, cultural and people-to-people exchanges with the UAE. Majority of India's around 4.3 million diaspora in UAE reside and work in Dubai. The visit of His Highness the Crown Prince will further solidify the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and strengthen our multifaceted ties with Dubai," read a statement issued by the MEA.

CM Revanth expresses grief over demise of Rajyogini Dadi Ratan Mohini



Hyderabad, April 8 (NSS): Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has conveyed his profound sorrow over the death of Rajyogini Dadi Ratan Mohini Ji, who held the position of Chief Administrative Head at Brahma Kumaris Global Centres. The Chief Minister

remarked that Dadi Ji's life serves as an exemplary model of spiritual strength, purity, and universal brotherhood. In a statement released on Tuesday, Revanth Reddy commended the late Dadi for her efforts in promoting Indian spiritual traditions across over 140 countries and for imparting messages of peace and human values to society.

KTR accuses Revanth govt of allowing Telangana water exploitation



Hyderabad, April 8: BRS party working president K Tarakarama Rao on Tuesday accused the Revanth Reddy government of allowing rampant exploitation of Telangana's rightful water share since coming to power. "Due to the State's negligence, our share of Godavari waters is going to waste," he said. He criticized the appointment of Adityanath Das, who argued against Telangana projects on behalf of Andhra Pradesh as the State's irrigation advisor and questioned if Andhra CM Chandrababu Naidu had influenced Revanth Reddy. "The irrigation advisor is working solely for Andhra's interests. How can we stop their water exploitation in this situation?" KTR asked. He noted that while the BRS utilized 36% of Sagar waters during its tenure, the Congress government has not even managed 24%, leading to crops drying up across lakhs of acres in the Krishna and Godavari basins due to neglected repairs and maintenance. KTR questioned the BJP's commitment to farmers, asking if it has replicated BRS's welfare schemes anywhere in India.

AICC tightens strings on Telangana affairs from Delhi; Revanth Reddy's vain bid to invoke Telugu pride



GNS News Agency, April 8

Hyderabad: The writing on the wall is clear. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has his back against the wall, under attack from all sides and within the party too. The Kancha Gachibowli fiasco has seen Revanth Reddy facing one setback after the other, from the Supreme Court, from the High Court, from the public, from the opposition. Now, with the All India Congress Committee (AICC) too stepping in to take the reins of governance in the State, as seen from how Telangana in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan has been involved in the university issue over the last few days, Revanth Reddy is undoubtedly rattled. The situation has seen him resorting to yet another gimmick, that of invoking Telugu pride and self-respect in an effort to loosen the AICC strings that are tightening on him. Reports in media outlets feeding on leaks from the Revanth Reddy camp smack of desperate attempts to warn the AICC, by calling its actions self-destructive, that it was undermining the duly-elected Chief Minister and also dubbing Natarajan & Co as 'super bosses'. What was discussed in hushed tones in Gandhi Bhavan and in those media outlets is now out in the open after Natarajan showed that she meant business and that the final word was still with the high

command. She not only participated in the Committee of Ministers' meeting with University of Hyderabad Teachers Association and representatives of public organizations at the Secretariat, but also got Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka to issue orders to the police to withdraw cases registered against UoH students and even to withdraw the police from the campus.

This move, apparently seen as a retreat from the smouldering war zone by the government, has left not just Revanth Reddy, but the State leadership also jittery. Ministers are quietly saying that Natarajan should not have participated in the meeting or gone to the Secretariat, or in other words, that she should not have "meddled with administrative issues". However, insiders point out that the AICC had only tightened the strings that it already thrown around Revanth Reddy, citing how the high command had rejected his suggestions for the MLC elections, how actor-turned-politician Vijayashanthi came from literally nowhere and became an MLC, and how the Cabinet expansion has been kept on hold for a year now, despite Revanth Reddy's 40-odd visits to Delhi

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Tariff bloodbath

US President Donald Trump's tariff onslaught and China's retaliation have taken their toll on global stocks, igniting fears of a prolonged, full-blown trade war that could hit economic growth worldwide. Shares nosedived as fear and uncertainty triggered massive sell-offs on Monday. Investors felt the heat in India too as they were left poorer by Rs 20 lakh crore in the morning itself as benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty faced a drubbing. The battle lines are set to harden as China has decided to red-flag US reciprocal tariffs as a "new trade concern" at a WTO meeting on April 9. Beijing has signalled its intent to build a broad coalition to jointly oppose unilateralism and protectionism, and safeguard the international trading system.

The million-dollar questions is: Will Trump negotiate or continue with economic bullying? The US President is not one to back off once he has set forth on a course, no matter how perilous or reckless. The onus will be on other nations to fall in line - how long they can hold out will depend on their ability to hit back. Looking at the larger picture of India-US trade ties, Delhi has chosen negotiations over confrontation. However, investors' growing panic has added to the pressure on India to work out a reasonable deal sooner rather than later.

There is a possibility that Trump may not be able to sustain his blitzkrieg if China and other nations up the ante. Ironically, the US President is creating a situation detrimental to his own country. According to an analysis by The Budget Lab at Yale University, retaliatory tariffs could cost the average American household up to \$4,200 annually. The spectre of recession and higher inflation is looming large in the US. Countries like India are hoping that international as well as domestic pressure will make Trump realise his monumental folly and stop him from triggering greater economic chaos.

"Is the looming water scarcity in Manthani Municipal area resolvable, or will there be a battle for water with tanks?"

Potaraveni Kranti Kumar, BJP District Spokesperson "P.S.ASHOKAN "INDIAN-CHRONICLE "MANTHANI "9-4-2025." "For the past ten days, the residents of Manthani Municipal area have been enduring significant hardships due to a lack of drinking water. Of particular concern is the situation in the 6th Ward, Boyin Peta, where the Mission Bhagiratha project appears to be either non-existent or ineffective. "As the heat intensifies with the arrival of April, if the water crisis persists in this manner, one can only imagine the severity of the situation in the upcoming months of May and June. Given the irregularity of the current water supply, the Mission Bhagiratha initiative has become increasingly inaccessible, leaving the people of Manthani anxious and distressed. "We urge the municipal authorities to recognize the dire situation faced by the residents of Manthani and take immediate, proactive measures to ensure that drinking water is supplied to every household. Failure to address this issue will leave no option but to store water tanks within the municipal office premise. "Yours sincerely, "Potaraveni Kranti Kumar" "BJP District Spokesperson - Peddapalli



KTR slams Centre over petrol price hike, US tariffs

KTR strongly criticized the Central government for its recent petrol price hike, labelling it "unusual" at a time when global crude oil prices are falling. "While petrol prices are decreasing worldwide, only the Modi government is raising gas and petrol rates here," he said. He warned that the fuel price hike would lead to a steep rise in essential commodity prices and transport costs, severely affecting common people. "Is this the 'Acche Din' promised by the BJP?" he asked, accusing the government of reducing rates only before elections for publicity. KTR pointed out the Centre's strategy of increasing prices through cess rather than taxes to centralize funds.

"A Rs 2 cess hike on petrol, a gas cylinder price increase, and a stock market crash—all in one day—mark a Modi hat-trick," he remarked. He also slammed the Centre for its silence on new US tariffs introduced by President Trump, which he said would cause significant losses to Telangana."

Kishan Reddy welcomes HC's verdict in twin blasts case

Hyderabad, April 8 (NSS): Union Minister Kishan Reddy today welcomed the verdict of Telangana High Court in Dilsukhnagar twin bomb blasts case. "We welcome the Telangana High Court's verdict on the Dilsukhnagar twin bomb blasts. The Telangana High Court's verdict that death is the appropriate punishment for the terrorists, who committed genocide has once again made it clear that there is no place for violence and terrorism in a democracy.

"We believe that justice has been done to the families of the victims, who have been haunting them like a nightmare for 12 years. We will stand by the families of the victims," he said, adding that on behalf of the BJP party, they were expressing their joy at the High Court's upholding of the death sentence awarded by the NIA court. He also said the Modi government was working with a zero tolerance policy to eradicate terrorism and added that there was no place for such incidents in the last 11 years of BJP rule.

Take Measures to prevent water shortage: Commissioner N. Maurya.



April 8, Indian Chronicle, Rayalaseema coordinator "Municipal Commissioner N. Maurya has ordered the officials to take all measures to prevent drinking water problems in the city during the summer season. The Commissioner inspected the sanitation work in Dasari Math, Palani Theater Sandu and other areas in Ward 17 under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation on Tuesday morning along with Health and Engineering officials. Speaking on the occasion, the Commissioner said that people are demanding that boreholes be repaired in many places. He said that there is a possibility of contracting dis-



eases by drinking water from unused boreholes. He said that those being used should be repaired. He also said that the officials should ensure that safe water is provided to the people. He said that there should be no shortage of drinking water during the summer season. He ordered the officials to take up sanitation work better. He said that a garbage truck should go to every street and house and collect wet and dry garbage separately. The Commissioner was accompanied by Municipal Engineer Tulasi Kumar, Health Officer Dr. Yuva Anvesh, DE Mahesh, ACP Balaji, Revenue Officer Ravi, Fire Officer Srinath Reddy, Surveyor Koteswara Rao, and others.

Shankarabadi Sundaracharyulu is a "great literary figure" : Rayalaseema Rangasthali Chairman Gundala Gopinath Reddy.

April 8, Indian Chronicle, Rayalaseema co-ordinator "On the occasion of the 48th death anniversary of the writer and literary figure Shankarabadi Sundaracharyulu, who wrote the Andhra Pradesh state song "Maa Telugu Talli Mallepoodanda", a floral wreath was laid at his statue at the Lakshmiapuram intersection in Tirupati under the leadership of Rayalaseema Rangasthali Chairman Gundala Gopinath Reddy and a grand tribute was paid. Speaking on the occasion, he said that Shankarabadi Sundaracharyulu was a versatile talent. He said that even though he worked many jobs for a living, he never lost his self-confidence. He recalled that he studied in Madanapalle and lived in Tirupati and wrote many works. He praised that his works have enriched Telugu language and literature. Rangasthali Chairman Gundala Gopinath Reddy, Secretary KN Raja, members Thondamanati Subrahmanyam Reddy, Brahmananda Reddy Rajasekhara Reddy Vijayabhaskara Reddy Jayant



Kumar Mallarapu Ravi Prasad Loka Prabhakar Naidu Panibhushana Reddy Mallarapu Vasu Kannappa Gari Keshavula Reddy and others participated in this program.

Sanjeevaraya Hanuman - Unique to Vontimitta



"April 8, Indian Chronicle, Rayalaseema co-ordinator "Sri Anjaneya Swamy temple located in Vontimitta of Kadapa district is being worshipped by the devotees as



"Sanjeevaraya". "The legend of the Sanjeevaraya temple says that the appearance of "Sri Ramachandra Murty in the Vontimitta temple holding a Kodanda (Bow) along with Sita Devi and Lakshmana Swamy flanked on either side, is believed to have occurred when they were in exile period. "At that time, Sri Hanuman had not yet met Sri Ramachandra. That is why Anjaneya Swamy is not present in the Vontimitta temple which is a unique feature in this ancient temple. "The Puranas also states that Anjaneya Swamy has Himself said that Vontimitta Ramalayam has come down to earth as Bhooloka Vaikuntham, and that He will serve His Master Sri Rama forever and that's why He is standing opposite the Vontimitta temple in a separate shrine and blessing devotees as 'Sanjeevaraya'. "According to the legend, when the Vanara Sena died in the war between Sri Rama and Ravana, while Lakshmana Swamy was fainting, Sri Anjaneya crossed the Himalayas twice and went to Mahendragiri to bring four types of Sanjeevani herbs (the elixir of life). "Anjaneya Swamy is also located on the bank of the pond. Devotees believe that this Anjaneya Swamy protects the devotees from fear of death, from inclement weather and others. "As He brought the celestial herbs located on the divine mount Sanjeevani, He is revered as Sanjeevaraya.

P.R.S.I ,Tirupati Chapter elected new Chairman .

"April 8, Indian Chronicle, Rayalaseema co-ordinator "Dr. G.S. Prasad has been elected as new "Public Relations Society of India (PRSI), Tirupati Chapter Chairman . In recently held PRSI Annual General Meeting unanimously elected a new executive committee for a term of two years. TTD Chief PRO Dr. T. Ravi and Chapter Founding President Ramakanth Sharma will act as the chapter's key advisors. "Dr. Prasad, who was elected as the Chairman of PRSI, served as a Manager in Andhra Bank and as a PRO in the bank's head office before taking VRS. He received his PhD in Public Relations and received his doctorate. Dudhyala Chandramohan, who is serving as the Public Relations Officer in the SWIMS Community Medicine Department, was elected as the Secretary. Similarly, TTD Shwethalo guest lecturer Kapa Madhusudhan was elected as the treasurer, Sri Padmavati Mahila Varsity PRO Sri Rajani as the vice-president, Sanskar Rajesh as the assistant secretary, Sri Padmavati Mahila Degree College retired principal Dr. C. Swarajyalakshmi, renowned writer RCK Raju, personality development expert VV. Subramaniam, and senior journalist Dr. Puttha Erramreddy were elected as the executive members. Meanwhile, PRSI elected Chairman, Secretary and former Chairman K. Srinivasa Rao as the national council members. "The Public Relations Society of India Tirupati Chapter has been working hard to spread public relations in Rayalaseema for the last 35 years. It is organizing training programs to enhance the profes-



sional skills of PROs of many organizations. It is educating engineering, IT, and management students as well as employees of various organizations about the importance of public relations and helping them grow to the top.

Gampa Nageshwar Rao elected Governor of Lions District 320H

Hyderabad, April 8 (NSS): Gampa Nageshwar Rao, advocate, has been elected as the Governor of Lions District 320H of the International Association of Lions Clubs during the annual convention held at Saketh, Secunderabad, on Monday. Rao won with a decisive majority, securing 143 out of 146 positive mandates. Ashok Swain was elected as the Second Vice District Governor, receiving 121 votes. In

International Conference on Traditional Medicine in SVU...



"April 8, Indian Chronicle, Rayalaseema co-ordinator "The Department of Botany, Sri Venkateswara University and the Traditional Medicine Mahasangh will jointly organize a three-day international conference on "Traditional Medicine: An Integrated Approach to Modern and Natural Treatments" from April 9 to 11. Speaking on the occasion, the organizer, Acharya J. Kamakshamma, said that about 400 botanical researchers and traditional medicine experts from different countries and states are participating in this program. She informed that various stalls will also be set up on the occasion.

CEO makes surprise inspection of Shilparamam



"April 8, Indian Chronicle, Rayalaseema co-ordinator "Andhra Pradesh Shilparamam CEO V. Swamy Naidu made a surprise inspection of the Shilparamam located locally at Tiruchanur, Tirupati Rural on Tuesday. On this occasion, several development programs were discussed and appropriate suggestions were made. The village museum should be made more beautiful, a small pond with a Buddha statue should be installed at the entrance and a small water fountain should be installed near the stalls, and electric lighting should be increased. He suggested that steps should be taken to further increase the greenery in the Shilparamam. Later, Shilparamam CEO, Administrative Officer Sudhakar along with District Collector Dr. J Venkateswar politely met and presented the Shilparamam calendar and explained the upcoming development programs in the Shilparamam.

Meta Launches New AI-Powered Ad Tools To Boost Sales For Ecommerce and Retail Businesses

Hyderabad: Meta has announced new tools that can help drive growth and incremental performance gains for e-commerce and retail businesses. As growth for e-commerce as an industry gets fueled in India on the back of Quick Commerce and the rise of online shopping in tier-2 and tier-3 towns, these new ad tools and features could further turbocharge growth for businesses in the sector.

Among the tools being launched is omnichannel ads, which allow advertisers to show ads that highlight nearby locations to people most likely to shop in-store. Meta is expanding access to omnichannel ads to more advertisers, adding the ability to guide people to the nearest store with products in stock, and surfacing discounts that can make it even more enticing for shoppers to visit a store. Initial testing showed that advertisers that used omnichannel ads had a 15% lower media omnichannel CPA and a 12% higher media ROAS when compared to their business as usual campaigns.

Meta recently held Meta Marketing Summit E-Commerce Edition to throw light on the emerging trends in the e-commerce space in India. The summit was attended by leading marketers across Mumbai and Bangalore.

Said Meghna Apparao, Director of Ecommerce and Retail vertical for Meta in India, "E-commerce and retail is witnessing a material shift in India driven by more offline retail brands reaching customers online, quick commerce continuing to grow rapidly, and online shopping in tier-2 and tier-3 markets continuing to accelerate. While AI-powered personalization and discovery, Reels and creators, and messaging have already unlocked immense value for the e-commerce and retail brands, Meta's continued thrust on innovative ad tools for the sector is going to prove pivotal for its growth, enabling brands to create impactful shopping experiences and deliver on business outcomes that matter most to them."

Retail brands with offline store presence that deploy omnichannel strategies are likely to gain most from omnichannel ads. For instance, apparel brand Taneira has leveraged Omnichannel Optimization ads and seen strong business outcomes.

Said Aishwarya Omprakash, Head of Marketing, Taneira, "In our pilot campaign utilizing Meta's omnichannel ads, we observed a significant boost in performance, achieving 3.5x higher purchase conversions and 4.3x higher Return on Ad Spend (ROAS) compared to campaigns optimized solely for purchases. This encouraging outcome reinforces the value of a multi-touchpoint strategy, and we're excited to take this experiment further in the coming year."

a press release issued today, Gampa Nageshwar Rao expressed his gratitude and outlined his vision for the upcoming year. Rao announced the theme for the year: "Be The Best." He encouraged the 1,000-plus attendees to always strive for excellence and give their best in everything they do.

SOCIAL Brings Stadium-Like Match Day Energy with its #Doorsr Stadium Experience



ing that every moment—from the first ball to the final over—is experienced with the energy of a stadium, right in the neighbourhood. SOCIAL has curated an all-new cricket season menu, offering a selection of flavor-packed shared platters perfect for match-day gatherings. Fans can enjoy the smoky and succulent Abra Kebab Ra Platter, the Mediterranean-inspired Achmed's Mezza Platter, the bold and fiery Killer Kebab Platter, the crispy and juicy Wings Platter, and the satisfying Shawarma, Yo Mama Platter. Designed for sharing, these dishes enhance the communal experience of watching a game with friends and fellow cricket enthusiasts. To complement the spirited atmosphere, SOCIAL has introduced limited-time shared pitchers bringing a refreshing lineup of cricket-inspired cocktails, each named after an iconic shot. Helicopter (Classic Mojito) delivers a strong, minty finish, while Cover Drive (Bacardi Gold Mojito) is as smooth and balanced as a perfect stroke. Upper Cut (Bacardi Coconut Mojito) swings straight into tropical bliss, and Switch Hit (Bacardi Pineapple Mojito) surprises with a juicy twist. Fans can also enjoy the zingy and playful Reverse Scoop (Bacardi Passion Fruit Mojito) or the sneaky sweet-and-sour hit of Ramp Shot (Bacardi Guava Mojito), making every sip as exciting as the game itself.

For beer lovers, SOCIAL will offer exclusive Beer Buckets in sets of 4, 8, and 12, ensuring that the drinks keep flowing as the excitement builds with every over—and the more you buy, the more you save, making it the perfect match-day deal for groups. Adding to the excitement, every purchase of a pint of beer gives fans a chance to win their next beer at either Rs 1, Rs 50, or Rs 100—because nothing makes a match more thrilling than a winning sip!

Hyderabad: With India's favourite cricket season returning in full swing, SOCIAL is gearing up to be the ultimate match-day destination bringing back its #Doorsr Stadium vibes from March to May 2025. Designed to bring fans together for an immersive cricket-watching experience, SOCIAL is transforming its outlets across India into lively hubs featuring large-screen match screenings, team-inspired décor, and a curated food and drinks menu crafted for shared enjoyment. In partnership with FanCode, SOCIAL will also offer exciting merchandise giveaways and interactive activities like trivia contests, ensur-

Edelweiss Life CDO: Women in Sandwich Generation must prioritise financial literacy

GNS News Agency, April 8

Hyderabad: Women in Sandwich Generation must take proactive steps to take charge of their financial planning including improving their financial know-how, said Edelweiss Life's Chief Distribution Officer Anup Seth. The company recently released a study which shows 50% women in this generation cite lack of understanding of various financial instruments as a challenge to wealth creation. Sandwich Generation are individuals between ages 35 and 54 years, providing for 2 generations – ageing parents and growing children.

"Women have long acted as the CFOs of their households, managing daily finances. Yet many still relegate long-term financial planning to their fathers or husbands, regardless of education or geography. While participation has improved, we need more women to actively own their financial future—and it starts with education," said Seth.

The study, conducted in collaboration with YouGov, also shows that more than half the women in this generation feel they are behind on meeting their financial aspirations. While family remains their priority, aspirations of women in this generation also give a peak into their individuality; many want to improve their standard of living, fund their child's marriage, travel, start a business, and invest in their higher education.

"Women's aspirations, in general, have evolved in tandem with their proactive participation in the economy. Today, more women hold boardroom and leadership roles, and there is a push to accelerate this momentum. Around 18% of Indian startups are now led by women, and access to formal credit has steadily improved. Government initiatives are also playing a pivotal role in strengthening this



ecosystem. As women's ambition and agency continue to rise, we will witness an even deeper shift in their aspirations—making financial literacy a critical enabler for securing their financial futures," Seth said.

In fact the study highlights how lack of financial literacy is impacting their wealth creation journey. As many as 38% women said they have prematurely liquidated their mutual funds, 32% exited equities/stocks early, 31% surrendered life insurance policies. These tangible financial struggles also have a psychological fallout. 61% women in this generation constantly worry about running out of money despite having a financial safety net, and 64% feel their savings and investments are never enough for the future.

Icon Star Special: The Ultimate Allu Arjun Binge List for His Birthday, on Tata Play Binge!

Hyderabad: The icon who redefined swag in Indian cinema, turned dance floors into fire zones, and gave us one unforgettable performance after another, is ringing in another year — and what better way to celebrate than with a full-on Binge fest? Allu Arjun has set the screens on fire from his early lover-boy roles to full-blown action stardom, our Bunny has constantly reinvented himself and won hearts across the country. This birthday, dive into his cinematic universe with Tata Play Binge — no multiple apps, no juggling subscriptions. Just hit play and experience the fire, flair, and finesse of the Stylish Star himself.

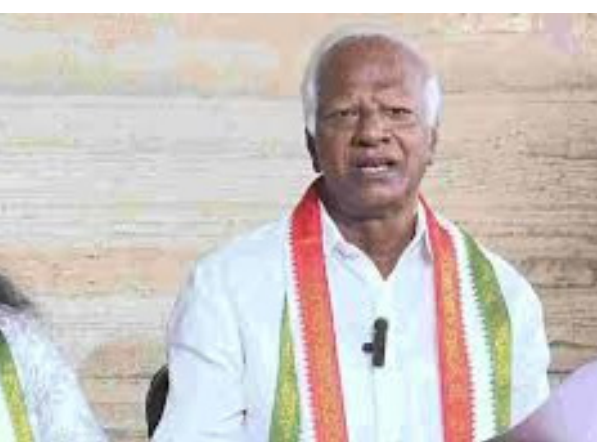
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Kadiyam Srihari refutes claims of land grabbing

Warangal, April 8 : Station Ghanpur MLA Kadiyam

Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leaders alleging that he is illegally occupying the Devunuru hills. "I have not engaged in any misconduct throughout my 30 years in politics. The BRS leaders are disseminating misleading information without proof that I have claimed 2,000 acres," he stated. Kadiyam Srihari, who was elected as an MLA for Station Ghanpur, subsequently aligned himself with the ruling Congress party. "There is a baseless campaign against me suggesting that I plan to transfer lands to benami people. If it can be demonstrated that I have encroached upon property, I will resign from my position as MLA and serve as a servant in the homes of BRS MLA Palla Rajeshwar Reddy and former MLA Rajaiah. If the allegations remain unproven, will they become my servants? I will pursue legal action concerning these unfounded claims," Kadiyam Srihari asserted.



Srihari has refuted claims of land grabbing against him in Warangal district. He rejected assertions from Bharat

Telangana to introduce slot booking system for registrations from April 10 : Ponguleti



Hyderabad, April 8 (NSS): Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy, the Minister for Revenue, Housing, Information and Public Relations, stated that the State government is enhancing the Sub-Registrar offices to deliver improved services to citizens throughout Telangana. The aim is to ensure these services are provided in an efficient, straightforward, quick, transparent, and corruption-free manner. To achieve this goal, the State government is launching a slot booking system that will allow the registration process to be completed in just 10 to 15 minutes, eliminating the need for long waits for document registration. This was announced by Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy in a statement on Tuesday. The Minister mentioned that this slot booking system will be initially rolled out as a pilot program in 22 sub-registrar offices starting April 10, out of the 144 sub-registrar offices located throughout Telangana. The slot booking programme will be launched at a total of 22 places, including Azampura, Chikkadapalli in Hyderabad, Sadashivpet in Sangareddy district, Qutbullapur, Vallabh Nagar in Medchal district, Shamshabad in Rangareddy district, Saroor Nagar, Champapet, Ramagundam in Peddapalli district,

Kusumanchi in Khammam district, Khammam (R.O), Medchal (R.O), Mahabubnagar (R.O), Jagtial, Nirmal, Warangal Fort, Warangal Rural, Kothagudem, Ammur, Bhuvanagiri, Choutuppal, Nagar Kurnool, he said. In an effort to prevent delays from multiple document submissions for registration at the Sub-Registrar's office on the same day, the Minister announced that the office's working hours have been organised into 48 designated time slots. He explained that individuals can reserve a slot for a preferred date and time directly via the website "registration.telangana.gov.in." Visitors are encouraged to arrive at their scheduled time to complete the registration process and depart promptly.

The Minister further mentioned that for those without a prior booking, the office will accommodate five walk-in registrations daily between 5 PM and 6 PM for urgent cases. Walk-in applicants will be served on a first-come, first-served basis. To improve the slot booking experience, particularly in offices with high demand or where more than 48 slots are necessary, the Minister indicated that additional Sub-Registrars will be appointed alongside the existing staff. As part of a trial initiative, the Qutbullapur office in the Medchal Malkajgiri district has appointed two additional Sub-Registrars and an extra staff member, resulting in an increase of 144 available slots in the office, he reported. Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy noted that daily complaints are being received from residents about the potential for their properties being registered multiple times. To address this issue, the State government plans to revise the law to prevent such double registrations. The Minister added that several other states have already modified their laws regarding this matter, and efforts are underway to amend the legislation in Telangana as well. He mentioned that a new section, 22-B, will be added through amendments to Section 22 of the Registration Act.

EECE hosts expert lectures at GITAM

Hyderabad, April 8 (NSS): The Department of Electrical, Electronics and Communications Engineering (EECE) at GITAM School of Technology, Hyderabad, hosted a series of expert lectures today featuring distinguished speakers from the realms of signal processing and international career development. The highlight of the event was an enlightening session by Prof. Karlheinz Brandenburg, a globally renowned audio technology pioneer, CEO of Brandenburg Labs GmbH, and Senior Professor at the Technical University of Ilmenau, Germany. Prof. Brandenburg delivered a captivating talk on "Applications of Signal Processing to Audio and Acoustics," covering the evolution of audio coding, advances in auditory perception, and emerging trends such as Music Information Retrieval (MIR), spatial audio, and headphone-based listening technologies.

Widely celebrated as one of the key inventors of the MP3 format, Prof. Brandenburg shared deep insights into the state-of-the-art technologies like Okeanos Pro and PARY, and discussed the future trajectory of immersive audio experiences. He emphasized recent breakthroughs in room acoustics integration and rendering techniques, which now eliminate the need for personalized HRTF mea-

surements. He also revealed plans for a new headphone product with built-in head-tracking sensors, expected to launch in Q4 2026. Joining the session was Sunanda Rao-Erdem, Founder and CEO of Seraphim Communications LLP, New Delhi, who addressed students on "Professional Opportunities in Germany." Her talk shed light on pathways for young engineers to pursue international careers, particularly within Germany's thriving innovation and technology sectors. An interactive Q&A session concluded the program, during which both speakers engaged with students, answering questions and offering guidance that left the audience inspired and better informed about global technological trends and career avenues. The event was presided over by Prof. Rama Sastri Vedala, Director of the School of Technology, who also felicitated the esteemed guests. The proceedings began with a warm welcome by Prof. T. Madhavi, Head of the EECE Department, and were skillfully moderated by Dr. Chepuri Akhilesh, Head of the Civil Engineering Department. The Department of EECE continues to uphold its commitment to academic excellence by fostering international collaborations and providing students with exposure to cutting-edge developments in technology and professional growth.

NIPHM celebrates success at grand Convocation ceremony

Hyderabad, April 8 (NSS): National Institute of Plant Health Management, Hyderabad on Tuesday hosted its Convocation for the 13th Batch of PGDPHM program marking a memorable milestone for the graduating students. The event was a grand celebration of academic excellence, resilience, and achievement. This course is a unique in developing experts in Plant Health Management. It is an industry-oriented programme where exclusive internship is provided to the students. For the first time, Institute collaborated with CAB International (CABI) for offering exclusive electives in the area of Plant Health Management. The ceremony was graced by Dr Danda Raji Reddy, Vice Chancellor of Sri Konda Laxman Telangana Horticultural University, who delivered keynote address, highlighting the importance of education and lifelong learning. The event also witnessed the presentation of degrees and special awards to outstanding students in recognition of their academic and extracurricular accomplishments. Dr Sagar Hanuman Singh, IPos, Director General of NIPHM, congratulated the graduates, emphasizing the role of education in shaping future leaders. "Today, we celebrate not just the completion of academic programs but the journey



of growth, perseverance, and discovery that each student has undertaken," he said. Total 22 students graduated in the PGDPHM programme. The convocation ceremony was a testament to the hard work, dedication, and resilience of the graduating students and a proud moment for NIPHM as it continues to nurture future leaders.

Aadi Srinivas slams Kavitha for staging dharna for statue of Jyotirao Phule



Hyderabad, April 8 Government Whip Aadi Srinivas has accused BRS MLC Kavitha of staging a dharna in the name of the statue of Jyotirao Phule. During a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan on Tuesday, he asserted that Kavitha has no authority to invoke the name of Jyotirao Phule, as the previous BRS administration did not undertake any significant actions for the BC community. "Kavitha's reference to Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai, who are revered figures, raises questions. Is there a more egregious contradiction than Kavitha discussing such iconic individuals? She is the first female leader in India to be arrested in a liquor scandal. It's regrettable that a leader, who spent nearly six months in Tihar Jail over a liquor case, now talks about Savitribai Phule. Should the citizens of Telangana heed the words of a compromised leader? If Kavitha demands the establishment of a statue for Phule, should the govern-

ment and the Assembly Speaker take her seriously?" he challenged. Why did Kavitha not recall Jyotirao Phule during the decade the BRS party held power? Why didn't she suggest to her father, former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, to erect a statue of Phule?" Aadi Srinivas inquired. He mentioned that the State government is genuinely committed to the welfare of Backward Classes and has honoured Mahatma Jyotirao Phule by naming the Pragathi Bhavan after him.

People will revolt against State Govt: Gangula Kamalakar

GNS News Agency, April 8

Karimnagar: BRS leader and Karimnagar MLA Gangula Kamalakar said the time had come when the people would not hesitate to revolt against the State government. After formation of a separate State, Telangana was developed on all fronts in the ten years of BRS regime. However, the Congress party, which came to power by assuring false promises, failed to fulfill its promises during the last one and a half year. Stating that governance was completely paralyzed in the State, he said there was every possibility of the public revolting against the government, while speaking at the Karimnagar constituency level preparatory meeting for BRS's 'Chalo Warangal' programme on the occasion of the party's silver jubilee celebrations.

BJP Hurting People by Increasing Gas Cylinder Prices



"CPI, NFID Leaders""He also mentioned that 80% of the Hindu population in the country is suffering due to rising prices, and the BJP, which claims to be a party for Hindus, is using the Hindu label only for political gain while betraying the Hindu people. He added that the people are watching and that if the BJP doesn't reduce the prices, the party will be removed in the coming times. He demanded that the government immediately reduce the price of gas cylinders." "National Women's Samakhya (NFID) district president, Haimavati, said that with the increase in prices, the common people are already struggling, and this price hike would financially harm the poor and middle class. She urged the government to immediately reduce the prices, and warned that if this is not done, Women's Samakhya will mobilize women to lead a large-scale struggle against the price hike. "The program was attended by CPI Mandal Committee members Ramulu, Branch Secretary Sahadev

Reddy, People's Theatre Committee President Babu, Women's Samakhya leaders Jayamma, Pramila, Kavya, CPI leaders Imam, Balraju, Prabhakar, Venkatachari, Narasimha, Bikshapathi, Youth leaders Jambu, Venkatesh, and others." [7:34 pm, 8/4/2025] Pedamma: No matter how many difficulties come your way, never stay away from education," said TPCC State General Secretary Sonti Reddy Punnaareddy. "In Division 125 of the Qutbullapur constituency, at the ZPHS school in Gajularamaram, Punnaareddy joined students for a mid-day meal and personally inquired about their issues. He stated that the Congress government, once in power, would give high priority to education. He also mentioned that an integrated school will soon be established in the constituency, as already announced by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. "Senior Congress leaders Lal Mohammad, Maralinga Pawan, Harbhajan Singh, Anwar Sai Kanth, and Sandeep participated in the event.

Special pujas of Prasannanjaneya Swamy under the leadership of Uday Kiran



"Miyapur Division April 8 A grand ceremony was held at the Sri Prasannanjaneya Temple in Miyapur Division, where the Abhishekam and Sindhura Pooja ceremony took place, featuring special pujas with constituency leaders who are driving positive change. "This was followed by the Anna Samaradhana ceremony, which drew a diverse group of distinguished guests, including Serilingampalli Constituency Congress Party In-charge and Greater Hyderabad Standing Committee Member V. Jagadishwar Goud, and Miyapur

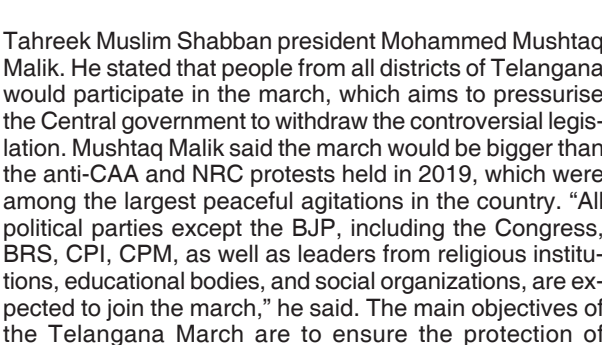
Congress Party General Secretary Yalamanchi Uday Kiran, all of whom are dedicated to fostering community growth. "Other prominent attendees included Baling Yadagiri Goud, Virender Goud, Om Prakash Goud, Krishna Goud, Balakrishna, Ramchander, Srinivas mudhiraj, Mahender, Narender, Vijay, Kumar, Praveen Goud, Bhaskar Goud, Rambabu, Yalamanchi Uday Kiran, and team members Vinod, Vamsi, Simhachalam, Balu, Sai, Abhiram, Pawan, Nani, and others who are passionate about creating a brighter future.

Ratan Mohini's demise is an immense loss to field of spiritual service: Governor

Hyderabad, April 8 (NSS): Governor Jishnu Dev Varma has expressed deep sorrow over the passing of Rajyogini Dadi Ratan Mohini ji, the esteemed Chief Administrative Head of the Brahma Kumaris, who attained Mahasamadhi at the age of 101. In his message here on Tuesday, the Governor stated that Dadi Ratan Mohini ji's demise is an immense loss to the realm of spiritual service. "She was a luminous guide and a source of solace to countless souls across the world. Her serene presence, compassionate heart and unwavering commitment to higher ideals uplifted and transformed innumerable lives," he said. The Governor noted that as the world bids farewell to this extraordinary soul, her legacy will continue to shine as a guiding star for generations to come. The Governor extended his heartfelt condolences to the Brahma Kumaris family and all her followers across the globe. "May her noble soul attain eternal peace, and may her divine mission remain ever alive in the hearts of seekers," he added.



Muslim JAC to organise 'Telangana March' on April 26 against Waqf Amendment Act



The Muslim Joint Action Committee (JAC) of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, under the banner of Tahreek Muslim Shabban, has announced a massive protest march in Hyderabad against the Centre's recently approved Waqf Amendment Bill.

Tahreek Muslim Shabban president Mohammed Mushtaq Malik. He stated that people from all districts of Telangana would participate in the march, which aims to pressurise the Central government to withdraw the controversial legislation. Mushtaq Malik said the march would be bigger than the anti-CAA and NRC protests held in 2019, which were among the largest peaceful agitations in the country. "All political parties except the BJP, including the Congress, BRS, CPI, CPM, as well as leaders from religious institutions, educational bodies, and social organizations, are expected to join the march," he said. The main objectives of the Telangana March are to ensure the protection of mosques, dargahs, khangahs, Ashoorkhanas, graveyards, Waqf properties, religious schools (madrasas), and Eidgahs, which protesters believe are under threat due to the amendment. Warning of grave consequences if the Muslim community remains silent, Malik said, "If we do not rise against this Act, all Waqf properties will be lost. Hindutva forces want to deprive Muslims of their rightful properties. Every Muslim must step out of their homes to resist this attempt." In the lead-up to the April 26 march, weekly peaceful protests will be held every Friday outside mosques across Telangana. Participants will wear black ribbons and wave black flags as a symbol of protest. Malik emphasised that the agitation would remain completely peaceful. The committee also plans to seek the support of key political leaders, including Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, former CM and BRS president K. Chandrashekar Rao, BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao, TPCC president Mahesh Kumar Goud, and leaders from CPI and CPM. Responding to a question, Mushtaq Malik remarked that "those supporting the Waqf Amendment Act cannot be considered true Muslims." The protest is shaping up to be one of the largest demonstrations in recent times, with strong participation expected from both Muslims and non-Muslims, who believe in preserving constitutional and minority rights.

Hyderabad, April 8 : The Muslim Joint Action Committee (JAC) of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, under the banner of Tahreek Muslim Shabban, has announced a massive protest march in Hyderabad against the Centre's recently approved Waqf Amendment Bill. The 'Telangana March to Rollback Waqf Amendment Act-2025' will take place on April 26 at Dhama Chowk, starting 2 pm. The venue for the Telangana March was finalised during the core committee meeting of the JAC held on Monday evening at the head office of Tahreek Muslim Shabban in Azampura, Hyderabad. The meeting was attended by MBT spokesperson Md Amjedullah Khan Khaled, TPCC spokesperson Syed Nizamuddin, Minorities Finance Corporation former Chairman Akbar Hussain, Dr Toufeeq of Wahdat-e-Islami, TPCC Secretary Osman Mohammed Khan, Nazimuddin Farooqi of Muslim Chambers and other eminent personalities. The announcement was made by JAC convener and

KTR on Party's silver jubilee celebrations

Warangal, April 8 BRS party working president K.T. Rama Rao on Tuesday outlined plans for the party's silver jubilee celebrations. He assured that the public meeting in Elkathurthy will be held in an area that avoids traffic disruptions and minimizes inconvenience to the public. Spanning over 1,200 acres, the event will include parking facilities and grand arrangements. KTR highlighted that only two parties in the Telugu States Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and BRS have successfully completed 25 years. "This is why we are celebrating our silver jubilee throughout the year," he said. The BRS sought permission for the meeting on March 28, submitting an application to the district police. KTR personally met the DGP to request approval. The party also requested 3,000 buses from the RTC, which has agreed in principle. With March 27 being a Sunday a holiday for students KTR emphasized that the event would not inconvenience anyone. Party president KCR personally re-

viewed preparations with leaders and representatives from all 33 districts, and committees have been formed to oversee the event. "This will be one of the largest gatherings in our party's history, akin to the massive Warangal meeting held previously," KTR stated. Following the public meeting, the party will enrol students and activists as members through a fully digital process, followed by the election of a president. State and district committees will be established, and training sessions for workers will be conducted across districts. "We've planned a year-long schedule, with one program each month, focusing on organizational growth and addressing public issues," he added. KTR recalled past instances where the government denied permissions for BRS events, causing difficulties. "If permission is denied this time, we will approach the courts to secure it. The government has no reason to refuse this is simply a peaceful celebration," he asserted.

Increase cultivation area for horticultural crops in Telangana: Kodanda Reddy

Hyderabad, April 8 (NSS): M. Kodanda Reddy, the Chairman of the Telangana Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Commission, emphasised the need to expand the cultivation area for horticultural crops in Telangana. He recommended that officials implement measures to boost horticulture as part of a pilot project in three villages located in the Yacharam mandal of Rangareddy district. To discuss this initiative, a review meeting took place at the Farmers Commission office on Tuesday. The meeting, chaired by the Commission Chairman Kodanda Reddy, was attended by Commission Members Gopal Reddy, Bhavani Reddy, Gadugu Gangadhar, Member Secretary Govindu, Agriculture, Horticulture, Marketing, NABARD officials, Commission DAO Sandhya Rani, Agriculture Officer Hari Venkata Prasad, and NGO representatives. During the meeting, of-

officials stated that the villages of Gaddamallayya Gudem, Mondi Gourelli, and Chaudhary Guda in Yacharam mandal have been chosen for a pilot project aimed at expanding the horticultural crop cultivation area.

They indicated that the specific needs of farmers who grow vegetables and leafy greens in these villages have been recognised by the government. Kodanda Reddy emphasised that, due to the limited rainfall and water resources in Rangareddy district, officials should recommend that farmers focus on cultivating crops that require less water. Guidance should be provided to the farmers accordingly. In addition, officials need to devise plans to enhance the cultivation area for vegetables, greens, fruits, and flower gardens throughout the State.

AP govt to expand 'Zero Poverty P4' program

Amaravati, April 8 : The Andhra Pradesh government is accelerating efforts to establish a robust framework to expand the reach of the 'Zero Poverty - P4' program, aimed at poverty eradication. As part of this, a State-Level Society is being set up, with the Chief Minister serving as its Chairperson and the Deputy Chief Minister as Vice Chairperson. Supporting them will be a CEO and Director, along with a Call Center, Tech Team, Program Team, and Wing Teams for operational execution. At the district level, the Minister will serve as the Chairperson of the District Chapter; for the constituency chapter, the MLA will be the Chairperson; and at the village/ward level, Panchayat Secretaries and Ward Administrative Secretaries will act as Chairpersons of the respective Secretariat Chapters.

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu held a review meeting at the Secretariat on Tuesday regarding the establishment of the State-Level Society and the progress of the P4 program. He directed every District Collector, Minister, and MLA to identify Margdarsis (mentors/philanthropists) and ensure they adopt Bangaru Kutumbalu (Golden Fam-

ilies). He underscored transparency by suggesting that all information, such as the donors, amounts donated, and the remaining needs of the Bangaru Families should be made publicly available on the P4 website. He added that this would build greater trust in the initiative. Officials briefed the Chief Minister that in line with the government's goal of adopting five lakh Bangaru families by August 15, the registration of Margdarsis and Bangaru Families is underway. Organizations such as Milaap, DonateKart, and Rang De are coming on board as P4 partners. The P4 platform has been designed to allow donors to adopt not only families but also mandals and villages, and to contribute funds accordingly. They also explained that donors can choose whom they wish to support and can contribute directly through the online platform. The process begins when a donor logs in via the P4 portal. The Chief Minister instructed officials to complete the registration process by August and operationalise the program. He also directed the release of an annual progress report by the next Ugadi, detailing the impact made during the first year of the P4 initiative.

BRS flags to be unfurled in all municipal divisions on April 27: Talasani

Hyderabad, April 8 : Former minister and Sanathnagar MLA from the Opposition BRS party Talasani Srinivas Yadav today said their party would celebrate its formation day in a festive atmosphere. A meeting of the BRS Party's top leaders at the Greater Hyderabad level was held at Telangana Bhavan in the city on Tuesday under the Talasani Srinivas Yadav. The party MLCs Surabhi Vani Devi, Shambhipur Raju, Dasoju Sravan, MLAs Kaleru Venkatesh, Mutha Gopal, Madhavaram Krishna Rao, several Assembly constituency in-charges and top party leaders participated in the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Yadav said the party flags would be unfurled in all municipal divisions on April 27 on the occasion of the party's formation day. He also said a large crowd would gather from the State capital in Elkathurthy

of Warangal district, on the same day to mark the 25th anniversary of the party's formation. He also said the assembly constituency level meetings would be held from today to prepare the party ranks and file for the public meeting. He revealed that the Greater Hyderabad General Body would be held on April 20 and added that the party's working president KTR would attend it as the chief guest. He said after the formation of Telangana State, Telangana had been set as a role model for the country in development with exemplary governance under the leadership of KCR as the Chief Minister. He alleged that after the Congress government came to power, people from all sections had not been spared from problems. He called for a large attendance of the party leaders and workers at the BRS party silver jubilee meeting to be held in Warangal to strengthen KCR's leadership.

Gurukulas to offer comprehensive coding courses for students' bright future

Hyderabad, April 8 : In an era where technical proficiency is as crucial as academic knowledge, TGSWREIS (Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society) is set to revolutionise education with the introduction of coding courses across its schools. Announcing this initiative on Tuesday, Dr. V.S. Alagu Varshini, Secretary of TGSWREIS, revealed that starting from the academic year 2025-26, coding training will be offered to students from Class 6 through to Intermediate in all 238 Gurukula schools across Telangana. Last year, coding training was offered only at the Moinaabad Gurukula school. However, following the success of the pilot programme, the decision has been made to expand this initiative statewide, she said. Alagu Varshini further stated that the training will be conducted in collaboration with the Raspberry Pi Foundation (RPF) from the United Kingdom, which has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with TGSWREIS for a five-year partnership. The foundation will provide expert guidance in areas such as curriculum development, action plan monitoring, and pedagogy. The

Telangana government has taken a significant step in integrating technology into the curriculum. The focus will be on Artificial Intelligence (AI), Coding, Machine Learning, Robotics, and Online Tools, all of which will be taught to students from the 6th class through Intermediate, she said. Alagu Varshini further explained that the pilot project, which involved selecting five students from each Gurukula school to engage in experimental coding training, yielded impressive results. Building on this success, the collaboration with the Raspberry Pi Foundation (RPF) is set to expand the initiative to all Gurukula schools in the upcoming academic year, ensuring that every student benefits from qualitative technical education. The goal is not only to teach coding but also to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the digital world," she added. Under the new curriculum, approximately 1,52,000 students across Gurukula schools will be taught Computing as a regular subject. This includes two hours of classroom sessions focused on computing concepts, followed by two hours of hands-on project work. ...

'Anumula Intelligence' hurting Telangana not Artificial Intelligence, says Kavitha

Hyderabad: Intensifying her campaign for the installation of a statue of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule in the State Legislative Assembly premises, BRS leader and MLC K Kavitha on Tuesday said it was not artificial intelligence that was hurting the BCs or students or the University of Hyderabad, but "Anumula Intelligence". Launching the BC Deeksha, a day long hunger strike, at the Dhama Chowk here to press for the statue, Kavitha, who has been leading the movement along with Telangana Jagruti and the United Phule Front (UPF), emphasized the importance of Jyotirao Phule as a beacon of social justice and inspiration and demanded

the government to respond with a positive decision by April 11, Phule's birth anniversary. She wanted the statue of Phule to be installed alongside that of Ambedkar on the Assembly premises. Students from different universities also took part in the protest. Earlier, referring to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's allegation that AI was being increasingly used to defame the government in the Kancha Gachibowli issue, Kavitha criticized the misuse of artificial intelligence by the government in studies related to reservations, calling it a diversion from addressing the real issues. She highlighted political manipulation.

'Shiv Sena-style swagat hoga': Rahoool Kanal to Kunal Kamra after Madras high court order, says 'not a threat'



GNS News Agency, April 8

Rahoool Kanal of the Shiv Sena's Yuva Sena (Shinde faction) on Monday said the party would welcome stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra in "good Shiv Sena style" whenever he enters Maharashtra. Rahoool Kanal, who was earlier arrested and granted bail along with 11 other Sena workers for vandalising Mumbai's Habitat studio where Kunal Kamra allegedly made a joke about Maharashtra deputy chief minister Eknath Shinde, asked the comedian, a permanent resident of Villupuram town in Tamil Nadu, to face the legal process in Mumbai. Kunal Kamra, known for his satirical comedy and outspoken views, has been facing legal trouble following complaints accusing him of making derogatory comments.

The FIRs have been registered in Maharashtra, prompting the comedian to seek legal protection from arrest while he prepares to contest the charges. On Friday,

the Madras high court granted interim anticipatory bail to Kunal Kamra on the condition that he execute a bond to the satisfaction of the judicial magistrate at Vanur in Villupuram district in Tamil Nadu. Kamra had submitted he moved to Tamil Nadu from Mumbai in 2021 and has been "ordinarily a resident of this State (Tamil Nadu) since then" and that he feared arrest by Mumbai Police. Reacting to Madras high court's decision, Rahoool Kanal told news agency ANI, "We welcome the court's order that gives him relief, but it is only until April 7. He should come and face the law... No matter what protection he has there (in Tamil Nadu), whenever he comes to Mumbai, he will be welcomed in a good 'Shiv Sena style'." When asked if it threatened the comedian, the Shiv Sena Yuva Sena general secretary replied, "It's not a threat. Mumbai has this culture of 'Atithi Devo Bhava', and he considers himself a guest here (in Mumbai) now."

What is there to get scared of? He should face the law and follow the procedure." Kanal emphasised that Yuva Sena members regularly visit the police station for attendance as per legal procedures. Meanwhile, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut claimed that the ministers in the Maharashtra state cabinet are threatening Kunal Kamra to be "shot and hanged immediately" over his controversial remarks about Shinde. During the press conference on Monday, Sanjay Raut addressed the security concerns for Kamra, stating that the cabinet ministers are allegedly demanding that Kamra be shot and hanged immediately. Raut also criticised Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnis for not taking any action against such "lawlessness" by the cabinet ministers. "Ministers in state cabinet are threatening Kunal Kamra openly. They are demanding Kamra to be shot and hanged immediately."

RSS to pick Narendra Modi's successor, likely from Maharashtra, Sanjay Raut claims day after PM visits Sangh headquarters

GNS News Agency, April 8

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the headquarters of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in Nagpur, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut claimed on Monday that the RSS is set to pick Modi's successor. Raut said it is clear that the PM will be made to retire at the age of 75, adding that Modi never visited the RSS headquarters in the last 11 years but he went on Sunday to inform that he was quitting.

"At this moment, it seems that the RSS will decide (the successor) and that is why Modi was called... The discussions of the Sangh take place behind closed doors and those discussions probably do not come out. Still, there are some indications, and those indications are clear. The next leader will be decided by the Sangh and he will most likely be from Maharashtra," Raut said. "Sarsangchalak Mohan Bhagwat and the entire Sangh Parivar want a change in the country's leadership. Now Modi's term is over. The RSS now wants to have a presence in the country. It also wants a say in electing the BJP national president. Therefore, Modi went to the RSS headquarters to see off and say that he is leaving," the Sena (UBT) leader claimed. Raut also took a dig at PM Modi over his statement that the RSS was involved in India's freedom struggle. He said, "The RSS



was nowhere in the Indian freedom struggle. What was its contribution? Narendra Modi should take a briefing from us on this. What did the RSS do for breaking the shackles of slavery?" "For 150 years, this country was bound by the shackles of slavery. From Mahatma Gandhi to Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, Savarkar, this struggle took place under the leadership of all of them and the shackles of slavery were broken," Raut added. The MP stated that until the attempt to project a false history is stopped, the mentality of the people will not improve. "You (BJP) are making people blind devotees and madmen. Therefore, this nation could be in the list of mad countries," he said.

Punjab Vigilance Bureau arrests SHO, ASI for demanding Rs 1.50 lakh bribe

GNS News Agency, April 8

The Punjab Vigilance Bureau Sunday arrested a sub-inspector posted as the station house officer (SHO) and his subordinate, an assistant sub-inspector (ASI), in the state's Hoshiarpur district for demanding a bribe of Rs 1.50 lakh. A Bureau spokesperson said Monday the arrests were made after an inquiry into an online complaint filed by a resident of the Asalpur village in the district on the Chief Minister's Anti-Corruption Action Line.

The complainant alleged that a First Information Report (FIR) was registered at the Bulowal Police Station against his nephew under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS), and the two policemen were threatening to implicate his son in the case under Section 29 of the same Act. According to the complaint, the assistant sub-inspector initially demanded a bribe of Rs 1.59 lakh on behalf of the SHO to spare his son but reduced the amount to Rs 1 lakh after negotiations. The complainant recorded his conversations with the policemen in which they can be allegedly heard demanding a bribe, and submitted the audio evidence to the Bureau.

The Bureau spokesperson said after the its Hoshiarpur



unit verified the complaint, and obtained legal advice, a case was registered against both policemen under sections 7 and 7A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, Section 61(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and Section 59 of the NDPS Act at the VB Police Station under the Jalandhar Range. "Both accused have been arrested and would be produced before the competent court tomorrow. Further investigation is underway," said Harpreet Singh Mander, Senior Superintendent of Police, Vigilance Bureau (Jalandhar Range).

Ambedkar University revokes suspension of student activist, says decision taken keeping in mind student's future

GNS News Agency, April 8

The suspension prompted a wave of student-led protests that questioned the Ambedkar University's handling of dissent and its approach to disciplining students. (File Photo) The suspension prompted a wave of student-led protests that questioned the university's handling of dissent and its approach to disciplining students. The Delhi-based Dr B R Ambedkar University withdrew its decision to suspend a student activist on Friday, following days of protests by student bodies and rising tensions on campus. In a statement, the varsity said, "Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University remains committed to maintaining high academic standards and a disciplined university environment for the benefit of its students. Regarding the disciplinary action taken against student... the university followed all established norms and procedures. The student was given multiple opportunities to present her side of the matter. The Proctorial Board attempted to hear her twice, and she also appealed to the Vice-Chancellor."

"Taking her appeal into consideration, the Vice-Chancellor directed the Proctorial Board to review the matter once again. The board invited the student to present her case on April 3, 2025, but she did not appear. After thorough consideration of the appeal, the Vice-Chancellor directed the proctorial board to show some leniency in this specific case and then (the) board after due deliberations recommended to allow the student to continue her academic pursuit under

strict disciplinary guidelines. This decision was made while keeping in mind the university's integrity, academic environment, and the student's future," it added. The statement came more than two weeks after a student and member of the All India Students' Association (AISA) was suspended for six months for allegedly using the official university email to criticise the vice-chancellor's Republic Day speech. The suspension also barred her from entering the university premises during the period. Her suspension prompted a wave of student-led protests that questioned the university's handling of dissent and its approach to disciplining students.

The protests unfolded against the backdrop of a separate internal circular that raised concerns over increasing surveillance of student activities. Last week, an email from the Dean of Academic Affairs directed faculty members to report "disruptions" in classrooms, linking them to student collectives. "It has come to our attention that certain disruptions caused by students or student collectives have been affecting classroom instruction," the Dean wrote. "With immediate effect, faculty members are required to implement the following measure: In cases where such incidents occur, it is imperative that faculty members report that event promptly," he added. The email further instructed faculty to document the "date, time and location" of such incidents, including identifying details of students or groups involved and noting the actions taken to address the situation. These reports...

'How will we hold classes, check Madhyamik scripts?': Heads of West Bengal schools face major crisis after SC order ousts 25,000 teachers



GNS News Agency, April 8

"My science faculty is almost entirely gone. How will we run classes?" said Kakoli Chowdhury, headmistress of Sailaja Memorial Girls High School in Lalgola, Murshidabad, where the employment of 18 out of 46 teachers is to be cancelled after a Supreme Court order nullified 25,752 school jobs in West Bengal. From holding classes and tests to checking answer scripts of Madhyamik (secondary board) examinations, hundreds of schools in West Bengal are facing a crisis after the order. Many state-run schools were already suffering from a dearth of teachers.

Notably, schools in West Bengal are yet to get an official notification in connection with the cancellations of recruitment, which came as the Supreme Court said the 2016 School Service Commission (SSC) recruitment process was "vitiated and tainted by fraud". Siddhartha Majumder, Chairman of Central School Service Commission of West Bengal, on Friday said, "We already got a letter from the state government regarding the Supreme Court order. We have started taking legal advice. We can say something only after making a decision. But the whole process cannot be completed within the three months." "We have 46 teachers out of a sanctioned strength of 60. Our school has 4,000 students. Now after the SC order, 18 teachers and a non-teaching staff will be gone. Most of the teachers teach biology, physics, chemistry and maths. Who will teach those subjects now?" said Chowdhury. "At present, the unit tests are on. How will we conduct the tests?" she said.

The thoughts were echoed by Jehangir Mian, a physics teacher at Lalgola M N Academy high school, where 11 teachers and one non-teaching staff will lose their jobs. "Last year, we started AI and data science classes in our school.

We had only one teacher for the subject. He lost his job. How will the students study? The students can't even take tuitions since not a single teacher in that subject is available in the entire Lalgola block," said Mian. The school has more than 4,000 students. "Many teachers who lost their jobs were in the process of scrutinising answer sheets of the Madhyamik examination. What will happen to that? The answer scripts they scrutinised, will they be valid? Who will check the answer scripts that are still left to be scrutinised? We do not know how to teach students and manage such affairs. Will we reduce periods and stop teaching some subjects for the time being? I had contacted the secondary and higher secondary board officials. They are also in the dark," Mian claimed. At Orarah Girls High School in Bhagabangola, Murshidabad, where there are around 2,000 students, eight of the 19 teachers have been ousted. Najmun Nahar, the headmistress said, "Today, we have our first summative (unit test). I have requested the teachers to stay since the notification is yet to come. But after the notification what will happen? I am not sure how we will run the school."

Though the Supreme Court has ordered fresh examinations through the West Bengal School Service Commission within three months, school administrations and teachers remain concerned about timely replacements. Sahin Saraf, headmaster of Sekhalipur high school in Lalgola, said the school will lose teachers for subjects like geography and physics. "We lost nine teachers, six of whom teach science subjects. One must understand that not only for teaching, but teachers operate data and work for various government schemes like Kanyashree. Everything will be affected."

Though the SC has ordered fresh examinations and a recruitment, whether it will happen on time and whether our school will get the requisite number of teachers is a question. It may take months." This school has around 5,000 students. In Arjunpur High School of the Farakka block of Murshidabad district, with 9,500 students, 36 of the 70 teachers will lose their jobs. "We haven't recruited since 2018. It will be a very tough time to continue running the school," said Faruk Abdullah, teacher and member of the School Organising committee. Basudeb Santra, headmaster of Salimabad High school in Jamalpur, Bardhaman district, which has 1,200 students, said the school will no longer have science or history teachers. The school has also lost a clerk. Kalna Kashra high school in the same district lost science, philosophy, and history teachers and a clerk.

Right to bodily autonomy: HC allows woman to terminate pregnancy with foetal anomalies

GNS News Agency, April 8

Mumbai, The Bombay High Court has granted a 32-year-old woman's plea to terminate her 26-week pregnancy over foetal anomalies at a private hospital of her choice, emphasising her right to reproductive freedom, bodily autonomy, and the right to choice. A division bench comprising Justices Revati Mohite Dure and Neela Gokhale allowed the termination to be carried out at a private hospital of the woman's choosing, provided the hospital submits an affidavit affirming it meets all the requirements under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act. The provisions of the MTP Act don't allow termination of pregnancy beyond the 24-week gestation to be conducted in private hospitals without the court's permission. "Conscious of the right of the petitioner to reproductive freedom, her autonomy over the body and her right to choice and having considered the medical condition of the petitioner, we permit the petitioner to terminate the pregnancy medically," the high court stated in its order dated March 28. The court's decision followed the woman's appeal to ensure that the procedure involved foetal heartbeat reduction to prevent the baby from being born alive. The bench, however, directed that the medical board at the state-run J J Hospital offer an opinion on the most suitable method to carry out the termination. The petitioner, a resident of Mumbai, said she wants to terminate the pregnancy at a hospital of her choice. Her lawyer Meenaz Kakalia said the procedure could be carried out if the requisite facilities under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Rules were available at the private hospital. She had discovered a foetal anomaly during a Foetal Echo Cardiography at around 24 weeks of pregnancy, which revealed skeletal dysplasia—a condition likely to lead to severe morbid-



ity. A medical board at J J Hospital had given the green light for termination based on the foetal condition. Kakalia cited a guidance note issued by the Union of India under the MTP Act, which provides for the cessation of the foetal heartbeat to prevent a live birth. She said Maharashtra has adopted these guidelines. The high court bench stated that as per the Rules, the procedure to stop the foetal heart, whenever contemplated, needs to be clearly mentioned in the recommendation or report of the medical board. However, the court observed that the medical board's report did not recommend a specific method for the termination, particularly regarding foetal heartbeat reduction. In light of this, the court requested the J J Hospital medical board to provide its opinion within two days. "Considering that the pregnancy is at an advanced stage, we deem it appropriate to request the medical board to give its opinion to the medical practitioner concerned within two days," the court said.

Only police inspectors, sub-inspectors with body cameras can issue traffic fines in Goa: CM Pramod Sawant

GNS News Agency, April 8

Announcing a slew of measures to curb harassment of both local residents and tourists in Goa, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Friday said only police inspectors with body cameras will now be authorized to issue challans (fines) for traffic violations during the day time. During the night time, either police inspectors or sub-inspectors with cameras installed on their uniform will be allowed to issue challans for traffic violations, he said, adding the new rule has come into effect from . The CM also warned that tourists who arrive in the state with gas stoves to cook on the road will face strict police action. Sawant was addressing a press conference at Mantralaya (secretariat) at Porvorim after chairing a meeting of high-ranking officials to review the implementation of new criminal laws (Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam) in Goa. The chief minister, who holds the home portfolio, maintained only officers of the rank of police inspector with cameras installed on their uniform will be eligible to issue challans for traffic violations during the day time. He informed the state police will identify traffic violations through methods like dash cameras, digital cameras installed on the road side or other gadgets with Artificial Intelligence (AI). He clarified that no official of the rank of constable, head constable or assistant sub-inspector (ASI) will be eligible to issue challans.

"If anyone of that rank (constable, head constable or ASI) is found issuing challan, then citizens can click their pictures and send them to the police department. Such officials will be suspended from duty," Sawant warned. However, taluka nodal officers with body camera can issue challans, he said. "These measures will stop harassment of locals and tourists. They will also do away with



The CM Pramod Sawant also warned that tourists who arrive in the state with gas stoves to cook on the road will face strict police action.

allegations levelled against police officers (of asking for bribes)," the CM emphasised. Warning travellers who prefer to carry their gas stoves and cook food at the roadside, the chief minister said all tourist vehicles entering the state will be checked thoroughly at the state border.

If they are found to be cooking at the roadside, their gas stoves and cylinders will be seized and their vehicles fined, Sawant insisted. The move is aimed at reducing roadside garbage, he said. In yet another announcement, the chief minister said activities of begging, massage on the beach and also touting will be completed banned. "Anyone found offering massage services or begging or touting will be immediately arrested by police," he cautioned.

Whitefield Art Collective to highlight art of Bengaluru and beyond



GNS News Agency, April 8

For the eighth year running, the Whitefield Art Collective event is now being hosted at the Whitefield VR Mall in Bengaluru, with exhibits, paintings and sculptures on display in various corners of the mall. Backed by the Yuj Foundation, which conducts Public Art Festivals across the country, the Art Collective this year is on the theme 'The Future is Now'. The main event, which began on March 27, was preceded by a small film festival, hosted by the British Council.

According to curator Sumi Gupta, the idea behind the festival is to create a space where people can freely express themselves, particularly in terms of identity, making it a diverse and inclusive platform. "As for the films we selected, this is actually a film festival hosted by the British Council, showcasing Five Films for Freedom. These films, created by global filmmakers, focus on themes of inclusivity, identity, and the need for a more accepting society," Gupta

said.

The festival has largely collaborated with local artists for many of the exhibits. Gupta said that every festival is deeply rooted in the local community, with collaborations involving both local and global institutions. "The students working on the art installations are always from local schools. For example, in the Whitefield Art Collective, they come from institutions like the Bangalore School of Design and Chitrakala Parishath," the curator said. Among the major exhibits not to be missed are 'The Sunflower Series' by Chennai-based artist Gita Hudson and 'Through The Window' by Korean artist SoonYoung Yang. Other displays use existing objects as mediums of art — one of these is an auto-rickshaw made into an art display — created by an artist who is a rickshaw driver and art student by night. Another is a car turned into an exhibit known as the Kala Car, by LGBTQ artist and activist Kalki Subramaniam. Among the many displays and sculptures on exhibit by Bengaluru artists are the 'Braided River' photo display by Unesco, which focuses on prominent Indian women in STEM and 'Hey!' that shows off the artistic and photographic talent of neurodivergent contributors. Bangaloreans who appreciate the history and diversity of their city will also not be disappointed, with contemporary photos from across the city as well as archaic and little-known maps of the city from the 1800s and even earlier being displayed. The primary exhibits will be on display until April 28, while there will be an Art Bazaar at the venue from April 22. The 'Whitefield Literary Society' event will include panel discussions by authors. Besides, there will be a puppet show and workshop on April 19, a Young Artist programme on April 6, and a workshop by Franck Provost and Blue Tokai on April 26.

Vikhroli railway overbridge in Mumbai likely to be ready by July

GNS News Agency, April 8

Originally conceived in 1997, the bridge was proposed as an alternative to a level crossing that existed at Vikhroli. Commuters travelling in the east-west direction often used to trespass the crossing and in many cases, people had lost their lives. Following this, the authorities mooted a proposal to build Vikhroli bridge as an alternative. Even though the crossing was sealed during the early 2000s, the bridge still couldn't be built within a decade after its conceptualisation. It was only in 2018 that the tenders for the bridge were finally floated and work orders issued. The bridge will connect Eastern Express Highway in the east with Lal Bahadur Shastri (LBS) Marg in the west. Till date, there is no direct east-west link in Vikhroli and local residents have to either take the ROB from Ghatkopar or Kanjurmarg for their journey. The flyover will also provide pedestrians direct access to the platforms. Therefore, once operational the bridge will bring down commute time to seven minutes which today take at least 25-30 minutes or even more depending on the traffic movement. This bridge will be India's longest bridge having an open-web-girder system that will run above railway tracks. The total length of the girders will be 100 metres and will be made of stainless steel. The weight of each girder is around 1,100 metric tonnes. The total length of this bridge would be around 480 metres and it will have two carriageways for east-west vehicular movement. Alongside these, the bridge will also have footpaths for pedestrian movement.

After the work orders were issued, the deadline was fixed in 2020. However, the authorities failed to achieve this deadline and it was later postponed to 2022. Considering the delay in removing the encroachment, the delay was again



pushed twice by a year and the civic body had issued a final deadline in July. The initial cost of the project at the time of issuing work order stood at Rs 70 crore. However owing to multiple delays the cost now stands at Rs 180 crore.

"This bridge had initially met with a few hurdles. That's why the project got delayed by a few years. At present, the project is on track and work is ongoing at full pace. This bridge will bring down the traffic woes in the eastern suburbs by a significant level. One of the key features of this ROB is that this is the country's longest bridge that will pass above the railway tracks. Instead of opening it in phases we will be opening it in entirety for the traffic movement," Abhijit Bangar, Additional Municipal Commissioner, Projects, told.

'Foreign exchange violations involving over Rs 1,000 crore' behind ED raid at Empuraan producer's premises, officials claim



GNS News Agency, April 8

producer Gokulam Gopalan, empuraan, ed raid, indian express Producer Gokulam Gopalan was seen largely distancing himself from the controversy and clarified that a movie with a political message was not his intention. The Enforcement Directorate raids at the premises of producer Gokulam Gopalan, whose production house backed the Malayalam film L2: Empuraan, which faced criticism for its portrayal of the 2002 Gujarat riots, are linked to its probe into alleged foreign exchange violations involving over Rs 1,000 crore, agency sources claim. The Kerala wing of the ED launched a multi-state search operation in Tamil Nadu and Kerala on Friday against the businessman and film producer.

According to ED, the searches are "in (connection with) a FEMA (Foreign Exchange Management Act) case involving Gopalan and his company Sree Gokulam Chit and Finance Co Ltd". "Currently, five premises are covered (under the raids). The case relates to alleged violations of various FEMA provisions worth Rs 1,000 crore with NRIs and other unauthorised transactions. The ED is also verifying alleged cheating and forgery cases registered against the company under PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act)," ED sources claimed. The searches began Friday morning, with at least 10 personnel arriving at the offices of Sree Gokulam Chit and Finance in Chennai's Kodambakkam area. Another team landed at Gopalan's farmhouse at Neelankarai in Chennai city.

The ED action comes just days after the release of Mohanlal-starrer Empuraan, which was co-produced by Gopalan along with Antony Perumbavoor, Mohanlal's close aide, and Lyca Productions' Subaskaran Allirajah. Gopalan was a late entrant into the production, at a time when the film's release was delayed over financial troubles faced by Lyca Productions. The film, a sequel to the 2019 blockbuster Lucifer and part of a trilogy directed by Prithviraj Sukumaran,

sparked controversy soon after its March 27 release. Right-wing groups, including sections of the RSS, accused the film of vilifying Hindus by depicting scenes from the 2002 Gujarat riots and using the names of individuals involved in cases related to the riots. The backlash prompted the producers to mute certain dialogues and remove scenes. This voluntary censorship involved about 24 cuts or a deletion of 2.08 minutes. Gopalan was seen largely distancing himself from the controversy and clarified that a movie with a political message was not his intention. Mohanlal also issued an apology and said that the contentious content had been removed. Gopalan, a Kerala-origin businessman with interests in hospitality, healthcare, education, media, cinema, logistics, and transport, and his company, Sree Gokulam Group, are widely known across South India, with its flagship chit fund operations servicing thousands of customers in India and abroad.

3 Delhi men detained for attempting Hindu rituals at Sambhal's Shahi Jama Masjid

GNS News Agency, April 8

Police detained three people from Delhi for allegedly attempting to perform Hindu rituals, including a havan and puja, at the Shahi Jama Masjid here, officials said. The administration had already deployed heavy security at the mosque due to Friday prayers. Superintendent of Police Krishna Kumar Bishnoi confirmed the detentions, stating, "Three individuals arrived by a car and were taken into custody near the disputed site. They have been sent to the police station, and action will be taken against them for disturbing public order. They will also be warned not to enter Sambhal in the future." One of the detained men, Sanatan Singh, claimed, "We came to perform a havan and yagna at the Vishnu Harihar temple, but the police arrested us. If namaz can be offered there, why can't we perform puja?" Another detainee, Veer Singh Yadav, said, "We came to conduct rituals at the Sambhal mosque, but the police stopped us." Anil Singh, the third detainee, added, "We were there for a havan at the Harihar temple when we were taken into custody." The police action follows heightened tensions over religious activities at the site in Mohalla Kot Garvi. Authorities have emphasised that any attempt to disrupt communal harmony will be dealt with strictly.

Mamnoon: Telangana's forgotten airfield and its glorious past



GNS News Agency, April 8

Sitting on a concrete bench in Mamnoon village in Telangana's Warangal district, 88-year-old Patwari Janardhan Reddy reminisces about the days when planes soaring through the sky were a common sight and their village was a part of India's aviation map. Back in 1932, the Nizam of Hyderabad, in coordination with the British, established what was then one of India's largest airfields — the Mamnoon airport. The airfield was used by the British in World War II, bombed by the Indian Air Force during Operation Polo, and played a strategically important role during the 1962 Indo-China War.

"Around 1900 acres of land was acquired from our village. Between 1952 and 1984, you could see a minimum of 40 aircraft here for training. From 1986, the agriculture department used it to store paddy for 7-8 years. Later, Hyderabad and Tirupati aircraft were operational from here. The airstrip was shut down in 1984," recalls Patwari Janardhan Reddy. Patwari Janardhan Reddy (L) at his village in Mamnoon. Today, all that remains is a locked gate, overgrown grass, and a plaque that reads: "This was the biggest airfield in India during that time. It was built to cater to and catapult the paper industry business in the region." Operation Polo

The erstwhile princely state of Hyderabad comprised six present-day districts of the Marathwada region, three districts of the Kalyana-Karnataka region, and the Telugu-speaking regions of Telangana. As India gained independence in 1947, the last Nizam, Mir Osman Ali Khan, sought to remain independent. However, on September 13, 1948, the Indian government launched 'Operation Polo', a five-day military operation that led to the annexation of Hyderabad. In the neighbouring village of Bollikunta, Patwari's 91-year-old cousin Donthi Rami Reddy recalls the days when the Indian Air Force bombed the runway of the Mamnoon airstrip. "Around 27 people were arrested by the Nizam government and were lodged in the aerodrome's buildings. I used to take food to those people as our home was just a stone's throw away," he says. "However, there was excitement, not fear, among people," says Donthi, who was 11 years old at the time. On being asked about the history of the airfield, Donthi Rami Reddy's eyes light up like a young kid's and his memory serves as sharp as ever. "For many years, large aeroplanes were a daily sight, often flying over our villages. One day, we witnessed a large plane being chased by two smaller aircraft. Eventually, the larger

plane returned and landed. Following this incident, for three days, the smaller planes dropped numerous bombs, severely damaging the runway. The resulting craters were as large as wells, and the explosions shook the villages," he says. Today, locals are optimistic about the revival of the airport, which was handed over to the Airports Authority of India in 1968.

Bollikunta Satheesh, a young auto driver from the nearby Bollikunta village, says they are hoping their business will pick up once the airport becomes operational, although concerns remain. "One key concern is the land acquisition for the airport. About 253 acres were required for further expansion of the runway. Not everyone is happy with the compensation offered, but at the end of it, everyone is happy about the revival of the airfield and Mamnoon's return to the aviation map of the country," he says. P Anuradha Reddy, historian and author of Aviation in the Hyderabad Dominions, however, cautions against limiting the state's aviation history to Operation Polo. Mamnoon was just one of the many airfields in the Nizam's Hyderabad State, she says. "Present-day Air Force stations of Begumpet, Hakimpet, Bidar, and Dundigal Air Force Academy, and the Chikkalthana airport in Aurangabad and airfields at Adilabad and Nadergul were all important airfields of the Nizam era, aiding industry, trade, and travel. The Kamareddy airstrip at Patarajpet was an important landing and refuelling station for the British aircraft flying between Ceylon and Delhi back in the day," she says.

In the early 1900s, Hyderabad had a coordinated system of air, road, and train services to ensure last-mile connectivity. This, she says, facilitated industrial development, trade, and transport across the region. "The British had their modern transport around Hyderabad and it was for their benefit that they suggested the Nizam to build a railway in the state as well. Thus, was born the Nizam State Railways in 1930, which later managed the aviation department as well." Deccan Airways, founded in 1945 by the Nizam of Hyderabad, was a pioneer in Indian aviation. The airline operated chartered flights to Quetta and Rangoon. In 1948, it became the first Indian airline to establish a dedicated Haj chartered fleet. "The Nizam 7th never set foot on a plane, and it was much later, as the Rajpramukh of Hyderabad, that he first boarded a plane. That was a trial flight for him before flying to Delhi for a meeting. He was so excited and anxious seeing his King Koti palace from the air that he imposed a no-fly zone over the palace," says Reddy.

In January 1911, Hyderabad State witnessed the first air-military reconnaissance operation when Bristol Boxkite, an early British aircraft, flew over Aurangabad cantonment during a military-cavalry movement. "This was the first such air-military joint operation in the world, and such things happened only due to the support of the rulers back then, who despite being unaware of the latest technology, understood and recognised the same as the technology of the future," she says. The Hyderabad State Aero Club, formed in 1934, started operations from Begumpet Airport. "During World War II, the British 'Hyderabad Squadron' prominently displayed the inscription, 'Presented by His Exalted Highness, the Nizam of Hyderabad,' on all its aircraft," Reddy notes.

ED seizes immovable assets worth Rs 22-crore of Kapurthala Congress MLA R G Singh-owned Rana Sugars

GNS News Agency, April 8

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) recently seized immovable properties worth Rs 22.02 crore belonging to Punjab-based Rana Sugars — owned by Kapurthala Congress MLA Rana Gurjit Singh, and his son and Sultanpur Lodhi MLA Inder Partap Singh — for the alleged violation of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). "ED initiated investigation under the provisions of FEMA, 1999, against M/s Rana Sugars Ltd, its promoters, Directors & others in connection with (the) issuance of Global Depository Receipts (GDRs) and non-utilisation of entire GDR proceeds for its intended bona-fide purpose," the Central agency said in a statement Thursday.

"ED investigation revealed that out of total GDR receipts, M/s Rana Sugars Ltd did not repatriate (the) entire GDR proceeds to India and held GDR proceeds to the tune of \$2.56 million (Rs 22.02 crore) outside India in contravention of Section 4 of FEMA, 1999. Further investigation is



under progress," it added. Earlier, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) imposed a penalty of Rs 63 crore on Rana Sugars for the alleged diversion of funds to its conduit and entities.

Tales of 3 chefs who experimented with exotic cuisines from Lucknow, Peru and Japan

GNS News Agency, April 8

Chef Qureshi comes from a long line of chefs, who have honed their skills in the kitchens of Nawab of Awadh in Lucknow. Thus, Qureshi, who showcases his art at the Chingari restaurant of Hotel Sheraton of Pune, says he brings with him skills that are influenced by a long line of masters and blended with his personal creations. The curator of the three categories of dishes — Riyaat (Traditional), Virasat (Modern) and Andaz (Contemporary) —, Qureshi says his aim is to make the delicate cuisine of Lucknow popular and with a twist. "Coming from a long line of chefs, I have literally learnt from the masters. My uncles were the one who introduced Nawabi cuisine to Delhi. Given how Delhi is the heartland of Mughal cuisine, making space for another North Indian cuisine must have been tough," he said. Unlike Mughlai food, Nawabi food goes easy on spices and instead brings about magic in terms of the blend of spices. "Unlike the Mughlai biryani, the Lucknowi biryani does not have any spice mix. Instead our biryani is made with lots of kewara and induced spices which make the Biryani light yet fragrant," he said. When it comes to protein, most dishes are cooked over slow fire with a unique combination of spices. Developed when the Nawabs of Awadh gained power in the declining days of the Mughal Empire, the court of Lucknow tried to make up for the grandeur of the new empire. "Instead of excessive usage of fat, our cuisine is subtle — the magic lies in spices," he said. The new menu is a clever take on traditional dishes using modern techniques. "Our work is to ensure that our guest gets introduced to the rich heritage from the kitchens of Nawabs. At times we do get guests asking if the biryani would have masala. But over all our experience has been warm and gratifying," he said. Chef Barve, is one of the very rare ones in Pune who have specialised in Peruvian cuisine. "Along with Japanese, Mexican and Spanish cuisines, I decided to add this to my skill sets as it would help me introduce my guests to something new," he said. Developed along the heights of Andes, Barve said Peruvian cuisine is known for its usage of corn, seafood and fresh food. "The spread is very vibrant and plays on the taste buds,"

he said. Peruvian food, Barve said, is served to people who are actually familiar with it. Thus the chef and his team prepare the dishes only when guests place the order. "But through festivals and special counters we are trying to introduce this cuisine to Pune," he said. Ceviche is a type of seafood, which, according to Barve, has caught the fancy of foodies. Instead of using heat to cook seafood, ceviche uses acid from lime and sauces to 'cure' the dish before serving it in a palatable manner. "Food is about experimenting and this clean and colourful cuisine is the best to experiment with," he said. Before shifting to Pune, Barve had worked in Mumbai and had introduced Peruvian and other exotic cuisine to his guests there. In Pune, Barve wants to do the same and with the team of Westin with him, he says he would be able to do it well. Given the fact that the Peruvian cuisine is exotic, guests require some convincing to try out this at times. Barve, whose expertise lies in other cuisines also, is always ready to ask his guests to try this out. He says there are plans to make this more popular in Pune.

Recently, DoubleTree by Hilton, held a food festival where the main ingredient was mushroom. Chef Rakshita Jadhav, the executive sous chef, said the inspiration was from the rich umami flavours and versatility of mushrooms. "Mushroom, have been a staple in Japanese cuisine for centuries... through this festival, we wanted to showcase their unique texture and gourmet appeal through authentic Japanese preparation in a specially curated menu," he said. Working with mushrooms can be tricky, given their delicate flavour, their original flavour is often lost if the spices are too loud. The exotic ones like the shiitake mushrooms require delicate handling. Jadhav said they managed to do this by the right pairing of the mushrooms with spices. Jadhav said they used Japanese techniques with minimal seasoning. "Slow simmering in miso based broths, light tempura frying and Teppanyaki grilling with soy and garlic butter allowed mushrooms to retain their textures and earthy notes," he said. Ponzu (a Japanese soy sauce), Mirin (sweet tangy rice wine), and tare sauce allowed the mushrooms to retain their original earthy taste.

India imposes 'uniquely burdensome' certification requirements: White House



GNS News Agency, April 8

New York: India imposes its "own uniquely burdensome" testing and certification requirements in sectors such as chemicals, telecom products, and medical devices, making it "difficult or costly" for American companies to sell their products in the country, the White House said. In a fact sheet issued after US President Donald Trump announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs on countries that levy taxes on US goods, the White House stated that non-tariff barriers — meant to limit the quantity of imports/exports and protect domestic industries — also deprive US manufacturers of reciprocal access to markets around the world. Citing the example of India, the White House fact sheet said: "India imposes its own uniquely burdensome and/or duplicative testing and certification requirements in sectors such as chemicals, telecom products, and medical devices that make it difficult or costly for American companies to sell their products in India. If these barriers were removed, it is estimated that US exports would increase by at least US\$ 5.3 billion annually." Trump announced a 26 per cent "discounted reciprocal tariff" on India, half of the 52 per cent levies imposed by the country on American goods, as he described India as "very, very tough."

The fact sheet, titled 'President Donald J Trump Declares National Emergency to Increase our Competitive Edge, Protect our Sovereignty, and Strengthen our National and Economic Security', noted that Trump has declared that foreign trade and economic practices have created a national emergency, and his order imposes responsive tariffs to strengthen the international economic position of the United States and protect American workers. On the issue

of addressing trade imbalances, the White House said that Trump is working to level the playing field for American businesses and workers by confronting the unfair tariff disparities and non-tariff barriers imposed by other countries. "For generations, countries have taken advantage of the United States, tariffing us at higher rates," it said, citing the example that the United States imposes a 2.5 per cent tariff on passenger vehicle imports (with internal combustion engines), while the European Union (10 per cent) and India (70 per cent) impose much higher duties on the same product. For networking switches and routers, the United States imposes a 0 per cent tariff, but India (10-20 per cent) levies higher rates. For rice in the husk, the US imposes a tariff of 2.7 per cent, while India (80 per cent), Malaysia (40 per cent), and Turkey (31 per cent) impose higher rates. Apples enter the United States duty-free, but not so in Turkey (60.3 per cent) and India (50 per cent).

"The United States has one of the lowest simple average most-favoured-nation (MFN) tariff rates in the world at 3.3 per cent, while many of our key trading partners, like Brazil (11.2 per cent), China (7.5 per cent), the European Union (5 per cent), India (17 per cent), and Vietnam (9.4 per cent), have simple average MFN tariff rates that are significantly higher," the White House fact sheet said. The White House stated in the fact sheet that China's non-market policies and practices have given China global dominance in key manufacturing industries, decimating US industry.

As he announced the tariffs from the Rose Garden in the White House, Trump held up a chart showing the tariffs that countries such as India, China, the European Union, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan levy on US products and the reciprocal levies that these countries will now have to pay. On India, the chart showed that the country charged 52 per cent tariffs on the US "including currency manipulation and trade barriers," and America will now charge India "discounted reciprocal tariffs" of 26 per cent. "India, very, very tough. Very, very tough. The Prime Minister just left. He's a great friend of mine, but I said, 'You're a friend of mine, but you're not treating us right.' They charge us 52 per cent. You have to understand, we charge them almost nothing, for years and years and decades, and it was only seven years ago, when I came in, that we started with China and we took in hundreds of billions of dollars from China in tariffs," Trump said.

The Public Well Revival Movement wants people in Tamil Nadu to reconnect with the ancient sustainable source of drinking water

GNS News Agency, April 8

We trek up a trail, on a hillock composed of damp, loose rock that cuts into finger millet fields, to reach Giri's tile-roofed home. It is within the many folds of Erode district's Bargur hills of the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu. He is not home, but his goats are. "Women walk up this stretch with a pot of water balanced on their hips up to 10 times a day," points out Madhu Manjari Selvaraj when we pause to catch our breaths near the goat shed. The world over, it is women who take it upon themselves to fetch water. It is no different in the mountain village of Solakanai. Here, women walk to a mountain stream for water every day. A few metres from the stream is their village well that, until a few months ago, was covered with boulders and sediment. It now brims with water and the promise of a new beginning after Manjari and her team from the Public Well Revival Movement took it into their fold. A handful of men used rocks sourced from the nearby hills to build a wall against the flow of the stream, after which the well was dredged, with a wall constructed around it. It was opened last month. The initiative, an offshoot of the Tamil Nadu-based Cuckoo Movement for Children, which strives to make childhood meaningful, has revived 15 defunct wells across the state over the past four years with crowd-funding. It is helmed by Manjari and her team that includes M. Mari Muthu, K. Rahunaman, V. Muthu, C. Bala Gurunathan, A. Arun Kumar and S. Mohan. Manjari, an architect, recently won the Doshi We Know Fellowship 2024-25 for her work. Architect Madhu Manjari Selvaraj of the Public Well Revival Movement. "Wells become unusable for various reasons," says Manjari. "They may be closed due to conflicts arising out of caste tensions; due to sand or rock filling them up over the years or simply because people have forgotten their existence owing to piped water connections." But the earth remembers. Despite being forgotten, water continues to spring forth from a well. The Public Well Revival Movement identifies such wells, reminding people in the village or town of its existence. After necessary permissions from local authorities, citizen's collectives, and the Forest Department are sought, it sets out to revive them with help from the locals themselves. Wells, says Manjari, are sustainable sources of water. While waterbodies such as ponds and lakes provide surface water, wells store groundwater and are hence able to keep regenerating. "A well connects four to five aquifers," she points out. The first well the group dredged was in Puliyanur village near Tiruvannamalai. The team that usually camps in local government schools or temples spent



almost three months in Puliyanur. At the end of the first month, they saw the first traces of clear water. The sun's reflection gleamed gold in it: it was a moment that filled the team with immense faith in their movement. It soon filled up and the villagers came to it in droves, pots in hand, unable to believe their dilapidated well was alive. The team then took up a well in Dhuruvam village in Kallakurichi district. "Women there were walking up to seven kilometres to reach a quarry to fetch water," says Manjari. The team later headed to Naickanoor village in Krishnagiri district, where they spent four months dredging a 28-feet-deep well. "A 90-year-old resident of the village would sit on his haunches by the side to observe us at work every day," she recalls. "When we got to the 27th feet, he said we would reach water after exactly one more foot. He then told us his father had contributed to digging the well 40 years ago." Solakanai's is the movement's fifth well located in a mountain village. The terrain — there are no proper roads from Bargur to the village — makes it almost impossible to transport construction material. "It took us six days to bring a truck load of M-sand to the site," says Manjari. At Agniabaavi in Kongadai, Erode district, the team dredged a well that the people wanted to share with cattle and elephants from the surrounding forests. "We constructed an outer wall with room for elephants to dip their trunks inside to drink," says Manjari. The night before the well's opening, a herd of elephants stopped by for a drink, declaring it open long before people could use it. Watching wells come alive has left the team with fascinating insights into the interaction between people and nature. "The tribal community of Bejjilthy mountain village in Erode calls water 'Gangai'," says Manjari. She recalls how once a little boy told her that children from their village do not hurl stones into wells. "They are being raised on the belief that wells are akin to a mother's breast."

Gains, losses, and politics in Andhra Pradesh

GNS News Agency, April 8

Ever since the Union government began discussing the delimitation exercise, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has made it clear that he supports the process, unlike his southern counterparts, led by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin. Supporting the NDA government's move, Mr. Naidu — who had earlier promoted family planning and spoken about population explosion — said that he has changed his view on population and is now promoting population growth, arguing that India's biggest advantage over developed nations is its demographic dividend. He further stated that even South Indian States, including Andhra Pradesh, were also facing the ageing issue, compared to northern States. And that is why he is now promoting population growth. In the recently concluded Assembly Budget session, Mr. Naidu made it clear that once the delimitation process is completed after the 2026 Census, the share of women in the Assembly would increase to 75 seats as per women's reservation norms. After securing a landslide victory in the 2024 General and Assembly elections and forming the NDA coalition government in Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Naidu overturned a three-decade-old

rule that disqualified candidates with more than two children from contesting local body polls. Now the question is whether his support for delimitation will isolate him from the other Southern States. Notably, he did not attend the meeting convened by Mr. Stalin. Mr. Naidu's absence from the meeting was expected, as his party, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), is part of the NDA, along with Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena Party. Interestingly, Mr. Naidu is aware that if the delimitation process is done after the 2026 Census, Andhra Pradesh's representation in the Lok Sabha will not increase substantially, unlike States such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. However, he has no other choice. As the leader of the TDP, Mr. Naidu is unlikely to repeat his past mistake of differing or opposing the BJP, as he had done before the 2019 elections. He not only lost the election by walking out of the NDA over the issue of Special Category Status for Andhra Pradesh, but also invited the wrath of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. The coalition deal was inked only days before the 2024 elections, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Kalyan. It is also worth noting that Mr. Naidu first formed the government in 2014, after Andhra Pradesh's bifurcation, with the support of the NDA.

Kashmir's Pulwama takes a leap to meet India's over 20 lakh annual tulip bulbs demand



GNS News Agency, April 8

Scientists in Kashmir have embarked on an ambitious project to indigenise tulip bulbs to make India self-reliant and match the skill and production of Netherlands, a major global exporter that meets the annual demand of India's 20-25 lakh tulip bulbs and cut flowers annually. This will also pave the way for hosting more blooming tulip gardens across the country, especially capital New Delhi. To realise the goal, over a lakh tulips are already in full bloom at the research centre of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine in Pulwama's Bonera area.

"The indigenisation of tulip bulb production in India is expected to bring significant changes to the country's floriculture sector. Currently, India imports around 20-25 lakh tulip bulbs and cut flowers annually, primarily from the Netherlands. By establishing sustainable production models for high-quality tulip bulbs, India will be able to meet its ever growing domestic demand while also creating opportunities to export tulip bulbs to international markets," Dr. Jitendra Singh, Minister of Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, told The Hindu, in an online interview. Spread over 60 hectares at an altitude of 5,400 feet, Pulwama's Bonera station is emerging as the launching pad of the ambitious project that also aims to see new tulip blooming destinations adding to India's tourism map in the future.

"The Ministry envisions establishing theme-based tulip gardens and production centers in regions with suitable agro-climatic conditions across the country. Given its temperate climate, J&K is poised to become a key hub for tulip

bulb production. In the coming years, the region is expected to match capabilities of the Netherlands in research and development on this novel floricultural crop, further strengthening India's position in the global floriculture industry," Mr. Singh said. The Union Minister said the Kashmir centre was developing "novel and elite varieties of high-value cut and bulbous crops, particularly tulips, to reduce import dependency and promote self-sufficiency in the sector". The Pulwama station already has eight varieties of tulips in its rows. Kashmir is home to the iconic Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden in Srinagar, which sees over 1.5 million flowers blooming every spring and attracts thousands of tourists from across the country. However, the region imports around 15 lakh bulbs every year from the Netherlands to curate Asia's biggest tulip garden. Over five lakh tulip bulbs were also planted in other parts of the country, mostly in New Delhi, officials said. The CSIR, however, felt the need to indigenise the bulbs. "India's floriculture industry has long faced economic and logistical challenges due to its heavy reliance on imported tulip bulbs. These imports are not only costly but also vulnerable to global market fluctuations, trade restrictions, and supply chain disruptions," Dr. Shahid Rasool, Senior Scientist and In-charge CSIR IIM Field Station Pulwama, said. Terming the Pulwama centre as a "strategic intervention", Mr. Rasool said it will also create new economic avenues for growers within India's floriculture sector. The department is planning to create farmers' clusters to boost production of tulip bulbs. The CSIR IIM has been carrying out trials to evaluate floral characteristics and adaptability, optimizing agro-technological protocols for large-scale cultivation since 2022. "We have been assessing resilience against pests, diseases, and climatic stresses. By refining these scientific parameters, the initiative aims to develop robust tulip varieties suited to local conditions. This has the potential to position J&K as a major hub for tulip production," Mr. Rasool said. Tulip cultivation, according to the scientists, offers an alternative and profitable income stream, particularly in regions where traditional agriculture is constrained by climatic or environmental limitations. "The long-term objective of this initiative extends beyond self-sufficiency; it envisions positioning J&K as a key player in the global floriculture industry. J&K has the potential to export high-quality tulip bulbs to international markets, competing with established global producers such as the Netherlands," he added.

China imposes 34% tariff on imports of all U.S. products starting April 10

GNS News Agency, April 8

China announced Friday (April 4, 2025) that it will impose a 34% tariff on imports of all U.S. products beginning April 10, part of a flurry of retaliatory measures following U.S. President Donald Trump's "Liberation Day" slate of double-digit tariffs. The new tariff matches the rate of the U.S. "reciprocal" tariff of 34% on Chinese exports Trump ordered this week. The Commerce Ministry in Beijing also said in a notice that it will impose more export controls on rare earths, which are materials used in high-tech products such as computer chips and electric vehicle batteries. Additionally, the Chinese government said it has added 27 firms to lists of companies subject to trade sanctions or export controls. Among them, 16 are subject to a ban on the export of "dual-use" goods. High Point Aeronautics, a defense tech company, and Universal Logistics Holding, a publicly traded transportation and logistics company, were among those listed.

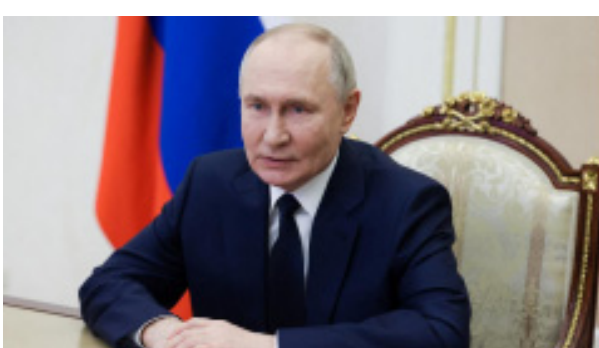
Beijing also announced it filed a lawsuit with the World Trade Organization over the tariffs issue. "The United States' imposition of so-called 'reciprocal tariffs' seriously violates WTO rules, seriously damages the legitimate rights and interests of WTO members, and seriously undermines the rules-based multilateral trading system and international



economic and trade order," the Commerce Ministry said.

"It is a typical unilateral bullying practice that endangers the stability of the global economic and trade order. China firmly opposes this," it said. In February, China announced a 15% tariff on imports of coal and liquefied natural gas products from the U.S. It separately added a 10% tariff on crude oil, agricultural machinery and large-engine cars. The latest tariffs apply to all products made in the U.S., according to a statement from the Ministry of Finance's State Council Tariff Commission.

Britain, France accuse Russia of delaying ceasefire talks; say Vladimir Putin 'owes' U.S. an answer



GNS News Agency, April 8

Britain and France on Friday (April 4, 2025) accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of dragging his feet in ceasefire talks to bring a halt to fighting in Ukraine and ramped up pressure on Moscow by insisting that he owes the United States an immediate answer. Russia has effectively rejected a U.S. proposal for a full and immediate 30-day halt in the fighting after a Kremlin official said on Monday (March 31, 2025) that Moscow views efforts to end its three-year war with Ukraine as "a drawn-out process." Russia, Ukraine trade overnight aerial attacks after Putin sets out conditions for ceasefire

"Our judgment is that Putin continues to obfuscate, continues to drag his feet," British Foreign Secretary David Lammy told reporters at NATO headquarters, standing alongside his French counterpart Jean-Noel Barrot in a symbolic show of unity. Britain and France are helping to lead a multinational effort known as the "coalition of the willing" to set up a force to police any future peace in Ukraine. Mr. Lammy said that while Mr. Putin should be accepting a ceasefire, "he continues to bombard Ukraine. It's civilian population. It's energy supplies. We see you, Vladimir Putin. We know what you are doing." Mr. Barrot said Ukraine had accepted ceasefire terms three weeks ago, and that Russia now "owes an answer to the United States." U.S. President Donald Trump has expressed frustration with Mr. Putin and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy after he promised last year to bring the war to a swift conclusion.

"Russia has been flip-flopping, continuing its strikes on energy infrastructure, continuing its war crimes," Mr. Barrot said. "It has to be 'yes.' It has to be 'no.' It has to be a quick answer." He said that Russia shows no intention of halting its military campaign, noting that Mr. Putin on Monday (March 31, 2025) ordered a call-up intended to draft 1,60,000 conscripts for a one-year tour of compulsory military service. The two Foreign Ministers pledged to continue

helping to build up Ukraine's armed forces — the country's best security guarantee since the U.S. took any prospect of NATO membership off the table. Coalition Army chiefs were due to meet in Kyiv on Friday. Defence Ministers from the group will meet at NATO headquarters next Thursday (April 10, 2025.)

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It's energy supplies. We see you, Vladimir Putin. We know what you are doing." Mr. Barrot said Ukraine had accepted ceasefire terms three weeks ago, and that Russia now "owes an answer to the United States." U.S. President Donald Trump has expressed frustration with Mr. Putin and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy after he promised last year to bring the war to a swift conclusion.

Bengaluru's Namma Metro: India's priciest transit

Mahindra Kumar, a daily metro rail commuter between Baijappanahalli and Cubbon Park, used to pay ₹19 earlier for a one-way ride. Now he pays ₹28. "I am paying ₹9 more for each trip, which adds up to ₹18 daily and over ₹500 a month. It may not seem like much to some, but for regular commuters like me, it's a burden," he says. Kumar's story is similar to that of lakhs of Namma Metro passengers who were in for more disappointment as the Karnataka High Court, on April 1, declined to intervene in the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited's decision to increase metro fares, dismissing a Public Interest Litigation petition that argued the hike amounted to a "breach of promise" as it exceeded previously stated limits.

The fare hike — the first revision in over seven years — has made Namma Metro the costliest transit service in India among the major cities with metro services. The revised fares, effective February 9, saw the maximum ticket price go up by 50%, from ₹60 to ₹90. The first fare revision since the metro began operations in Bengaluru in 2011 took place in 2017. The fare increase, implemented on February 9, in some cases, approached 100%. Amid public outrage, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah intervened on February 13, instructing BMRC Managing Director M. Maheshwar Rao to roll back "abnormal" fare hikes. Following this, BMRC adjusted the increase, limiting the maximum stage-wise fare hike to 71%. However, the base fare and the highest ticket price remained unchanged at ₹10 and ₹90, respectively. Under the revised pricing, the maximum fare has gone up from ₹60 to ₹90, while the minimum fare for the shortest distance (0-2 km) has remained at ₹10.

Under the revised pricing, the maximum fare has gone up from ₹60 to ₹90, while the minimum fare for the shortest distance (0-2 km) has remained at ₹10. | Photo Credit: special arrangement Under the revised pricing, the maximum fare rose from 60 to ₹90, while the minimum fare for the shortest distance (0-2 km) remained at 10. The fare for the 2-4 km distance increased from 15 to 20, while those travelling beyond 30 km now have to pay 90. The revised fares were implemented on February 14, with some commuters noticing reductions of 9 to 10 on certain routes.

Further aggravating commuter concerns, BMRC discontinued QR code-based fare discounts, restricting them solely to smart card users. Even for them, the discount has been reduced to 5%. Additionally, the minimum balance required on smart cards was raised from ₹50 to ₹90. However, a 5% off-peak discount remains available, bringing the total discount to 10% for those travelling outside rush hours — before 8 a.m., between 12 p.m. and 4 p.m., and after 9 p.m. on weekdays. A flat 10% discount is also applicable on Sundays and national holidays.

The fare revision also affects tourist and group passes, with new rates set at 300 for a one-day pass, 600 for a

three-day pass, and ₹800 for a five-day pass. The metro fare hike followed the Karnataka government's announcement of a 15% increase in bus fares. Chennai Metro provides a 20% discount for passengers using smart cards, National Common Mobility Cards, and online QR code tickets. The recent fare hike has made Bengaluru Metro the most expensive metro service in India. In contrast, Kolkata Metro, operated by Indian Railways, remains the most affordable, with fares starting at ₹5 for short distances and going up to a maximum of 50 for longer routes.

In contrast, for journeys beyond 25 km, Namma Metro now charges ₹90, whereas Delhi Metro's fare for distances over 32 km is ₹60, and Chennai Metro's is 50. Meanwhile, in Kolkata, the fare for trips between 25 and 30 km is just 25. Unlike Bengaluru, most other metro systems continue to offer discounts for both QR code and smart card users. Many commuters argue that removing the QR code discount in India's tech hub contradicts the vision of Digital India. Metro operators in Chennai and Kochi still offer a 20% discount on smart cards, QR codes, and WhatsApp tickets. BMRC has also raised the minimum balance requirement for smart cards from ₹50 to 90, a policy not seen in any other metro service in India. Since its launch in 2011, BMRC has issued around one crore smart cards. Additionally, the cost of daily and multi-day passes has increased significantly, with the one-day pass rising from ₹150 to 300, the three-day pass from 350 to 600, and the five-day pass from 550 to 800. It has also reduced discounts on smart cards and QR code tickets, while other metro systems across India continue to offer significant fare benefits. For instance, Delhi Metro provides multiple discounts to encourage ridership and affordability. Smart card users receive a 10% discount on every journey, with an additional 10% off during off-peak hours to promote staggered travel. Delhi Metro also offers discounted fares on Sundays and national holidays. Similarly, Chennai Metro provides a 20% discount for passengers using smart cards, National Common Mobility Cards, and online QR code tickets. Hyderabad Metro offers student passes where students get 10 free trips for every 20 trips purchased while Kochi Metro offers student passes, including the "Vidya" pass, with options for daily, 30-day, and 45-day travel, — an initiative that Bengaluru Metro does not provide.

Meanwhile, in Hyderabad, metro authorities are considering a fare hike, and a fare fixation committee has been appointed. The previous government had not allowed any fare increase due to the Assembly elections. L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad, which built and operates the project under a public-private partnership. Kolkata Metro, operated by Indian Railways, remains the most affordable, with fares starting at ₹5 for short distances and going up to a maximum of ₹50 for longer routes. The cost of two end-to-end metro trips

has now jumped from 120 to ₹180, making shared cabs or autos a more economical choice for families travelling together. Unlike Delhi and Chennai, Bengaluru lacks a shared autorickshaw system, and the limited BMTC feeder bus service forces commuters to rely on expensive private autorickshaws or bike taxis for last-mile connectivity. With the High Court on March 2 directing aggregators to stop bike taxis, it will soon no longer be an option. Those using personal vehicles must also bear the added expense of parking fees at metro stations.

Since the fare hike, commuters have expressed their discontent online and through on-ground protests, including demonstrations inside metro trains. Many have voiced concerns that the increased costs are making public transport unaffordable, pushing people toward private vehicles instead. Ridership data for Namma Metro indicates a sharp decline following the fare hike on February 9. Before the increase (February 2-7), the average daily boardings stood at 8,44,899, peaking at 8,70,687 on February 7. However, post-hike (February 9-14), average daily ridership dropped to 7,51,560, with a drastic dip on February 9 (6,23,123), the lowest recorded during this period. This suggests an immediate impact, as many commuters may have switched to alternative transport options due to higher fares.

In Delhi Metro, smart card users get a 10% discount, with an additional 10% off during off-peak hours. There is a discount on Sundays and national holidays. In Delhi Metro, smart card users get a 10% discount, with an additional 10% off during off-peak hours. There is a discount on Sundays and national holidays. | Photo Credit: MOORTHY R.V.

Why it is most expensive BMRC stated that the fare hike was based on recommendations from a fare fixation committee (FFC) appointed by the Union government on September 7, 2024. The committee, chaired by a former High Court judge, submitted its report on December 16, suggesting a fare revision after considering operational costs, passenger feedback, and expert consultations.

BMRC Managing Director M. Maheshwar Rao explained that the FFC had recommended fare increases of up to 105.15%, resulting in an average hike of 51.5% (6.87% per year). However, the final revision was lower than the 14.02% annual increase initially proposed by BMRC. Passengers argued that the increased fares would force low-income commuters to revert to private vehicles, further worsening Bengaluru's already severe traffic congestion — an issue the metro was meant to alleviate. Critics also highlighted that despite the Namma Metro covering only 76 km, it now has a maximum fare of ₹90, whereas the 353 km-long Delhi Metro charges just ₹60 for trips exceeding 32 km.

BMRC cited Section 37 of the Metro Railway Opera-



tions and Maintenance (O&M) Act, 2002, which states that FFC recommendations are binding. However, critics pointed to Tamil Nadu's 2021 decision, when the then Chief Minister, Edappadi K. Palaniswami, reduced Chennai Metro fares despite similar recommendations. Rao admitted that technical errors had impacted the fare calculations and announced corrections to the pricing structure. "This revision aligns with the spirit of the Fare Fixation Committee's recommendations while addressing commuter concerns," he said. Political showdown The fare hike has sparked a political showdown between the ruling Congress and the opposition BJP. BJP leaders submitted a memorandum to BMRC demanding a rollback, accusing the Congress government of burdening citizens with higher fares.

The Congress, however, shifted the blame to the BJP-led Central government. Karnataka Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy stated, "BMRC revised fares based on recommendations from the fare fixation committee constituted by the BJP-led Centre. Let the BJP explain why it is truly responsible." Under mounting pressure, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah intervened on February 13, directing BMRC to reverse the "abnormal" fare increases. "The way BMRC has implemented the fare revision has led to anomalies, with fares more than doubling in some sections," he wrote on social media platform X. "I have asked the MD of BMRC to urgently address these issues and reduce fares where increases are abnormal."

This statement contradicted his earlier stance that the Karnataka government had no control over BMRC's fare decisions, as the metro operates autonomously under a 50:50 partnership between the State and Centre.

Reasons for higher cost When asked why and how fares remain lower in Kolkata and other cities but not in Bengaluru, a BMRC official explained that Kolkata Metro is operated by Indian Railways, which heavily subsidises passenger fares. In Delhi, the Union government covers the cost of CISF security, whereas, in Bengaluru, a significant portion of revenue is allocated to staff salaries.

Shot dead at 19, how Jyoti Hemla went from being an ashram school girl to a Maoist



It was a grim police handout photograph — eyes closed, a trickle of dried blood on the left side of her temple. "Unidentified Maoist," read the description in the note released on February 9, after one of the biggest anti-Maoist operations in Chhattisgarh. Police later identified the girl in the photograph as Jyoti Hemla, one of the 31 Maoists killed that day in the forests of the Indravati National Park in Bijapur. How did a 19-21-year old who until a few years ago studied in a government school in Bijapur end up in the forests of Indravati? It's a question Jyoti's family has been grappling with since the encounter, as the family waited for hours at the district hospital to take her body home after the post-mortem procedure, her uncle Bhadrhu Hemla had burst into tears. "Bahut hi achi bachhi thi, sir. Yahan Bijapur ke porta cabin me padhi thi (She was a very good girl. She used to study in a portacabin school in Bijapur)," he said.

Portacabin schools were introduced by the Chhattisgarh government in 2010 for children in Naxal-affected areas of the state to tackle the loss of education as Maoists destroyed several school buildings. The portacabin schools continue till date, housing 28,000 children in Bijapur. At the portacabin in Bijapur where Jyoti studied, the teachers said they were new and refused to share records of past students. When asked about Jyoti, Bijapur SP Jitendra Yadav directed The Indian Express to the press release issued a day after the encounter in which Jyoti was identified as a member of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) with a bounty of Rs 2 lakh on her head. The note also said that among the 31 killed were six 21-year-olds, including Jyoti, and eight 20-year-olds. The Indian Express visited Sawnar, a village in Bijapur district, to track Jyoti's journey — from the portacabin school that is few kilometres away from the Bijapur Collectorate and the police headquarters, to dropping out in while in Class 3, and finally joining the Maoist ranks in 2021 at the age of 16. Jyoti Hemla was one of the 31 Maoists killed in an encounter on February 9 in the forests of the Indravati National Park in Bijapur.

A village nearly 30 kilometers from the district headquarters in Bijapur, Sawnar falls in Gangaloor, an area that is known to be a recruitment, training and high-level meeting centre of Maoists. Top police sources said that many of the Maoist cadres gunned down over the last few decades in Chhattisgarh as well as neighbouring states were from Gangaloor. At Sawnar, only her minor sister was home, picking mahua flowers from a tree in their compound. Her mother had gone deep into the jungles with other women to gather mahua, while her father and a brother had gone to Telangana to "pluck chillies". Her two other brothers studied in an ashram school in Bijapur while her married elder sister lived in another village. Jyoti's uncle Laxman Hemla, 40, and her 17-year-old cousin, both speaking on the phone, and her childhood friend and neighbour (name withheld) spoke about all that had gone wrong. Laxman said, "Jyoti was born in 2005, sometime in May or June. Though barely anyone in our village has a birth certificate, I vividly remember her

birth year as she was born around the time the Salwa Judum was set up." Like most other children from Gangaloor, Jyoti and her childhood friend joined the portacabin school in Bijapur. While the friend stayed on, Jyoti dropped out in Class 3 to help her parents with household work and to collect forest produce.

"I last met her in 2023, after she joined the Sangathan (Maoists). She came to the village with a couple of Maoists. She asked me about my studies and what they teach in school. She said she missed school. I asked her why she had dropped out and she said that she had no time for studies now that she was with the Sangathan. She loved mangoes and took some with her when she went back. She didn't ask me to join the Sangathan but when I asked her to leave, she said they wouldn't let her," the friend said. Her uncle Laxman says Jyoti joined the Maoists years after she dropped out of the portacabin school and, like most other child recruits, was influenced by the Chaitya Natya Mandal (CNM), a cultural wing of the Maoists. Police sources said Jyoti joined the Jantana Sarkar school run by the Maoists in Sawnar before becoming a part of the CNM. Jyoti's uncle Laxman said, "They took her away by the end of 2021. I told her to quit the movement many times but she would simply look down and say no. She would say, 'Dinesh bhaiya (Dinesh Mudiyan, a Divisional Committee Member) ne bola hai kitna bhi bolenge to bhi chodna nahi hai (people will keep asking you to quit but do not leave the organisation)."

Incidentally, earlier this month, Dinesh — who has 26 murder cases to his name and who was allegedly involved in two attacks on security forces, in 2005 and 2017, killing seven jawans — surrendered to the police along with his wife. Police sources said the 26 cases against him are likely to be closed. Police sources admit that the recruitment of children remains a concern, especially in Bijapur villages beyond the Indravati River and the Indravati National Park, where there is little presence of the State. "The villagers have no choice. The Maoists force them to send at least one child from their family to join the Maoist organisation," said Inspector General of Police for Bastar Range, Sundarraj P. Though police say many Maoists from Gangaloor have been surrendering over the last two years, their influence was evident when a 45-kg command Improvised Explosive Device (IED) was planted on the Palnar road near a police camp on Friday, March 28, a week after 26 Maoists were gunned down in south Gangaloor on March 20.

The power of 'not' | Notes from the 10th Symposium in the Literary Activism Series

Prefixing any straitjacketed definition with a defiant "not" can produce startling results. Much like Kabir's 'ulatbansi' (upside-down sayings) or the Advaita philosophy of 'neti neti' (not this, not that), it is a stream of consciousness that moves beyond the blindspots of binary thought, resisting convenient categorisation. Only fitting then that modernist writer Virginia Woolf was the toast of the 10th Symposium in the Literary Activism Series in New Delhi last week, centred on "the non-peer reviewed essay", a work that is more spontaneous, imaginative, intellectual, "essayistic" and, more importantly, immune to slaughter at the conformist hands of "peer review". Jon Cook, Emeritus Professor of Literature at the University of East Anglia, said that the essay stemmed from a festering "self-doubt" when imperialist forces started digging their feet in foreign lands. For it to develop dialogue between the "philosophical eye" and "conversable crowd", it needs the firm footedness of "experience". He further quoted from a Woolf essay to describe the "transition, the invention of self", that the form of the essay might facilitate. Interesting assumptions, each one intersecting with, and adding to, what an essay can (not) entail, emerged from the two-day event, helmed by scholar-

The Public Well Revival Movement wants people in Tamil Nadu to reconnect with the ancient sustainable source of drinking water



We trek up a trail, on a hillock composed of damp, loose rock that cuts into finger millet fields, to reach Giri's tile-roofed home. It is within the many folds of Erode district's Bargur hills of the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu. He is not home, but his goats are. "Women walk up this stretch with a pot of water balanced on their hips up to 10 times a day," points out Madhu Manjari Selvaraj when we pause to catch our breaths near the goat shed. The world over, it is women who take it upon themselves to fetch water. It is no different in the mountain village of Solakanai.

Here, women walk to a mountain stream for water every day. A few metres from the stream is their village well that, until a few months ago, was covered with boulders and sediment. It now brims with water and the promise of a new beginning after Manjari and her team from the Public Well Revival Movement took it into their fold. A handful of men used rocks sourced from the nearby hills to build a wall against the flow of the stream, after which the well was dredged, with a wall constructed around it. It was opened last month. The initiative, an off-shoot of the Tamil Nadu-based Cuckoo Movement for Children, which strives to make childhood meaningful, has revived 15 defunct wells across the state over the past four years with crowd-funding. It is helmed by Manjari and her team that includes M. Mari Muthu, K. Rahuraman, V. Muthu, C. Bala Gurunathan, A. Arun Kumar and S. Mohan. Manjari, an architect, recently won the Doshi We Know Fellowship 2024-25 for her work.

"Wells become unusable for various reasons," says

Manjari. "They may be closed due to conflicts arising out of caste tensions; due to sand or rock filling them up over the years or simply because people have forgotten their existence owing to piped water connections." But the earth remembers. Despite being forgotten, water continues to spring forth from a well. The Public Well Revival Movement identifies such wells, reminding people in the village or town of its existence. After necessary permissions from local authorities, citizen's collectives, and the Forest Department are sought, it sets out to revive them with help from the locals themselves. Wells, says Manjari, are sustainable sources of water. While waterbodies such as ponds and lakes provide surface water, wells store groundwater and are hence able to keep regenerating. "A well connects four to five aquifers," she points out. The first well the group dredged was in Puliyanur village near Tiruvannamalai. The team that usually camps in local government schools or temples spent almost three months in Puliyanur. At the end of the first month, they saw the first traces of clear water. The sun's reflection gleamed gold in it: it was a moment that filled the team with immense faith in their movement. It soon filled up and the villagers came to it in droves, pots in hand, unable to believe their dilapidated well was alive. The team then took up a well in Dhuruvam village in Kallakurichi district. "Women there were walking up to seven kilometres to reach a quarry to fetch water," says Manjari. The team later headed to Naickanoor village in Krishnagiri district, where they spent four months dredging a 28-foot-deep well. "A 90-year-old resident of the village would sit on his haunches by the side to observe us at work every day," she recalls. "When we got to the 27th feet, he said we would reach water after exactly one more foot. He then told us his father had contributed to digging the well 40 years ago."

Solakanai's is the movement's fifth well located in a mountain village. The terrain — there are no proper roads from Bargur to the village — makes it almost impossible to transport construction material. "It took us six days to bring a truck load of M-sand to the site," says Manjari. At Agnibaavi in Kongadai, Erode district, the team dredged a well that the people wanted to share with cattle and elephants from the surrounding forests. "We constructed an outer wall with room for elephants to dip their trunks inside to drink," says Manjari. The night before the well's opening, a herd of

writer Amit Chaudhari. One panellist compared the Hindi variant 'nibandhi' (one without any 'boundation' as he puts it) with its Bengali or Odia counterpart 'prabandhi' (one with form). Poet-professor Sumana Roy believed the essay to be a way of 'genre-defiance', genre being a very masculine, rigid entity, while Yale University's Cynthia Zarin thought it to be a container to hold discursive thoughts. Dwelling on his decade-long engagement with the series, Chaudhari said the aim was to zoom in on intelligent, thoughtful, playful exchanges, to listen to them and learn from them. The extension of the symposium into a full-fledged online magazine, as well as a dedicated imprint which doesn't bow down to market forces, are his ways of engaging with and chronicling these ongoing conversations. In the coming years, Chaudhari wishes for the symposium to move to Kolkata and other parts of the country, to "democratise knowledge and rescue these conversations from the stranglehold of academia". "Trust the tale, not the genre's non-fiction only based on verifiable facts, and is fiction its made-up version? Is non-fiction (non) fiction, a dry and drab fact sheet sans narrative and storytelling, the two central tenets of creative writing? How do these forms interact and intersect

with each other in a world dominated by free market capitalism? Chaudhari chose the cinematic equivalent of non-fiction — the documentary — to illustrate his point. In focus was Anand Patwardhan's "bold and perspicacious" Ram Ke Naam (In the Name of God), based on the 1992 demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. Chaudhari seemed least concerned with the historicity of the events; the quotidian shots of a milestone, an empty stretch of road, and two chatting farmers piquing his interest instead. These marginal people or objects, simultaneously in and out of the narrative, he said, offer a "looseness, unfinishedness, and distractedness to narrative" making the tale take a flight of its own, without the constrictions of genre, so that we, as viewers "trust the tale, and not the genre". Author Saikat Majumdar made a convincing case for the public essay at a time when emotion is animating public conscience. Underlining the Hobbesian theory that pits 'public sphere' as a corrective space against the excesses of state, he stressed on the need for an effective emotion — a co-mingling of the 'rational' and 'emotional' — for effective dissemination of information. While the turnout at the symposium remained lower than one expected, it was exciting to see specialists from various fields in attendance.

For Nimisha Priya, Indian nurse on death row for murder in Yemen, hope hangs by a thread — a pardon from victim's family



clinic of her own and he hoped to raise funds from well-wishers back home. His departure was followed by the civil war in Yemen in September 2014, after which India imposed travel restrictions to the conflict-ridden country. Three years later, Nimisha was arrested for murdering 24-year-old Talal. In an open letter released by Nimisha after her arrest, she accused Talal of mental, physical and financial abuse. The 2017 letter and accounts shared by Nimisha with her mother and husband paint a picture of how her business plans in Yemen went all wrong. Talal Talal Abdo Mehdi, the Yemeni citizen whose murder Nimisha has been convicted of.

According to Nimisha's letter, it was around October 2014 that she met Talal, whose family frequented the clinic where she worked. During a conversation with Nimisha, Talal is said to have expressed his desire to see India, while she shared with him her plan to open her own clinic. Since Yemeni laws require local partnership in ventures started by foreigners, Nimisha, the letter said, sought help from Talal in completing the paperwork for the proposed clinic. The letter stated, "I gave Talal the money (6 lakh Yemen riyal) to pay the building owner and complete the paperwork for the clinic." Accompanied by Talal, her family said, Nimisha arrived in Kerala for her daughter's baptism in January 2015. She returned to Yemen a month later with the funds Thomas had raised. "Then the war in Yemen got worse and India issued a travel ban. That was the last time my daughter and I saw Nimisha," Thomas had told The Indian Express last year. Nimisha, meanwhile, proceeded with her business plan with Talal's help. Nimisha, raised by a single mother, Nimisha was in her 20s when she left for Yemen to work as a nurse at a health centre outside Yemen's capital city of Sanaa. According to the letter, following the launch of her clinic on April 17, 2015, Talal allegedly got fake papers claiming a 33 per cent share in the business. Nimisha also accused him of torturing her for money, taking away her passport and other documents and getting a fake marriage certificate made to show them as a couple. She filed a police complaint against Talal in Sanaa, but the dispute landed both of them in jail. According to a court order dated February 16, 2016, Talal returned to Nimisha the documents related to the clinic and property. While both of them were released from jail, Talal went back to jail in another cheating case. According to her letter, Nimisha, meanwhile, kept visiting Talal in jail to persuade him to return her passport and get him to sign on the divorce papers. In July 2017, during one of those visits, Nimisha allegedly injected Talal with sedatives, leading to his death.

In 2020, a trial court awarded Nimisha three death sentences. The appeal court expunged one of these death sentences, a verdict which was upheld by the Supreme Court of Yemen. A family's agonising wait Nimisha's mother Prema Kumari said they learnt about her troubles through the media. "It was through others that Tomy (Nimisha's husband Tomy Thomas) got to know that Nimisha was in jail. I came to know about the incident only through newspaper reports of her conviction on May 5, 2018," Prema Kumari had told earlier. Back in Kerala, Thomas, an auto driver, shifted his 13-year-old daughter to a residential school to keep the news of her mother's death sentence from her. "We have told her that her mother is in jail due to some trouble. I delete all messages related to the case before giving her my phone. At school, the teachers have been told not to talk about the case. If Nimisha makes it to the news, I call the school to ensure the newspaper is kept away from students that day."

With Yemen President Rashad al-Alimi approving the death sentence for 37-year-old Indian nurse Nimisha Priya, for her family in Kerala, any hope of reprieve now hangs by a thread — a pardon from the family of Talal Abdo Mehdi, the Yemeni citizen whose murder she has been convicted of. According to the prosecution's case, Nimisha, who worked as a nurse in Yemen, allegedly murdered Talal in July 2017 by "injecting him with sedatives to get her passport that was in his possession".

Samuel Jerome Baskaran, a social worker who is currently involved in the negotiations with government officials in Yemen and Talal's family, told The Indian Express that the President's order reached the prosecutor on Monday, December 30. "The key to Nimisha's life now rests with the family of Talal. She will live if they forgive her. Our job is to convince the family to do that," he told Samuel, however, said the negotiators were chasing a very tight deadline. "We had an excellent first phase of mediation. We established contact with Talal's family, but the mediation did not continue because the Save Nimisha Priya International Action Council (set up in 2020 to raise the required funds for negotiations) did not send the second installment of funds. Our immediate task is to resume the negotiations and hopefully, get Talal's family to forgive her, because all legal options have been exhausted. We have barely four weeks left with us," he said. Advocate Deepa Joseph, Vice-Chairperson of the Save Nimisha Action Council, said an amount of \$40,000 was required for the negotiations and the legal process. "Earlier, we had paid \$20,000 via the Indian mission to the lawyer in Yemen. Due to some confusion within the Action Council, the remaining amount could not be transferred. We have now transferred the second installment of the negotiation amount through the Indian mission in capital Sanaa," she said. On December 31, the Ministry of External Affairs said it would extend "all possible help" to Nimisha. Since April, Nimisha's mother Prema Kumari, a domestic worker in Kochi, has been camping in Yemen. In December last year, Kumari had approached the Delhi High Court to secure an exemption from the travel ban to conflict-ridden Yemen. Since her arrival in Sanaa, Kumari has had a few meetings with Nimisha in prison, Samuel said. A business plan gone awry

Raised by a single mother, Nimisha was in her 20s when she left for Yemen to work as a nurse at a health centre outside Yemen's capital city of Sanaa. In 2011, she returned to Kerala to marry Tomy Thomas, then a driver in Qatar, before returning to Yemen with him. Thomas told The Indian Express that in mid-2014, he returned to Kerala with their infant daughter since Nimisha wanted to open a

The year of the 'sakhi'

2024 was the year the International Olympic Committee voted for numerical gender parity. A revolutionary mandate. There was equal representation of men and women at the world's most elite and most celebrated sports event of the year, the Paris Olympics. India kept pace — at least in cinema. In 2024, quite a few films passed the Bechdel Test. An unofficial invention by American cartoonist Alison Bechdel in 1985 in her comic strip Dykes To Watch Out For, it goes so: For any given work of fiction to pass the Bechdel Test, it must 1) have at least two women in it 2) talk to each other, about 3) something other than a man. A blunt and basic measure of gender equality in a book/film/show.

Indian women directors and screenwriters sliced up the clutter of big-budget, star-fuelled spectacles with huge dollops of novelty. Their narratives draw on their experiences and their gaze on the human condition: Payal Kapadia's All We Imagine As Light, the most celebrated around the world; Shuchi Talati's Girls Will Be Girls; Kiran Rao's Laapataa Ladies; Lakshmi Priya Devi's Boong, set entirely in Manipur, which had its world premiere at the 2024 Toronto International Film Festival under the 'Discovery' section; Sandhya Suri's Santosh, UK's official entry to the Oscars; Rima Das's Village Rockstars 2, a rare indie sequel; Nishtha Jain's immersive documentary Farming the Revolution, set in the farmers' protests of 2023, which won Best International Feature at Hot Docs 2024. Nothing prepared movie lovers, critics and curators for the staggering response Kapadia's All We Imagine As Light received on the international stage from May onwards. A film written and directed by an Indian woman in her mid-30s, with a cast that included actresses from Malayalam cinema and Marathi/Hindi cinema, in three Indian languages, about three women working in the lower rungs of a medium-sized medical establishment, about inter-faith love, and female camaraderie and resistance, won the Cannes Grand Prix. The Cannes feed showed the four women, Kapadia, Malayalam actresses Kani Kusruti and Divya Prabha, and Marathi/Hindi actress Chhaya Kadam accept the honours for their work flaunting Indian glamour, quiet confidence and Cheshire Cat grins. Actresses Kani Kusruti and Chhaya Kadam are each in two of these films — Kusruti in All We Imagine As Light, as well as Girls Will Be Girls, and Chhaya Kadam in All We Imagine As Light as well as Laapataa Ladies. Both primarily act in regional language films — Malayalam and Marathi. Both are what every groomed, branded, radiant star actress in Indian films is not. Kusruti was born in rural Kerala to social activist and rationalist parents, who had dropped their last names to erase the social hierarchy marker that comes with last names in India. At 15, she invented her last name 'Kusruti' (meaning 'mischievous' in Malayalam) to fill in a requirement in her class 10th exam application. She studied physical theatre in Kerala and Paris before acting in Malayalam films. Kadam, also with a formidable background in Marathi theatre, is known for her roles in Nagraj Manjule films, Fandry, Sairat, and Jhund, which demand her to engage with social realities as much as with acting craft.

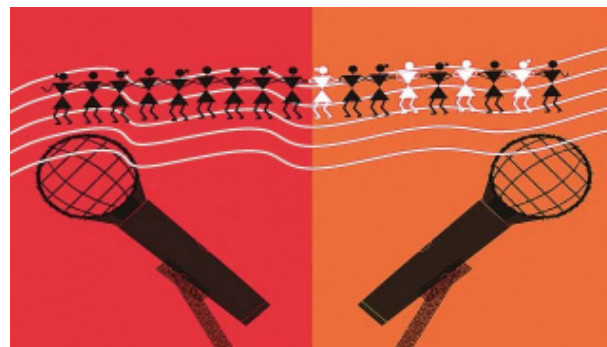
Kapadia's three lead characters in the film, Prabha (Kusruti), Anu (Prabha) and Parvati (Kadam) could be characters from any great film by Satyajit Ray or Shyam Benegal — attuned to feelings of drift, up against a system unfriendly to them and yet deeply rooted in a sense of place and to their work. In the film's most revelatory moments, Prabha's



melancholic-eyed wisdom about life and Anu's determination to experience joy don't clash; they harmonise. As it does also in Rao's Laapataa Ladies, which was India's official entry to the Oscars for 2024. Friendship, these two films remind us, can be a profound act of resistance. For each other, Prabha, Anu, Paravaty, or Manju Maai and Phool in Laapataa Ladies, or for Mira and Anila in Girls Will Be Girls, are like family (you need, or hate, or can't forsake them), a beloved (you are jealous, and you are so sensitive to their slights) and also an alternative self, all squashed into one.

In Rao's splendid social comedy, the astute and cynical street brio of Manju Maai (Kadam), a chai-seller at a railway junction and Phool (Nitanshi Goel), simmers hope in the young, just married (and separated from her husband because of a bizarre and entirely believable twist in the plot) Phool like she makes chai: always on a boil, always ready to be stirred, always on survival mode. Hope is a balm, respite as well as a propeller also in Kapadia's film — when Prabha sinks to the floor of her kitchen one rainy night and folds her husband's gift in a silent, wrenching embrace as if the red rice cooker contains her every last grain of her hope; when the three friends embrace the youngest's inter-faith love, shooting the sea breeze at a village beach shack in rural Ratnagiri, hope is the emotion, accented by their beautiful sense of surrender to camaraderie, and to be beside each other. The climactic moment in All We Imagine As Light is sublime in its quiet resistance to the crushing pressure of living with so less of visibility in society, and so much of traditional binds. Talati's Girls Will Be Girls is about a mother and a daughter, and here too, the intangible becomes a resolution — for the plot as well as for the characters. Mira the daughter (Preeti Panigrahi) and Anila the mom (Kusruti) don't end up cementing their frenemy tugs that puncture almost the entire film. They can never break each other; in contrast, the film ends with a quiet sense of possibility and hope. Even as the mom-daughter relationship grows more fraught, their interdependence more complicated, there is the unspoken sense, through a scene where the daughter is oiling her mother's hair, that they are emotionally and psychologically conjoined. And this is what's interesting about friendship as the basis for all these stories: Their elasticity. Romance lends itself to declarations, defining events, hurdles and societal preconditions to accept or fight, but friendship eludes these things. These films, and a mainstream OTT film, Crew (Kareena Kapoor Khan, Tabu and Kriti Sanon as air hostesses) reclaim the female friendship narrative like no other time in Indian film history. A topping of the saas-bahu canon, a new gaze on how women exist for each other and the world, a serum to cure the normalised anti-individual staples of womanhood in Indian movies —

In Chennai, two concerts showed Carnatic music has a place for T M Krishna and his right-wing critics



The 2024 edition of the December music "season" in Chennai crested with two contrasting recitals bookending Christmas Day. At 9 am, the curtain rose on T M Krishna at the Music Academy to cheers and applause that would not have been out of place at a rock concert. At 6 pm that evening, Krishna's fiercest critics, the sisters Ranjani and Gayatri (RaGa to their fans), who had refused to participate in the Music Academy's festival, held their audience spellbound at the Narada Gana Sabha, barely half a kilometre from the Academy. Between them, the two kutchcheris showed how the Carnatic tradition can move on, and even thrive, after nearly a year of acrimony.

Krishna had stopped singing at the Music Academy and other Chennai sabhas about a decade ago, accusing them of Brahmin elitism. No community in the world is as closely associated with a high-brow cultural tradition as Tamil Brahmins are with Carnatic music (and its dance sibling Bharatanatyam) and the Music Academy has been their unrivalled bastion. Only Germanic Jews with Western classical music come close. Therefore, when the Music Academy decided to award Krishna its highest honour of Sangeeta Kalanidhi in March 2024, it caused a kerfuffle. Conservative rasikas accused the institution of pandering to a "woke" leftist who had tarnished the tradition by accusing revered icons — the composer Thyagaraja and the vocalist MS Subbulakshmi — of casteism and undermining its Hindu devotional roots by singing in praise of Allah and Jesus Christ. Carnatic stars such as RaGa and the Trichur Brothers announced that they would not perform at the Academy's December festival. Behind all this was the politics of Hindutva ('Hindutva, music and the elite', IE, March 27, 2024) provoked by Krishna's mockery of the Ram temple in Ayodhya and his endorsement of Periyar, the Dravidian movement founder known for his anti-Brahmin rhetoric.

Krishna's Christmas morning performance was therefore a homecoming of sorts (he had sung at the Academy at a lower profile event last year). He had insisted that it be a free concert, in keeping with his campaign for Carnatic music to be more inclusive. Free entry, of course, ensured the hall was packed (unlike on previous days of this "season" when many of the usual rasikas kept away, likely put off by the controversy). They were rewarded by a trademark unconventional performance. For two-and-a-half hours, Krishna sang, seated cross-legged in a twin-toned lungi, slightly turned towards his violinist. As someone observed, this was rather like Roger Federer turning up at Wimbledon in striped shorts and serving from the middle of the baseline (Carnatic vocalists typically sit at right angles to their main accompanists, clad, if male, in crisp white veshtis). Krishna served up many more breaks with concert convention: Opening his recital with an extended 22-minute-long exposition of Thyagaraja's "Karubaru" (rather than a brisk varnam or krithi), starting the next song, "Lavanya Rama", with the middle verse and then returning to the opening pallavi to improvise upon it, rendering three pieces, including a serene Dikshitar krithi, with minimal accompaniment and skip-

ping a ragam-tanam-pallavi, the highpoint of a Carnatic concert and de rigeur at the Academy.

Krishna's political leanings also featured in rousing lyrics espousing freedom of expression, by the Tamil writer Perumal Murugan. For his closing pieces, he chose a song on the travails of a Dalit devotee of Siva and a composition by Narayana Guru, the late 19th and early 20th century social reformer from Kerala, which referred to Buddha, Christ, and the Prophet Mohammed, alongside Hindu deities, while probing the identity of the divine. But it was Krishna's command of the classical idiom that shone through, not least in the three Thyagaraja krithis that he sang, and in his main piece in Kalyani by Swathi Tirunal. Carnatic's enfant terrible, extended an olive branch to his critics by concluding his kutcheri with "Dhava Vibho", a Marathi bhajan that M S had popularised; Krishna had also pointedly praised M S in his Academy address a few days earlier. The standing ovation that greeted him at the end suggested that he had made his point: Carnatic music can innovate and be more inclusive without compromising its classicism. The RaGa sisters' nearly three-hour concert to a mostly-packed (and ticketed) house was as steeped in tradition as Krishna's was unconventional. Resplendent in their yellow-and-black Kanjeevaram silks and wearing jasmine flowers in their hair, RaGa looked straight from Carnatic central casting. However, while they stuck to convention in their concert format and musical form, their content was just as political as Krishna's.

Gayatri set the tone at the very outset with her assertion that Carnatic music is inextricably intertwined with bhakti and the programme was replete with pieces ingrained with Hindu devotionalism. And what glorious music this was, even to my irreligious ear! But no Christ, the Prophet, or even the Buddha figured in their verses — indeed, they sang praising our nation as the land of Rama, Krishna, and Vittala. Their sublime ragam-tanam-pallavi in Jaunpuri had as its pallavi (equivalent to the bandish in Hindustani) a Tamil line celebrating Bharat as an upholder of dharma since time immemorial. RaGa's uncritical nationalism tinged with Hindu revivalist sentiments made me cringe but it was hard not to be moved by their stirring patriotic composition in Desh, sung in Sanskrit, Tamil, Brijbhasha and Marathi. The choice of Desh, and Jaunpuri earlier — both ragas derived from Hindustani music — and the multilingual renditions underlined Carnatic's catholicism and relative lack of parochiality. In one sense, RaGa may actually have been more inclusive than Krishna. They made it a point to announce each of their pieces while Krishna uncharacteristically stuck with the elitist practice of seldom naming his song or its raga.

These two performances demonstrated that Carnatic music is capacious enough to accommodate both a "left wing" Krishna and the "right wing" RaGa sisters. No classical art form can remain relevant without constantly evolving. While bhakti is undeniably foundational to Carnatic, the tradition also has more recent strands that espouse reform and protest, and celebrate other faiths. Likewise, the current Carnatic concert format, while only a century old, already feels stale in certain aspects. Krishna is only the latest artist to push its boundaries; indeed, others have done so without being sanctimonious, as he has sometimes been. The Music Academy has a crucial role to play in ensuring that Carnatic music thrives. Its leadership showed courage in honouring Krishna for his stellar musicianship, despite him being out of favour with the BJP and the adherents of Hindutva. Now, perhaps, it can reinforce its commitment to musical excellence by naming the equally deserving RaGa sisters as its next Sangita Kalanidhis, despite their public diatribe against the institution for honouring Krishna. Would such magnanimity be too much to ask for?

A WhatsApp group, a network of doctors, and thousands of lives saved: How Kashmir is curbing heart attack deaths

In 2016, a 35-year-old pilgrim undertaking the long trek to the Amarnath cave suffered a heart attack in the Baltal area of Jammu and Kashmir's Ganderbal district. As he was brought into the makeshift medical bay set up for pilgrims, a young doctor — unsure of administering drugs to thrombolysed the patient — called his senior, cardiologist Dr Imran Hafeez, for assistance. "He was a bit unsure, but I told him to stay on the call and administer the drug. Once the pain settled, the patient was brought over to the Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) in Srinagar and saved just in time," Dr Hafeez told. The incident was the spark that led to the creation of a network of doctors across J&K that has been working on ensuring that patients on the peripheries of the state's healthcare infrastructure get the required treatment within the "golden hour" — the first 60 minutes after a heart attack, during which proper treatment can significantly improve chances of survival.

The network, Save Heart Foundation, connects over 1,200 doctors from 130 hospitals across J&K over WhatsApp, allowing even those with little cardiology experience to provide life-saving treatment to patients at makeshift medical camps and primary health centres by tapping into the expertise of senior cardiologists. According to its members, over 6,000 lives have been saved through early intervention via their WhatsApp group since the network started in 2017. Currently, the network covers nearly all hospitals in Kashmir, large parts of Jammu and some areas of Ladakh.

Every few minutes, Dr Hafeez's phone lights up as his colleagues interact on the WhatsApp group, uploading ECGs and seeking the expertise of cardiologists on the platform. "In remote corners, say at a primary health centre, the set-up includes a medical officer and consultants. So, when a patient with heart complications comes in, whether or not the person on duty is a cardiologist, they upload the ECG on our WhatsApp group and the cardiologist available at the time responds and guides the doctor on further treatment before they are referred to SKIMS or a district hospital if required," he said. SKIMS is the Valley's premier health institute and caters to a majority of Kashmir's patient load. Dr Hafeez, who has been a cardiologist here for 20 years, said, "In cardiology, time is muscle. So, ideally, the sooner a patient reaches us, the better the chance we have to save the heart. With our topography and the distances involved, a patient can sometimes take even four hours before reaching the hospital."

In places like Kupwara and Kulgam, which have remote villages that often face issues of connectivity, the expertise of the cardiologists on the group has helped save several lives. Dr Aijaz Ahmad Bhat, posted at the Sub-District Hospital in Kupwara, said that while he has been posted at the hospital for the last 19 years, he first conducted thrombolysis on a patient with assistance from doctors on the group in 2017 and since then, "thousands of patients have been saved through early intervention of the doctors on the group". He said, "ECG facilities are available in every hospi-

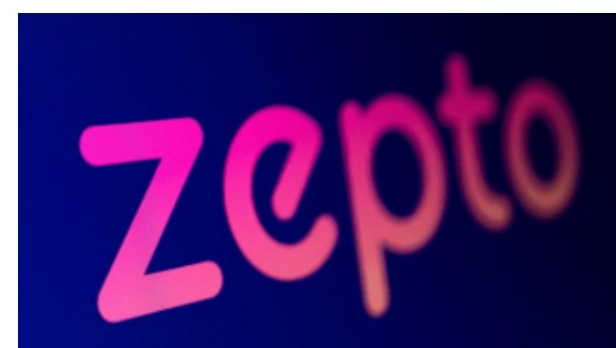


Currently, the network covers nearly all hospitals in Kashmir, large parts of Jammu and some areas of Ladakh.

tal, drugs are available everywhere, so in case of cardiac emergencies — even as far as Machhil or Keran — we upload the ECG and the patient is immediately treated." Dr Bhat emphasised that this has reduced referrals to tertiary care, and the key benefit is that they are able to treat the patients in time — within the "golden hour". In Kulgam, Dr Irfan Dar, posted at the district hospital for the last four years, said that in this period, at least 350 patients who came to the hospital have benefitted from the early diagnosis of heart diseases.

"What happens is that sometimes, people available at the hospital do not know how to read or even conduct ECGs. But with this network, they are administering medicine to thrombolysed a patient. This has been an excellent collaboration," he said. "Even a young doctor with little cardiac experience can get assistance on the group and help patients." Though the group started in 2017, the internet shutdown in 2019 following the abrogation of J&K's special status under Article 370 of the Constitution took a toll on the effort. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the group again served as an asset, with doctors already connected through WhatsApp. Dr Hafeez also credited the J&K Health Department for providing drugs required for pharmacological interventions at primary health centres and training for doctors where necessary. As per data collected by the collective, nearly 64 per cent of cardiac emergencies in the Valley come from peripheral regions where the average time between diagnosis and treatment had been about 250 minutes. In many cases where there has been a delay in treatment, the reason has been misdiagnosis at the primary level. With the doctors' network, such misdiagnosis has reduced.

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



and girls... Is that the destiny of India... this is not a startup, this is entrepreneurship... What other side is doing — robotics, machine learning, 3D manufacturing and next generation factories," Goyal said on Thursday, comparing the nature of Indian startups with that of Chinese.

Palicha went on to count many other economic contributions, and placed many arguments. Rs 1,000 plus crores of tax contribution to the government per year, over a billion dollars of FDI brought into the country and hundreds of crores invested in organising India's back-end supply chains (especially for fresh fruits and vegetables). If that isn't a miracle in Indian innovation, I honestly don't know what is," he wrote.

Why doesn't India have its own large-scale foundational AI model, he quipped, then added "It's because we still haven't built great internet companies." "Most technology-led innovation over the past 2 decades has originated from consumer internet companies. Who scaled cloud computing? Amazon (originally a consumer internet company). Who are the big players in AI today? Facebook, Google, Alibaba, Tencent etc. (all started as consumer internet companies)," he said. Consumer internet companies drive innovation because they have the best data, talent, and capital to put behind it. We need to build great local champions in the internet that are generating hundreds of millions of dollars in free cash flow (FCF) first if we ever want to get a piece of great technology revolutions. The startup ecosystem, the government, and the owners of large pools of Indian capital need to actively support the creation of these local champions, not pull down the teams that are trying hard to get there," he argued. Zepto, he said, is still far away from being a great Internet company that can hold a candle to the global best, but is "executing day in and day out to get there." "I can promise that any capital we generate from this business (and it honestly looks like we will) will be invested towards long-term innovation and value creation in India. That is essentially what I am dedicating the next few decades of my life to try to do: create dynamism in the Indian economy and our capital markets, in the same way the Americans have for decades. We have the talent and capital; we just need the execution," he further said.

zepto ceo cites, startups, FDI, internet consumers, jobs The Zepto co-founder statement comes after Goyal on Thursday asked the Indian startup community to shift their focus from grocery delivery and ice cream making to high tech sector like semiconductor Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's scathing remarks on Indian startup ecosystem and its innovation priorities have drawn sharp reaction from the industry, with Zepto CEO Aadit Palicha putting up a strong defence citing the company's contribution to jobs, FDI and terming it a "miracle in Indian innovation".

Underlining the role played by consumer internet companies in pushing technology-led innovation, Palicha — one of the most recognised faces in the startup circles, and the co-founder of quick commerce company Zepto — argued that the startup ecosystem, the government, and the owners of large pools of Indian capital need to actively support the creation of these local champions, "not pull down the teams that are trying hard to get there." "It is easy to criticise consumer internet startups in India, especially when you compare them to the deep technical excellence being built in US/China. Using our example, the reality is this: there are almost 1.5 Lakh real people who are earning livelihoods on Zepto today — a company that did not exist 3.5 years ago," Palicha said in a LinkedIn post. The Zepto co-founder statement comes after Goyal on Thursday asked the Indian startup community to shift their focus from grocery delivery and ice cream making to high tech sector like semiconductor, machine learning, robotics, and artificial intelligence. "Are we going to be happy being delivery boys

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

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

The stock market has already started feeling the heat, with stocks of pharma, automobile, IT, aluminium, steel companies and even Reliance Industries experiencing a significant decline over the last two days, taking the benchmark indices down by 1.22 per cent on Friday.

The tariff increase is expected to disrupt India's export-oriented industries, potentially leading to job losses, profit margins and revenue declines. As the situation unfolds, Indian corporates are gearing up to mitigate the effects of the tariff hike and explore alternative strategies to maintain their competitiveness in the global market. "Our analysis suggests that India's direct export loss from higher tariffs could be limited to around \$ 9-13 billion, which is 0.2-0.3 per cent of its GDP. India's domestically driven economy may offer some resilience," CareEdge Ratings said in a report. The Trump blow has come at a time when the rise in input costs and moderation in urban consumption slowed down corporate performance in the quarter ended December 2024 and companies listed on the stock exchanges set to report a lacklustre performance on profits and sales during the quarter ended March 2025, reflecting the challenging business environment. There's uncertainty over the corporate performance and GDP growth in the first quarter of FY2025-26 in the wake of the tariff changes. Tremors created by the Trump tariffs are expected to impact the entire industrial spectrum.

Hit by the tariff hike, shares of TCS, India's largest IT firm, fell another 3.07 per cent and Infosys plunged by three per cent on the stock exchanges on Friday amid worries that US firms will cut down IT spending. "Higher tariffs may result in higher inflation (versus the 2 per cent target of the US Fed) and may impact the FED's rate cut decision which is not conducive for the IT sector, in general," said Sumit Pokharna, VP-Fundamental Research, Kotak Securities. Indian IT companies get almost 70 per cent of their export revenue from the US. Any imposition of retaliatory tariffs on US exports by the US's trading partners could add to global inflation, which had turned benign. Tata Motors, a leading vehicle manufacturer, fell by 6.15 per cent on Friday after US has imposed 25 per cent tariffs on imported cars, light trucks and select auto parts sourced from outside of North America. Over 30 per cent of Tata Motors-owned JLR's revenue is from the US.

Further, almost 150 auto parts will face tariffs at similar rate. This move could result into increase in car prices in the US and cost pressure for component suppliers. In the event of car prices going up, the US car market may witness a steep volume decline and that can impact rev-



enue for component players supplying parts to the US car/light truck industry, according to Arun Agarwal, VP (Fundamental Research — Automobiles), Kotak Securities.

Bharat Forge which exports 20 per cent of its auto components to the US fell by 8.46 per cent on the stock exchanges. However, auto makers like Maruti Suzuki and Mahindra & Mahindra have largely escaped as they are unlikely to get hit in a significant way. Sun Pharma and other pharma majors in the country are also set to face Trump tariff policy as the US has planned to include pharmaceuticals in the reciprocal tariffs in the next stage. Sun Pharma plunged by 3.43 per cent and Cipla by 5.32 per cent on the exchanges on Friday. India exported \$ 8 billion of pharma products to USA in fiscal 2024, its largest export destination, and supplies 40 per cent of generics consumed in the USA and any hike in tariff by the US Administration is likely to impact pharma exports.

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

Taj Mahal top earning ASI monument in last five years



it is considered one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. In FY19-20, the Agra Fort in Agra and Qutub Minar in Delhi were in the second and third positions. In FY20-21, the Group of Monuments Mamallapuram in Tamil Nadu and Sun Temple, Konark were in the second and third positions. In FY23-24, Qutub Minar and Red Fort of Delhi were in the second and third positions.

New Delhi: Mughal-era mausoleum Taj Mahal was the top earning ASI-protected monument through ticket sales, generating a revenue of Rs 297 crore in the last five years, according to data shared by the government.

Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat shared the data in a written response to a query in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. In FY23-24, Qutub Minar and Red Fort of Delhi were in the second and third positions generating a revenue of Rs 23,80,16,983 and Rs 18,08,90,825 respectively. He was asked the amount that the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has received from selling entry tickets to various monuments in the last five years, year-wise and monument-wise; and the monuments that have received the highest income through sale of entry tickets in the last five years. In his response, the Minister shared the data in a tabular form for cycles of financial years ranging from FY19-20 to FY23-24. According to the data, Taj Mahal earned the top slot for all five years. The Taj Mahal was commissioned by Emperor Shah Jahan in the 17th century and

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



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

Meanwhile, the IMF warned that the new US tariffs have heightened the risk of sluggish global growth and urged the US to ease trade tensions. "We are still assessing the macroeconomic implications of the announced tariff measures, but they clearly represent a significant risk to the global outlook at a time of sluggish growth. It is important to avoid steps that could further harm the world economy. We appeal to the United States and its trading partners to work constructively to resolve trade tensions and reduce uncertainty," IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said.

Okonjo-Iweala further emphasised that the recent US announcements will have substantial implications for global trade and economic growth prospects. "I'm deeply concerned about this decline and the potential for escalation into a tariff war with a cycle of retaliatory measures that lead to further declines in trade. It is important to remember that, despite these new measures, the vast majority of global trade still flows under the WTO's Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) terms. Our estimates now indicate that this share currently stands at 74 per cent, down from around 80 per

cent at the beginning of the year. WTO members must stand together to safeguard these gains," she said, as per Reuters. The WTO was established precisely for moments like this—as a platform for dialogue to prevent trade conflicts from escalating and to support an open and predictable trading environment, Okonjo-Iweala added, encouraging members to use WTO forums to engage constructively and seek cooperative solutions.

Goldman Sachs, in its report, estimated a 30-basis-point drag on India's GDP growth for the current year, given India's 4 per cent share in US final demand. The investment banking firm further stated that it expects no retaliation from India and believes some announced tariffs will likely be negotiated lower over time during the ongoing trade deal negotiations. HDFC Bank Research warned that FY26 growth estimates could see a "significant downward revision" due to potential trade wars and the absence of a strong domestic demand recovery, exacerbated by weather-related disruptions, the risk of heatwaves, increased financial market volatility, inflation spikes, and a more severe downturn in the global economy. Sakshi Gupta, Principal Economist at HDFC Bank, stated in a report that the across-the-board reciprocal tariffs imposed by the US are much more extreme than initially anticipated, posing a downside risk to India's GDP growth forecast of around 30 basis points. "We must admit that there continues to be a significant level of tentativeness in this forecast, which hinges on several 'unknowns'—whether other countries like the EU and China would retaliate, or whether the US will eventually reduce tariffs through successful bilateral negotiations," the report stated.

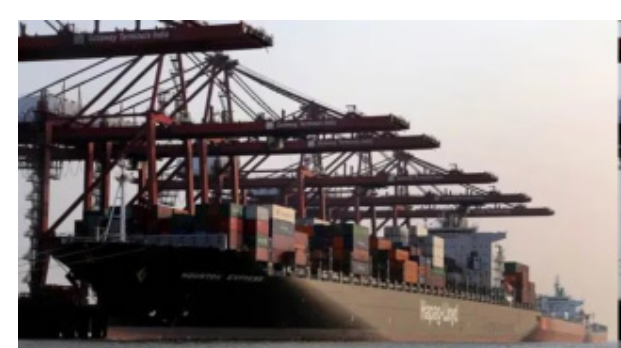
Furthermore, HDFC Bank's research report warned that a sharp global growth slowdown, particularly in the US (with recession odds now rising to 40 per cent), could reduce India's total export volumes—not just in goods but also in services. "We believe this is the biggest risk to India's GDP growth (estimated at 0.3-0.4 percentage points for a 0.8-1 per cent drop in global growth), more so from the direct impact of US tariffs. Moreover, with tariffs of over 50 per cent on China, the risk of oversupply flowing into India and hurting domestic manufacturing remains high," the report noted. Gupta added that the impact on India could be softened if it secures some concessions under the ongoing bilateral talks with the US. However, she cautioned that the potential benefits could be weaker than expected if other countries choose to absorb some of the tariff hikes by reducing prices, negotiate lower tariffs with the US, or engineer currency depreciation to offset the impact of tariffs.

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

US President Donald Trump's announcement to impose lower reciprocal tariffs on India compared to other Asian countries will give India a competitive advantage over its peers and attract higher foreign inflows into the domestic market, experts say. On Wednesday, President Trump announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs on its trading partners. In the case of India, the tariff imposed is 27 per cent. This rate is much lower than 34 per cent imposed on China, 46 per cent on Vietnam, 37 per cent on Bangladesh and 36 per cent on Thailand.

"Exporters are going to benefit given the preferred tariff rates for India vis-a-vis the other economies of the globe, especially Asia Pacific. Now, India is going to have a better advantage in terms of exporting at a lower cost, and that will tantamount to better profitability, and earnings growth cycle in the country. This, in turn, will attract further investments into India, especially from foreign investors," said Akhil Puri, partner, financial advisory, Forvis Mazars in India. All export-oriented sectors, such as auto, textile and minerals, are going to reap the benefits.

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



expected to arrive at a common ground.

After incessantly selling for months, foreign portfolio investors changed their strategy and became buyers of domestic stocks. The modest buying by FPI was visible in the week ending March 21, which further increased in the week ended March 28. Big buying by FPIs during the last several days of March substantially reduced the total FPI selling in the month to Rs 6,027 crore. Since FPIs invested Rs 2,055 crore through the primary market, the net FPI sell figure for March is down at only Rs 3,973 crore.

The re-emergence of FIIs as buyers contributed to nearly six per cent recovery in Nifty. The factors that resulted in recent buying by foreign investors included valuation in the domestic market turning attractive, recent appreciation in the rupee and improvement in India's macros such as gross domestic product (GDP), IIP and CPI inflation, according to VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Ltd. The real GDP picked up pace sequentially to grow at 6.2 per cent in October-December 2024 (Q3 of 2024-25 or FY25) compared with 5.6 per cent in July-September 2024 (Q2) quarter. Consumer price inflation (CPI), or retail inflation eased to a seven-month low of 3.61 per cent in February, compared to 4.26 per cent in January.

Electronics manufacturers remain cautiously optimistic post Trump tariff hit — but see some immediate risks

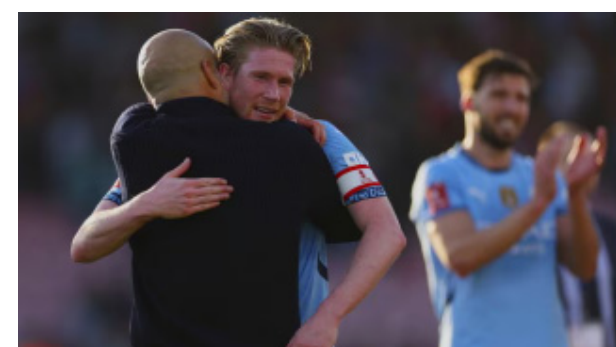
As US President Donald Trump announced "retaliatory" tariffs on a slew of countries, demolishing an over 75-year-old global trading system with the imposition of an across-the-board baseline levy, electronics manufacturers that are producing and exporting from India acknowledged that while it could result in a cost barrier, the measure could also offer some advantage to India owing to higher levies imposed on its competitors. Immediate risks, however, arise from countries like Brazil, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

As part of Trump's diktat, India is receiving a 27 per cent tariff on exports to the US. Its key Asian competitors in electronics manufacturing, China and Vietnam, have fared much worse. The reciprocal tariff on China is 34 per cent, plus the existing 20 per cent rate which Trump had imposed on the country in early days of his administration, bringing the total rate to 54 per cent. Vietnam will be hit with a 46 per cent levy. However, some countries — with similar ambitions as India in deepening their electronics supply chain — may have received a more favourable levy than New Delhi. Key among them is Brazil, which will be subjected to the baseline 10 per cent levy, and as a result could draw away some investments from India. Similarly, Saudi Arabia and UAE, too have gotten away with just the baseline levy, and Philippines has been charged with a lower rate than India at 18 per cent. Although, it is worth noting that the tariff-setting mechanism by the US appears to correlate primarily with bilateral trade imbalances rather than purely tariff rates or non-tariff barriers. Clarity on the precise calculation meth-

odology remains limited, introducing uncertainty into future negotiations. "Saudi Arabia and UAE represent near-term threats to India's electronics exports due to their SEZs, competitive manufacturing environments, and potential labour-cost advantages. Brazil's favourable tariff treatment, despite historical trade barriers, adds to strategic ambiguity and warrants careful monitoring," electronics lobby group India Cellular & Electronics Association (ICEA), said in a statement. The group represents companies including Apple, Google, Vivo, Oppo, and Dixon among others.

According to the Economic Survey 2024-25, the domestic production of electronic goods in India increased from Rs 1.9 lakh crore in FY15 to Rs 9.52 lakh crore in FY24, growing at a compounded annual growth rate of 17.5 per cent. However, the country has made limited progress in localising electronics design and component manufacturing. It has recently announced a Rs 23,000 subsidy scheme to boost the latter. One key company in focus is Apple. Its stock was down more than 7 per cent in after hours trading post Trump's measure as many of its key production hubs — China, Vietnam and India — were hit by tariffs. In India, the company assembles around 10 per cent of its iPhones through its contract manufacturers Foxconn and Tata Electronics, and is the prime beneficiary of New Delhi's production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for smartphones. Apple's business in India is considered crucial in the power corridors of New Delhi, as the company is seen as a flagbearer for the manufacturing narrative it wants to project, while drawing in more marquee names. Calling for a comprehensive trade agreement between India.

Kevin De Bruyne says he will leave Manchester City at end of season



GNS News Agency, April 8

Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne, center, celebrates with Manchester City's head coach Pep Guardiola, left, at the end of the English FA Cup quarterfinal soccer match between Bournemouth and Manchester City at the Vitality stadium in Bournemouth, England, Sunday, March 30, 2025. (AP Photo) Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne embraces coach Pep Guardiola.

Manchester City star Kevin De Bruyne took to social media to announce his decision to part ways with the English giants at the end of the season. The 33-year-old's decision comes after much debate on his likeliness to leave City for the Saudi Pro League or the MLS. De Bruyne missed a total of 12 games this season owing to a hamstring injury, but managed to score twice and assist his teammates on six different occasions in all competitions this campaign. De Bruyne joined Manchester City back in 2015 for a sum of £55 million from Bundesliga club Wolfsburg. He is in his final months of his City contract and will leave the defending Premier League champions at the end of the season.

In his near-eleven-year long stay at the Etihad, the Belgian helped his side to six Premier League titles, while also helping Pep Guardiola and Co get their hands on the all-elusive Champions League trophy in 2023. De Bruyne will leave City with at least 16 major trophies to his name, given the club fails to add any more to their cabinet this season. De Bruyne will end his City career with the most number of Premier League titles for an active player. He is tied on six trophies with several City teammates, including Phil Foden, Nathan Ake, Ederson and John Stones.

Aakash Chopra's 'unpopular opinion' on KKR: 'Don't play Rahane-Raghuvanshi together'

GNS News Agency, April 8

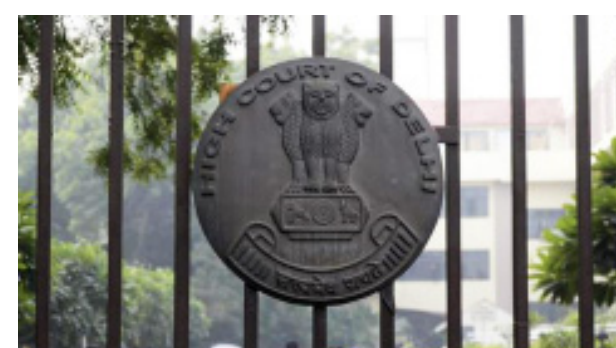
Kolkata Knight Riders may have strolled to a victory by a whopping 80-run margin against the Sunrisers Hyderabad on Thursday evening at the Eden Gardens, but there were still weak spots in their batting order, according to cricketer-turned-analyst Aakash Chopra. After KKR's victory over the team from Hyderabad, Chopra posted an 'unpopular opinion' on his X handle about the defending champions.

"Unpopular opinion — Especially a day after KKR wins by 80 runs and both (Ajinkya) Rahane-(Angrish) Raghuvanshi scored runs. But still. Here goes — If KKR really wants to realise the full potential of the batting power they've accumulated, they must not play Rahane-Raghuvanshi together," Chopra posted. His views came after a game where KKR had lost both their openers against SRH by the third over and then saw Rahane and Raghuvanshi stabilise the team. Later, fireworks from Venkatesh Iyer and Rinku Singh saw the side set a target of 201 runs. While KKR captain Rahane scored 38 (from 27), Raghuvanshi registered a half century against his name. Chopra continued: "Shocking stat — Rinku (Singh) has batted 16 balls in an innings only twice since the start



of last season. Second time was yesterday. Venky (Venkatesh Iyer) must not bat at 5. And Ramandeep at 9. What happened yesterday (the incredible onslaught in the last-5) might not happen every time. "KKR are still finding their feet in IPL 2025 after losing their leadership before the start of the season. Their IPL-winning leader Shreyas Iyer left to join Punjab Kings while Kolkata opted to name Rahane as his successor. After four games, KKR are currently in fifth position, with two wins and two defeats from their four games so far.

Delhi HC expresses concern over infighting in sporting federations



GNS News Agency, April 8

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday (April 2, 2025) expressed concerns over the "infighting" and "disputes" in sporting federations in the country, saying such an environment was not conducive for sports. A Bench of Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela made the observation while hearing an appeal by the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) against a single judge Bench's order over its election process. Counsel appearing for the secretary and treasurer of the federation said the appeal was not duly filed as it was instituted by the BFI president

without any authority.

The BFI's counsel, however, said the secretary and the treasurer were suspended. The court asked the parties to "resolve" the dispute and said every sporting federation in the country was embroiled in litigation and "inter se disputes" came in the way of "interest of sports". "Every sports federation has some dispute. Your function affects the entire nation. Why this kind of infighting? These kinds of things pave the way for where you can be disqualified by the international body. Sports internationally is governed by international Olympic charter. The charter says the (national) body has to be autonomous. Autonomy is being compromised by litigation," the court said. Judge said, "such kind of infighting I can't understand. Every single sports federation is in litigation." The court posted the matter for further hearing on April 7. The BFI plea challenged a March 19 order of a single judge Bench, which stayed the federation's March 7 decision to allow only elected members of its affiliated State units to represent their respective States in the upcoming elections in the sporting body. The single judge Bench's order came on a plea of Delhi Amateur Boxing Association and held the process of election should continue along with the declaration of results but it was subject to the petition's final outcome.

Lauritz Knudsen launches campaign with Mumbai Indians to highlight role in powering India's progress



GNS News Agency, April 8

Hyderabad: Lauritz Knudsen Electrical and Automation (formerly L&T Switchgear), the leader in the Indian electrical and automation industry, recently launched its new integrated marketing campaign featuring Mumbai Indians and its players. Lauritz Knudsen has rolled out a new TV Commercial which highlights the strong contribution made

by the brand to India's progress, weaving a narrative that connects technological innovation with sporting excellence. The campaign reinforces Lauritz Knudsen's position as 'India's Favourite Switchgear' brand, showcasing its pivotal role in powering India's infrastructure—from airports and stadiums to metros and titled 'Who am I?' the TVC features Mumbai Indians' star players—Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya and Suryakumar Yadav (SKY)."

We are driven by a commitment to innovation, safety, and partnership—values that resonate deeply with the world of sports. Just as athletes rely on precision and reliability to achieve excellence, our electrical solutions empower businesses and homes with cutting-edge technology that ensures safety and efficiency," said Naresh Kumar, COO of Lauritz Knudsen.

Rahi Sarnobat eyes Olympic comeback after battling health scare

Hyderabad: Two-time Olympian and shooter Rahi Sarnobat, who staged a stunning comeback from serious health issues to win the gold in the women's 25m air pistol in the National Games in Dehradun this year, says that her goal now is to focus on herself to realise her Olympic dream. "This dream has been planted in my system for a reason. This is not about proving to the world. I am more courageous as there is nothing to lose. I want to be remembered as a person who made things happen," Rahi said in a House of Glory podcast, an initiative by Hyderabad and London Olympics bronze medallist Gagan Narang Sports Foundation. The 32-year-old Maharashtra shooter had health issues in 2022 and found herself facing hot flashes and nerve pain. After weeks of feeling sensations all over her body,

causing her tremendous pain, Rahi found herself being on bed rest, unable to find a diagnosis. "We did not know which doctors to go to — we did ECG, cardio testing, routine tests — but everything was fine. Still, I was feeling terrible. I started feeling my neck pain, that I could not lie on bed and I had to sit and sleep for months. My medical team suggested consulting a neurologist," Rahi revealed. After weeks of neurological testing, Rahi was diagnosed with neuropathic pain. "Neuropathic pain syndrome has no fixed pattern and no fixed line of treatment. It depends on case-to-case, and the medical history of every person. It makes it even more scary," the pistol shooter said. "I was sleeping for 17-20 hours for months. I was just staring at the ceiling for months. I could not live my normal life. I felt fear about being uncertain.

Impact Player — a tussle between evolution and a level-playing field



GNS News Agency, April 8

Followers of the Indian Premier League will identify Vikram Solanki as the Director of Cricket with Gujarat Titans, the champions on debut in 2022. The Udaipur-born Solanki, who celebrated his 49th birthday on Tuesday, played 51 ODIs and three T20s for England between 2000 and 2007 with modest returns, but he will go down in history books as the first 'Super Sub' in international cricket. The Super Sub was introduced in One-Day International cricket in July 2005, sending hordes of statisticians, mainly, and scorers across the world into a tizzy. Cricket was always supposed to be 11 versus 11; the Super Sub would make it 12 vs 12 or, in many instances 12 vs 11. How was this cricket?

As an experiment, the Super Sub idea lasted only eight months. Fundamentally flawed because it magnified rather than neutralised the effect of the toss, it met its logical denouement in March 2006 with numerous luminaries, among them the Australian captain Ricky Ponting, exhorting a rollback to the original 11 vs 11 faceoff. Because the Super Sub had to be named before the toss, it negated the advantage for the captain who lost the toss and conferred a distinct edge to the side that hit it lucky with the coin. The decision makers within the International Cricket Council acted swiftly, though had they been a little more prudent in the lead-up to the unleashing of the Super Sub, it might not have been the worst idea, never mind if the scoring/statistician community was up in arms.

More than a decade later, the concussion sub came into the picture, in 2019. The catalyst for this move was undoubtedly the tragic incident involving Phil Hughes in a Sheffield Shield encounter towards the end of 2014. The prime example of a concussion sub emerging as one of the leading batters for his country is Marnus Labuschagne, the first such player in Test cricket when he came on to replace an injured Steve Smith, who was struck on his helmet by Jofra Archer in the Lord's Test of August 2019. Labuschagne made 59 in his first hit in Test cricket, and despite his recent travails, averages 46.76 from 57 Tests.

The concussion sub is a permanent feature now, used — sometimes misused or abused, one might say — in all formats across all levels but a novelty that the IPL sprung on the game is yet to catch on. In a more nuanced variant of the discarded Super Sub, the IPL permitted the use of an Impact Player from the 2023 edition onwards. Outside of the designated 11, each side can nominate five reserves, from whom the Impact Player can be summoned at any stage. Because this was delinked from the outcome of the toss — any of the five could be used in that capacity, so long as only four overseas players were part of the 12 — it provided a greater level-playing field compared to the Super Sub, though the bowling community might hold a dim view on this development.

Ironically, while the Impact Player has freed up the minds of batting groups and spawned a dramatic increase in the rate of scoring and team totals, the thinking behind this innovation was to bolster bowling depth. In theory, teams could swap a batter for a specialist bowler when they defended a target, thereby precluding the need to rely on the infamous 'bits-and-pieces' players. In reality, it has triggered a change in mindsets and attitudes from a batting perspective. The Impact Player might not always make an impact, but the luxury of being able to call up an additional batting resource in the event of a collapse has emboldened teams to shed conservatism and concentrate on all-out attack. That the top five scores of all time in the IPL have come since the start of the 2024 edition is no coincidence. The once-preferred approach of beginning carefully and then exploding in the second half has now been emphatically thrown out the window. There are no more sighters even if the new ball is swinging or ripping around. No one has benefitted from this more than Sunrisers Hyderabad, who have produced scores of 287, 286 and 277 in the last season and a quarter, taking aggression to ridiculously new heights and marrying it with a consistency that makes them comfortably the most feared batting unit of the competition.

Spanish flair behind JFC's success

GNS News Agency, April 8

HYDERABAD: The Spanish flair behind Jamshedpur FC's gritty display in the ISL which leads to the business-end this season has been too obvious. Leading the charge on that front have been their Spanish attacking duo of Javi Siverio and Javi Hernandez, who combined and contributed to a total of 16 goals and three assists — making up nearly 46% of the total strikes scored by the side.



While Hernandez, with nine goals and three assists, has been an inspired signing in the summer from Bengaluru FC, Siverio had joined the club midway through 2023-24 and extended his deal prior to the current campaign. Both of their impacts have been overwhelmingly positive, with Siverio's sides now being unbeaten in 19 ISL games in which he has scored (W14 D5), the highest such tally for any player. Siverio credited head coach Khalid Jamil for a major chunk of his success

at Jamshedpur FC.

"From day one, coach (Khalid Jamil) has valued me and given me confidence. I think he knows me as a player and that's why I have found my best football in Jamshedpur FC again. The coach knew me, and we were attacking and playing to win, which is why a player like me can score goals," Siverio said. Creating 24 goal-scoring chances and making 110 touches inside the opposition's box, he has been a lively presence

When an Impact Player delivers, it sends a frisson of excitement and satisfaction in the support staff that works out match-ups and the rest and decides who is best suited for that role. Already this season, a slew of such players has made a telling difference, none more so than Ashutosh Sharma, against Lucknow Super Giants. Rishabh Pant's men had amassed 209 for eight in their 20 overs and Delhi Capitals were reeling at 65 for five after 6.4 overs when Ashutosh strode in to join Tristan Stubbs, the exciting young South African. The Capitals needed 145 more in 80 deliveries but were fast running out of batters. Among those already back in the hut were skipper Axar Patel and Faf du Plessis, the South African who had captained Royal Challengers Bengaluru for the preceding three years.

Ashutosh started slowly, steadying the chase with stands of 48 and 55 respectively with Stubbs and the relatively unknown Vipraj Nigam. Because Stubbs had taken only 22 balls for his 34 and Nigam had scored even more furiously — 39 off just 15, at a strike-rate of 260 — Ashutosh was able to play himself in without feeling the need to score rapidly. Perhaps he had an inkling of what was to come, of how much responsibility he'd have to shoulder. Perhaps he believed that there would come a time when it would all be up to him and therefore it made no sense to take a chance or three early on and throw it all away. When the Nigam show ended, the Capitals required 42 in 23 deliveries with three wickets in hand; that became 39 in 17 with two wickets remaining when Mitchell Starc ate up five balls in making two before falling to leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi. Only Kuldeep Yadav and Mohit Sharma were left. The former is no mug with the bat but not exactly a power-hitter while the latter averages 7.34 at a strike-rate of 94.94 in 166 T20s. It was now entirely in Ashutosh's hands, the fate of the match. At one point 20 off 20, the powerful right-hander positively exploded towards the closing stages. Pant and his team believed all they needed was one false stroke, but none was forthcoming. Targeting his areas, mainly straight down the ground, the 26-year-old smashed five fours and as many sixes so that his last 11 deliveries produced a remarkable 46 runs. Despite having their backs to the wall, despite the required rate mounting and the wickets tumbling, the Capitals won by one wicket with three deliveries to spare. A massive half an hour. Extraordinary doesn't even begin to do justice to the carnage at the gob-smacked ACA-VDA Stadium in Visakhapatnam, the Capitals' temporary home at the start of their campaign.

Ashutosh is the most visible but not the only Impact Player to make a difference at this early stage of this year's skirmishes. As recently as on Tuesday, but under far less pressure, Nehal Wadhwa justified his introduction with a 25-ball 43 not out in Punjab Kings' eight-wicket rout of, well, Lucknow Super Giants again. Maybe they, more than anyone else, will have deep reservations about the Impact Player, considering how adversely that has impacted their fortunes and left them languishing at sixth in the table a fifth of the way into the league phase.

The Impact Player hasn't been discussed on a global platform and no other major T20 league has followed in the IPL's footsteps. Indeed, there was a concerted push from many captains for the scrapping of this rule ahead of this season; among those who have spoken out against this are Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers. But the IPL has gone ahead and extended this concept to the next three seasons, sparking genuine fears that what might be good for the most visible franchise-based league in the world might not necessarily be good for Indian cricket because it will, as it already has, stymie the unearthing of genuine Indian all-rounders. "It brings an added excitement, clearly, for the audience," Mo Bobat, RCB's Director of Cricket, observes. "It also makes sure that games stay live for longer, which is useful. And I think that also is relevant here (at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru), where games stay live for longer because you can chase quite a lot in the end. So, in many ways, it makes it very exciting for people." Bobat's loyalty is to RCB, as it must be, and he isn't particularly fussed about how the Impact clause affects Indian cricket per se. Hence, it was no surprise to hear him say, "If you were someone who was particularly bothered about Indian cricket's future, you might ask a few questions around what it's done to the all-rounder. But me in this position right now, that isn't a major concern. It's a case of us trying to make sure that we use it to our advantage."

The IPL's insistence on the Impact Player, yet to surge into international consciousness, hasn't adversely impacted the national team's fortunes. India remained unbeaten at the T20 World Cup last year on their way to the title and are unbeaten in their last nine bilateral series. Maybe we are overstating the adverse effect on the Indian all-rounder. Or maybe, just maybe, we are being clairvoyant?

ers are robots and play exactly like I ask them to do. I like to give them freedom, especially to foreigners, who need to use their experience. Young Indian players cannot be overloaded with information, and senior players are to be pushed to share their know-how whenever required," Jamil said. With both Siverio and Hernandez scoring once each in the pening game, Jamil will bank heavily on their craft, experience, and goal-scoring knack to guide his team into the finals.

"I do instruct my players in some areas, especially when they are required to do man-to-man marking. Otherwise, I encourage them to play with freedom, display their talents. It should not be like my play-

Nurses were shouting at me but Amitabh Bachchan politely requested to be on time with his mother's tube feeds in the hospital: 'I made it my only job'



worked at the hospital at the time, shared in a recent interview, that once when Teji's feed was delayed, Amitabh spoke to her kindly and requested her to make sure that there were no more delays.

Khyati was in conversation with Ronak Kotecha on his YouTube channel where she recalled Amitabh Bachchan as someone who was "very nice." "You said name someone very nice, I must name Mr Amitabh Bachchan. Mrs Teji Bachchan was in the hospital for 11 months and she was on tube feeds," she recalled and shared that during this time, they would sometimes witness some delays as they were dealing with an entire hospital full of patients. "In 11 months, sometimes, her feeds used to go late. It's an operation. We are feeding 400 beds. We are dealing with salt restricted diets, we are checking everything," she said.

She shared that the feed would sometimes reach 10 minutes late and Bachchan's private nurse would get very angry with this. "By the time the feed reaches her, it is sometimes 10 minutes late and her private nurses used to be angry," she said and shared that at one point, she went and checked on her in person because the delays had been reported twice in one week. "One fine day, I went because the complaint had come second time in the week. I went to meet her. Mr Bachchan was there. The nurse was blasting on me but Mr Bachchan was like, 'Beta, please try and get it on time.' After that, I made it my only job. She will get fed first. He was very polite," she shared.

Amitabh Bachchan, who is known as one of the best Indian actors of all time, was very close to his late mother Teji Bachchan. Even now, he often shares anecdotes about her during Kaun Banega Crorepati. So when Teji was extremely ill and was admitted to Lilavati Hospital, Amitabh would sit by her bedside and make sure that she was being looked after really well. Nutritionist Khyati Rupani, who

Throwback to when Alia Bhatt took her first international trip, cried when hotel didn't let her pet in

Veteran actress Soni Razdan shared a series of throwback pictures with her daughter Alia Bhatt. In the photos, the actress is barely two-three years old. Right from a picture of Alia Bhatt from her first international trip to her crying to take her pet to a hotel, Soni Razdan gave a sneak peek into Alia Bhatt's childhood. The post was a part of Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor's newest ad for travel website Make My Trip, who is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

On Friday, Soni took to her Instagram handle to share a series of photos with the caption: "Throwback to the travel memories Alia and I share." The very first picture in the post featured an excited Alia, who was all set to take her first international trip. The second photo featured Alia from one of her family vacations where she can be seen sitting on her mother, Soni Razdan's lap. Sharing the image, Soni shared in a note: "In this moment, while Aloo and the girls were living their best vacation lives, I was secretly panicking over the missing return tickets!" The third image showed a chubby Alia Bhatt posing for the camera. Recalling the moment, Soni shared: "Aloo started crying right after this image was clicked because she couldn't bring her pet to the hotel." Soni also shared a picture from the time when their car broke down and the veteran actress had to walk



all the way to hotel, carrying a young Alia Bhatt. In the last two slides, Soni shared the new ad featuring Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh, who can be seen sitting at a Manali hotel along with their pet, and going through a family album. The album showed pictures of the two as childhood friends, who wished hotel would come to them, and their pets were allowed in these hotels. Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh have been the ambassadors of Make My Trip brand for a very long time. They are often seen doing a lot of interesting ads for the travel agency.

Mahesh Babu-SS Rajamouli's SSMB 29 to bypass the Baahubali way, and take the RRR route

SS Rajamouli-Mahesh Babu project to be a single-part film SSMB 29, starring Mahesh Babu, is expected to be a globe-trotting action adventure. Even though sequels and franchise films were dime-a-dozen in Indian cinema, SS Rajamouli's Baahubali films became the blueprint of sorts for every big-ticket film that followed. Almost every big star had two-part films, and in some cases like Mohanlal-Prithviraj Sukumaran's Lucifer franchise, even three films. However, after Baahubali, Rajamouli is yet to make a two-parter or a franchise film. His RRR was a standalone film that starred Ram Charan and Jr. NTR and became a global success of epic proportions. Even as there were speculations about his next with Mahesh Babu, tentatively titled SSMB 29, might take Rajamouli back to his Baahubali days, newer reports have surfaced giving clarity to the same.

According to a Pinkvilla report, the film, which will hit the screens in 2027, is said to be a single-part film. The globe-trotting adventure, which also features Priyanka Chopra-Jonas and Prithviraj Sukumaran, will reportedly be Rajamouli's longest film. Quoting a source, the report read that Rajamouli, who isn't a big fan of how the two-partner system is now mostly being used for merely financial gains and not because the story demanded it, is "restructuring the screenplay in a single-part storytelling format." With RRR, which ran for over three hours, being Rajamouli's longest film to date, SSMB 29 might just break that comfortably. In fact, the report suggested that the film would be almost 200+ minutes, which has already proven to be a winning formula considering the collections of films like Animal and Pushpa 2: The Rule, which ran to a similar runtime. Even though the makers of the Rajamouli-Mahesh Babu project are remaining tight-lipped about the cast details, and other important aspects of the film, it is getting increasingly difficult for them to do so. Even before the offi-



cial announcement of the inclusion of Prithviraj and Priyanka, images surfaced from leaked shooting spot stills confirming their presence. So, the report revealed that Rajamouli and team might be officially announcing multiple facets of the film through a 2-minute video that might act as a glimpse into the world. Expected to be a project made on global standards with an international team working together to go a few steps ahead of RRR, which became a global phenomenon, SSMB 29 is backed by KL Narayana, and will be shot by PS Vinod, and have music by Oscar winner MM Keeravani.

An incensed Sunny Deol, Javed Akhtar's personal approval: How Akhtar Calling Akhtar radio gag made it on the air

Mimicry artist, radio jockey, voiceover artist and actor Kettan Singh recalled coming up with a humorous bit on radio in which he mimicked Javed Akhtar and Farhan Akhtar having a conversation with each other. The bit was called Akhtar Calling Akhtar, and ran for over a decade. But the radio station was hesitant about putting it on the air, as it had recently offended Sunny Deol and Dharmendra with a similar concept. Kettan recalled sitting on the idea for several months, before Javed himself gave his nod to it in his trademark tongue-in-cheek manner.

In an interview with The Lallantop, "My colleague Rochak Kohli came up with the idea. He said, 'You know Kartik Calling Kartik? Let's do Akhtar Calling Akhtar.' The idea was that Farhan would call his dad up with a doubt of some kind, and his dad would regale him with a song before addressing his doubt.



A Minecraft Movie review: Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black keep the jokes going in predictable film



Guess when you are "the best-selling video game of all time", "with over 300 million copies sold" as per Wikipedia, you don't have to stress more than calling yourself 'A Minecraft Movie'. Guess when you have signed Momoa and Black on, you may also think you don't need to stress more than throwing them together. A Minecraft Movie does that, again and again - having the two actors

with a fairly good comic presence go at each other head to head. It's not funny, particularly when you can't escape the quantities of unwashed hair on their heads. Still, Momoa and Black, who hold little of themselves back in this video game enterprise, are the best part of A Minecraft Movie.

Strangely, for a gaming enterprise that prides itself on its emphasis on creativity - differentiating it from the others - the film hardly has any time for those aspects of Minecraft. Henry (Hansen) is the sort of child genius who can get there, under the guidance of Steve (Black), but there is no method to his madness in hurling blocks around to "create" things - nor is the film interested in showing you the method. We have fights, flights, swines, wolves, orbs, crystals, red minerals, diamonds, castles, towers, lava-cooked chicken, good people, bad people, real world, Overworld, and lots and lots of screaming. And then we have Jennifer Coolidge, doing her thing. As a waiter at a hotel asks her and her partner, "Are you finished?" She replies, "No, I think he is Swedish."

Amit Mishra extends support to Jasleen Royal for widely criticised opening act at Coldplay's Mumbai concert: 'Kisi ko besura kehne se pehle...'

While the India leg of British rock band Coldplay's ongoing Music of the Spheres World Tour was met with widespread praise, with all the concerts becoming monumental events and offering memorable moments to the audience, it turned out to be a complete disappointment for singer, songwriter and composer Jasleen Royal as her opening act for the Mumbai concerts was met with immense criticism. While some slammed her overall performance, a section of social media even went as far as to allege that she relied on autotune.

Incidentally, her show also drew criticism from celebrities like controversial filmmaker Vivek Agnihotri, and playback singers-turned-music composers Vishal Dadlani and Sonu Mohapatra. While Vivek and Sonu took direct jabs, Vishal's was a veiled attack, but none of them minced words, and neither did thousands of netizens who vented their ire online. However, singer-songwriter Amit Mishra recently extended his support to Jasleen, pointing out that performing on such mammoth platforms can be overwhelming. "There is also a human being inside every person who goes on stage. They too will feel nervous. It was a huge show," Amit pointed out during a chat with Bollywood Bubble.

"When the audience sings along, sometimes there could be leakage in the in-ear monitors. This is a technical aspect. Because of that leakage, they might not have been able to hear their own voice. Either they weren't getting proper pads or the stage monitors weren't working properly. When you perform live, there are many technical aspects that matter," he noted. "I am not trying to save anyone, nor am I trying to hide anyone's mistakes. I feel that when I am in my 60s or 70s, my aim will be to sing in tune. The feel of singing is a game-changer; not every person



can think like an engineer. If everything's so perfect, then a song could be immediately recorded and released without any mix or mastering. 'The singer has recorded it and that's it, everything is perfect' - that's not how it works. The whole team works together. And we should also think a little more humanely. Kisi ko 'besura' kehne se pehle samajhna chahiye ki besura hona kya hota hai (Before calling someone 'out of tune', we should understand what it means to be out of tune," he added.

Ravikumar, noted Malayalam and Tamil actor known for his lead and villain roles, passes away

Renowned actor Ravikumar, known for his performances in several Malayalam and Tamil movies, has passed away. He was 71 and reportedly succumbed to his battle with cancer at a private hospital in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, on Friday morning. The holder of a prolific career spanning over 100 Malayalam films, several Tamil movies and a handful of television serials, Ravikumar hailed from Thrissur in Kerala but had been living in Chennai for many years.

Following his purported acting debut in Indhulekha (1967), Ravikumar rose to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s by playing both lead and villain roles. Although he appeared in movies such as Ullaasayaathra (1975), Neelasaari (1976) and Ayalkkaari (1976), it was his performance in director M Krishnan Nair's Amma (1976), starring Madhu and Srividya, that earned him his first bout of recognition.

His other notable films include Avargal (1977), Avalude Ravukal (1978), Padakkuthira (1978), Lisa (1978), Neelathamara (1979), Allaluddinum Albhutha Vilakkum (1979), Anupallavi (1979), Sarppam (1979), Pagalil Oru Iravu (1979), Angadi (1980), Theekkadal (1980), Sphodanam (1981), Rojavanam (1999), Vanna Thamizh Pattu (2000), Youth (2002) and Sivaji (2007). He was last



seen in films such as director B Unnikrishnan's Mohanlal-starrer Aaraattu (2022), K Madhu's Mammooty-led CBI 5: The Brain (2022) and Veetla Vishesham (2022), a Tamil comedy drama featuring RJ Balaji, Sathyaraj and Urvashi. The son of KMK Menon and R Bharathi, Ravikumar's mortal remains will be taken to his residence at Valasaravakkam in Chennai, as reported by OnManorama, and his funeral will be held there on Saturday.

Nani on bringing back 'relatable Chiranjeevi' with Srikanth Odela project: 'We forgot why we loved Chiru garu'

Actor-filmmaker Nani has never minced words in his admiration for Megastar Chiranjeevi. Throughout his career, Nani has often spoken very highly of Chiranjeevi, and waxed eloquently about the impact of the Megastar's films in his life. That's why, when it was announced that Nani was presenting Srikanth Odela's next with Chiranjeevi, it was almost like life came a full circle. When asked in an interview with The Hollywood Reporter if the larger-than-life persona of Chiranjeevi impacts the way the project will be made, Nani simply said, "I don't want to have that idea at all."

Elaborating on how placing such pressure on himself, and on Chiranjeevi isn't doing any good at all. "When people start thinking that way, we stop understanding what made Chiranjeevi garu so relatable to generations," said Nani, who fished out an example from his own life. "In my childhood, when I walked into the theatre to watch Chiru garu on the screen, I could see him immediately transform into whatever role he was playing. He made us cry, he made us smile, and of course, there were exciting fights too, but what really stood him apart was the immense relatability."

Nani, who is fondly called the "Natural Star" is someone who has made a career out of being relatable to his

audience. Since he made his debut in 2008, Nani has always gravitated towards the script featuring the everyman as the hero, and picked scripts that endeared him to the masses.

"We are not understanding the power of relatability. We do these big action films, the big spectacles where the focus is on the technique, music, and the huge action set-pieces. Imagine we do all that but with a strong grasp of relatability... the emotions are magnified by ten times. That used to happen when we saw Chiru garu's films," said Nani, who pointed out how theatre viewing has undergone a drastic change in today's digital era.

"We used to be in complete awe while watching a film. Now, we are having conversations, looking at our phones, etc... First, let's bring back that brand of cinema. Of course, Chiru garu is larger-than-life, but let us remind ourselves as to why we loved him in the first place. Some say he is good with dance or he is good with action or he is good in this or that... But he is more than all of that. We always saw him as a member of our family, and we seem to have forgotten that now," said Nani, who is presenting Srikanth's film under his banner of Wall Poster Cinema.