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# Residents of ten villages live in fear in Telangana's Mancherial

Mancherial: A migrant tigress returned to forests of Kannala village in Bellampalli mandal on Sunday, triggering panic among residents of around 10 villages.

Forest officials said the tigress named B1, which was roaming in the forests of Dubbagudem and Varipet villages in Kasipet mandal till Saturday, came back to the forests of Kannala again. The tigress migrated to the district from Kumram Bheem Asifabad district and had stayed at Kannala before drifting towards Kasipet on February 3. The officials said steps were being taken to track the movement of the tigress, to ensure its safety and to prevent human loss.

# Delhi's New Chief Minister To Take Oath After PM Modi's US Visit, BJP Mulls Top Contenders

### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

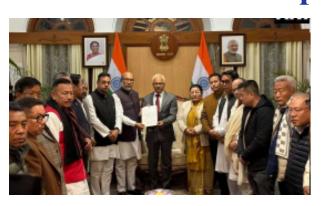
The BJP's landmark victory in Delhi will see a new Chief Minister take oath after February 13, following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's return from his US visit. The party secured a decisive mandate with 48 seats in the 70-member Assembly, marking its return to power in the capital after 27 years. The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) faced a significant setback, winning only 22 seats, with prominent leaders including Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia losing their constituencies. Five prominent BJP leaders have emerged as potential Chief Minister candidates. Parvesh Verma, who defeated incumbent CM Kejriwal in the New Delhi constituency, leads the list. Other contenders include former Opposition Leader Vijender Gupta, exstate president Satish Upadhyay, Delhi BJP General Secretary Ashish Sood, and RSS veteran Jitendra Mahajan.

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva indicated that the party's central leadership will make the final decision, leaving open the possibility of a fresh face or potentially a woman candidate for the position. The timing of the swear-



ing-in ceremony awaits PM Modi's return from his February 12-13 US visit, where he's scheduled to meet President Donald Trump. While a high-level meeting was held at BJP headquarters with Home Minister Amit Shah and party president JP Nadda, discussions about the chief ministerial choice remain under wraps.

# Biren Singh resigns as CM, says it was honour to serve people of Manipur



GNS News Agency, Feb 10 Imphal: Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on

Sunday tendered his resignation to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at the Raj Bhavan, officials said.Singh was accompanied by 14 MLAs belonging to the BJP and NPF. State BJP president A Sharda and senior saffron party leader Sambit Patra was also part of the delegation.After meeting the Governor, Singh went to the CM secretariat. In his letter to the Governor, Singh said, "It has been an honour to serve the people of Manipur thus far.

I am extremely grateful to the central government for time actions, interventions, developmental work and implementation of various projects for safeguarding the interests of every single Manipuri."On Saturday, Singh convened a meeting with BJP-led ruling alliance MLAs at the CM Secretariat in connection with the upcoming Assembly session beginning February 10. The meeting was held in the wake of the opposition Congress seeking to move a no-confidence motion against the government led by Singh.

# **Telangana Budget 2025-26 likely in March, local body polls take priority**

# Telangana farmers against parting with their land for Congress projects

Hyderabad: With farmers standing firm against parting with their land, the Telangana Congress government is facing an uphill task in grounding different projects across the State. The Regional Ring Road, pharma village, multiple irrigation projects, industrial park, Fourth City, Adani cement factory or name any project, farmers are up in arms against the State government.

They are vociferously opposing land acquisition and at many places, protests are being staged against the government. Be it Lagacherla, Yacharam mandal in Rangareddy, Makthal constituency, Mahabubabad or Nalgonda, farmers in all these places are not even allowing officials to conduct land surveys.

# CM Revanth Reddy Calls for Unity Among Southern States to Protect Constitutional Rights

### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has emphasized the need for southern states to unite in safeguarding the constitutional rights and guarantees granted by the Indian Constitution. He urged collective resistance against policies that disrupt the federal spirit, particularly those promoting a "one leader, one party" approach.Revanth Reddy made these remarks at the Mathrubhumi International Festival of Letters (MBIFL 2025) held in Thiruvananthapuram. Participating in the event organized by the renowned Malayalam daily Mathrubhumi, he also engaged in a discussion with Mathrubhumi editor Manoj K. Das and other attendees. Concerns Over Parliamentary Seat Redistribution: The Chief Minister questioned the rationale behind parliamentary seat redistribution based on population, arguing that southern states, which have long implemented family planning policies and robust welfare programs, are now being unfairly penalized. Telangana's Economic Growth: Revanth Reddy highlighted Telangana's "Telangana Rising" vision, aimed at comprehensive and inclusive development. He reiterated the state's goal of transforming Hyderabad into a global city. Investment Boom: Telangana has become a hub for international investments, securing ?1.82 lakh crore at the recent World Economic Forum in Davos. Welfare Initiatives: The state government is successfully balancing industrial growth with welfare measures, including:

Social Justice Policies: Telangana is the first state to conduct a comprehensive caste survey and initiate SC



sub-categorization based on a Supreme Court directive. The government has declared February 4 as Telangana Social Justice Day to reinforce its commitment to equitable resource allocation for BCs, SCs, STs, and minorities. Economic Performance: According to the Union Government's latest economic survey, Telangana has the lowest inflation rate in India and leads in per capita income.Central Government's Disparities: The CM questioned why the Union Government was not supporting states with strong economies, particularly southern states and non-BJP-led governments. He emphasized that Telangana achieving a \$1 trillion economy would benefit India as a whole and urged the Center to extend its cooperation. Revanth Reddy's speech underlined the growing concerns of southern states over central policies, advocating for greater autonomy and cooperation to ensure their economic and political interests are protected.

## **KTR counters CM Revanth, offers** to participate in fresh caste survey

### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao, who demanded a fresh and scientific caste census, has also offered to participate in it along with party chief and Leader of Opposition K Chandrashekhar Rao and other senior leaders of the party.He was countering Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's claims during the recent Assembly session that BRS and BJP leaders had skipped the caste census to avoid revealing their land ownership details.The Chief Minister listed out that Chandrashekhar Rao, Rama Rao, T Harish Rao, T Padma Rao Goud and BJP MP DK Aruna among others did not participate in the caste survey when it was conducted across the State last year



### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Hyderabad: The Telangana State Budget for 2025-26 is expected to be presented in March, with the Congress government prioritising local body elections scheduled after February 15. This marks a shift from the recent practice of presenting the Budget in February, reverting to the earlier tradition of the March presentation. The State has the flexibility to present its Budget before March 31 for the next financial year, and the exercise was traditionally conducted in the second or third week of March. However, following the Union Budget's move to early February, Telangana has been aligning its schedule accordingly for the last couple of years.

Despite the approaching deadline, Budget preparations appear to be moving slowly at the ministerial level. Since December, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy held only one review meeting, and Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka is yet to convene departmental consultations. Officials, however, have reportedly completed the initial Budget drafting and are awaiting final reviews. The delay in the departmental consultations is being attributed to the Congress government's plans to focus on the ongoing MLC polls, followed by the local body elections. Amid growing criticism, the Chief Minister is learnt to be keen to win all three MLC seats and a majority of local body elections, including gram panchayats, MPPs (Mandal Praja Parishads) and ZPPs (Zilla Praja Parishads), to prove his strength within the party and outside as well, prompting him to focus on po-



litical issues and regular administration.

A senior Finance Department official confirmed that while the technical work was done, the Budget would be refined after further review meetings with the Chief Minister and Finance Minister in the coming weeks. "The final Budget estimates for 2025-26 are yet to be determined, pending ministerial discussions. The Budget is likely to be presented in the third week of March," he said. He did not rule out the possibility of holding a marathon Budget review meeting by the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister before finalising the outlay. The Congress government presented its first full-fledged Budget in July last year with an outlay of Rs 2.91 lakh crore for 2024-25, slightly surpassing the previous BRS government's Rs 2.9 lakh crore Budget for 2023-24.

### Harish Rao demands release of Rs 432 crore as bonus to farmers immediately



#### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Siddipet: Former Minister T Harish Rao lashed at the ruling Congress for failing to keep its promise of giving Rs.500 as bonus on fine rice varieties.Speaking to news reporters in Siddipet on Sunday, Harish Rao said Rs.432 crore of the bonus was pending even after completing the procurement of paddy 48 days ago.Rao recalled that Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy had promised to release the bonus within 48 hours of procuring the paddy. The former Minister wrote a letter to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to release the bonus amount to all the farmers without any delay.

He said the bonus for 8.64 lakh tonnes of fine rice was still pending. Citing the instances of farmers roaming around offices, he said the farmers at Muchinthala in Mahabubnagar district had met the Collector recently seeking the release of bonus. Even though the fine rice was being sold at Rs 2,800 to Rs 3,000 per quintal in the open market, farmers had sold it to the government's procurement centres, hoping for the bonus.

However, the Congress government cheated the farmers.Harish Rao also recalled that the Congress actually came to power by promising bonus to all crops. He said the Congress had failed to complete the loan waiver as well besides breaking a host of promises made earlier.

.Calling the Chief Minister's remarks silly excuses, Rama Rao pointed out that the election affidavits of Chandrashekhar Rao, himself and other BRS leaders were available in the public domain on the Election Commission of India's website."However, if a resurvey is conducted prop-

erly, we will all participate, including KCR, to prevent injustice to Backward Classes," he declared, emphasising that BCs were being shortchanged by the Congress government due to miscalculations in the recently conducted survev.

### Rohit Sharma hits spectacular ton, eases pressure ahead of Champions Trophy

### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

New Delhi: Rohit Sharma the 'Batter' owed 'Captain' Rohit Sharma a favour for the longest time. On a sultry Sunday at the Barabati Stadium, the 37-year-old Mumbaikar knew that the batter in him had no options left but to give the skipper a breathing space.A ton of stone might have been removed from his chest but his muted celebrations said it all. It was more of relief and less of happiness. He did that in style with a hundred (119, 90b, 12×4, 7×6) that will always be his personal favourite in terms of pressure quotient when he would have time to reflect on his white-ball career full of milestones.A performing captain is one who commands respect in the dressing room. Not that his stature has diminished in that change room but someone, who has played the game on his own terms wouldn't like men lurking around him with question mark running through the contours of their faces even if it is head coach Gautam Gambhir, who gave away very little while clapping for his skipper's hundred with a customary poker-face. Having endured a wretched run since the start of the New Zealand series at home, the affable Indian skipper faced the most scathing criticism in his 17-plus years at the international level. As much as players speak about "outside noise", an under-pressure man in a high-stakes world would be vulnerable after a point. The memes hurt, conjectures about living on borrowed time must have bruised his champions' ego big time. The criticism was not unwarranted. He was consis-



tently failing in Test matches and it came to a point where he had to drop himself from the playing XI of the Sydney Test match.But only he could have changed it all. Till the opening game in Nagpur, everything that could have gone wrong went wrong for Rohit — till February 9 happened. Finally, the sixes were soaring into the stands and one saw the vintage Rohit, who wasn't pre-empting anything but like good old days reacting to the deliveries.

Unlike Australia Tests where he was standing outside the crease trying to counter the movement, he stood deep inside the crease and things started happening. Just like everything goes wrong when it has to go wrong, things start falling in place when it has to.England bowlers made a cardinal mistake during the first ODI by trying to penner. Shrevas liver with short-nitched deliveries

# President Droupadi Murmu to visit Maha Kumbh Mela on Feb 10

#### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu will visit the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj on Monday and take a holy dip at the Sangam, her office said.Maha Kumbh, which began on Paush Purnima (January 13), is the world's largest spiritual and cultural gathering, attracting devotees from across the globe. It will continue until Mahashivratri on February 26. "During her day-long visit to Prayagraj, the President will take holy dip and perform Pooja at Sangam, perform Pooja and Darshan at Akshayvat and Hanuman Mandir, and also visit the Digital Kumbh Anubhav Centre,"



### **INDIAN CHRONICLE**

### Ranga Reddy

# Indian Chronicle English Daily RBI's rate cut

THE Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has finally pulled he trigger on a much-anticipated rate cut, lowering the enchmark repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent. his marks the first such move in nearly five years and ignals a shift in the central bank's approach to balancing economic growth and inflation. The decision comes at a ime when India's economic momentum has been slowng. With GDP growth projected at 6.7 per cent for FY26 - well below the 8.2 per cent seen in 2023-24 — the RBI appears to be prioritising growth, even as inflation remains bove its 4 per cent comfort level. Governor Sanjay Malhotra, in his first policy review, however, dismissed peculation of a prolonged rate-cut cycle. While the move as been welcomed by industry leaders, its impact on orrowing costs remains uncertain, with some saying it is a case of too little, too late. Banks, already facing liquidity constraints, may not immediately pass on the benefits to orrowers even as there are expectations of loan EMIs joing down after the rate cut.

Beyond the monetary policy, the RBI also introduced neasures to enhance cybersecurity in financial transacions, requiring banks to shift to the 'bank.in' domain and on-banks to 'fin.in'. Aimed to curb digital fraud and enance consumer trust in online banking, this additiona ecurity measure is welcome in view of the rising ybercrime. Additionally, Malhotra's deferment of the proosed stringent banking norms that were to be implenented from April 1 hints at a more flexible regulatory tance compared to his predecessor. It offers banks more ime to adapt to liquidity and capital requirements without sisrupting credit flow. However, global uncertainties - inluding volatile energy prices and US monetary policy – continue to pose risks. But, for now, the RBI's cautious hift reflects an attempt to revive growth without eopardising financial stability.

### The Dark Side of Quick Commerce: How 10-minute delivery apps are using deceptive design to manipulate shoppers

### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

In the bustling world of quick commerce, where a bag of onions can arrive at your doorstep in minutes, convenience comes at a cost. Apps like Blinkit, Zepto, Swiggy Instamart, and Amazon Fresh have revolutionized how Indians shop for groceries and essentials, promising speed and ease. But beneath the surface of these seamless services lies a troubling reality: the pervasive use of "dark patterns"—deceptive design tactics that manipulate users into making decisions that benefit companies, often at the expense of buyers' own wallets, time, and well-being.

Dark patterns, a term coined by user experience designer Harry Brignull, are deliberate design choices that trick users into actions they might not otherwise take. These tactics range from hidden fees and hard-to-cancel subscriptions to misleading advertisements and forced registrations. While they boost profits for companies, they often leave users frustrated, misled, or financially worse off.In India, the Central Consumer Protection Authority has identified 13 types of dark patterns in its 2023 guidelines, but the list is far from exhaustive. As quick-commerce apps compete for dominance in the country's multi-billion-dollar market, these manipulative strategies have become increasingly common—and problematic.

Quick commerce thrives on urgency. Unlike traditional commerce, where users might spend hours browsing these apps cater to immediate needs: a forgotten onion, a last-minute snack, or a missing household item. But this speed-centric model often comes with less flexible cancellation policies and a higher likelihood of encountering dark patterns.Take Blinkit, for example. Users are lured with promises of "free gifts," only to discover they must spend a minimum amount to unlock the offer. Hidden handling fees and small cart charges further inflate the bill, while competitive pricing often masks higher-than-usual costs. In one instance, the platform even added free melatonin gummies to orders, raising concerns about dependency and unsolicited promotions Zepto, another major player, employs tactics like drip pricing, where hidden fees are revealed only at checkout. Users with monthly passes for free delivery must manually select the option each time, a design choice that can easily lead to oversights. The app also creates a false sense of urgency with "Price Drop Alerts" and nags users with lastminute product suggestions, pushing them to spend more.Swiggy Instamart, meanwhile, confuses users with poorly placed discount coupons and forces them to scroll through repetitive product suggestions during checkout. The app also defaults to charging for bags unless users opt out, a practice that ties environmental guilt to consumer choice. And while tipping delivery drivers is optional, the app automatically applies the same tip to future orders, leaving users with less control over their spending. Even Amazon Fresh, which operates on a slightly slower delivery model, isn't immune. The app obscures product choices with horizontal scrolling, prioritizes its own Solimo brand despite inferior ratings, and misleads users with cashback offers that turn out to be Amazon Pay credits. These tactics not only frustrate users but also raise questions about fair competition in the market.Dark patterns exploit users' vulnerabilities-whether it's their lack of time. emotional state, or even physical ailments. For instance, a grieving family booking last-minute flights might be hit with hidden fees, leaving them no choice but to pay up. Similarly, quick-commerce users in a rush might overlook hidden charges or miss out on discounts due to confusing interfaces. These practices not only harm consumers but also stifle competition. New entrants with more ethical designs struggle to gain traction, while existing players copy deceptive tactics to stay ahead. The result? A race to the bottom that erodes trust and lowers industry standards. In response to these concerns, the Indian government has taken steps to curb dark patterns. The 2023 guidelines prohibit platforms from engaging in deceptive practices and apply to all advertisers and sellers operating in India. However, enforcement remains a challenge, and new dark patterns continue to emerge.As quick commerce grows, so does the need for greater transparency and accountability. Users deserve clear pricing, honest advertising, and designs that prioritize their needs over corporate profits. Until then, the convenience of a 10-minute delivery might come with a hidden cost—one that goes beyond the price of an onion Quick-commerce apps like Blinkit, Zepto, Swiggy Instamart, and Amazon Fresh use dark patterns to manipulate users

# Families of Bhil tribe allege sugar institute in Pune trying to demolish their homes



GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Pune rural police on February 4 appeared before the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) in Delhi in connection with a complaint filed by Bhil families against the Vasantdada Sugar Institute (VSI). About 12 families of Bhils, an indigenous tribal group in India, have alleged that VSI is trying to demolish their homes and displace them from the land where they have been residing for generations.Spread over 200 acres of land taken on a 99-year lease from the Maharashtra government, VSI is a premier organisation in Pune district that conducts research in sugar and allied industries. Its Director General Sambhaji Kadupatil has denied the allegations that they are trying to displace the tribals.

Bapurao Dadas, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Pune Rural, said, "I appeared before the NCST and submitted our inquiry report... This is a civil dispute pending before a court. The police will follow the directions of the court."Subhash Baban Gaikwad, 65, who belongs to the Bhil tribe, said, "We are a few Bhil families residing for many generations on a small piece of government land alongside the Mula Mutha river in Naigaon village near the temple of Theur in Haveli taluka of Pune district. Fishing is our main occupation. Some of us also work as labourers to earn extra income.""One afternoon in July 2024, all of a sudden, without any official notice or intimation, some persons constructing the compound wall of VSI came with heavy machines and tried to demolish our houses. We objected, but they asked us to vacate the land forever. We stopped them as we have been residing for several years. We have our Aadhaar cards on this address," said Gaikwad. With help of advocate Sangram Kolhatkar, who has a house near the Bhil settlement in Naigaon, the Bhils filed a civil suit in a Pune court and submitted a complaint to the NCST against the VSI for allegedly trying to demolish their houses and displace them. A civil court passed an order granting status quo on July 8, 2024. The order stated that the Bhils have "produced on record photographs of the suit property amongst other documents. They have also reported the matter to the police. The document produced on record shows that there is substance in their apprehension. There exists fear that plaintiffs will be dispossessed and become homeless if no interference is made at this stage. It is necessary to preserve the nature of the suit property as of today. Therefore, it will be necessary to grant the status quo...".

Meanwhile, the NSCT initiated a probe into this case and issued a notice to the Pune district collector and Pune police on October 8, 2024, seeking a report from them in this matter. On October 30, officials of the Uruli Kanchan police station in Pune Rural police limits recorded the statement of a complainant Rabha Sakharam Pawar, 69, of the Bhil tribe. Pawar told the police that he and his family have been residing in Naigaon since his forefathers, but still the VSI officials asked them to leave the place. When The Indian Express visited the Bhil settlement in Naigaon, it was observed that about 80 people from Bhil families, comprising senior citizens, women and children, live in poor conditions in about 13 hutments, having no electricity connection and other basic facilities. When contacted, Pune District Collector Jitendra Dudi shared the report submitted by Tehsildar Trupti Kolte Patil to the NSCT on January 3, 2025. It stated that the government has provided facilities like water tank, a temple to the Bhils, but the complainant Gaikwad and the others left the main Bhil settlement and encroached on the VSI land.

The Tehsildar's report also claims that the Bhil community has made a false complaint that VSI officials threatened and tried to displace them, so that they can continue with the encroachment. The report says that a VSI officer filed a police complaint on December 12, 2024, against the Bhils for allegedly obstructing the institute's work. The report mentions that the government is sensitive towards the Bhils and attempts are on to rehabilitate them on alternative land. The Bhils, meanwhile, said their complaint is genuine. Pointing at a house located near a partially constructed compound wall of VSI, Bhil woman Sushila Gaikwad said, "If we had not objected, they would have simply demolished our homes and left us displaced."They also showed a copy of a resolution passed by the Naigaon gram panchayat on January 31, 2023, to provide caste certificates to the Bhils residing on the river side in the village for the last 60 years. This resolution, which they have also submitted in the court, mentions that due to lack of education, the Bhils could not register themselves in the village records in the past, due to which they are finding it difficult to get caste certificates. The resolution says that they should be given caste certificates so they can avail educational and other facilities under government schemes.

A complainant Rabha Pawar, whose name is mentioned in the gram panchayat resolution, showed his voting card, mentioning his residential address as Naigaon in Haveli. Pawar said, "Nobody tried to displace us in the past. We have been living peacefully here even before the land was given on lease to the sugar institute. We fail to understand why VSI, which has possession of huge land, now wants to throw us away. Government officials are frequently visiting us. They want to rehabilitate us on some other land. But this alternate place is not suitable as here we would lose our traditional livelihood by fishing."Advocate Kolhatkar said, "As per the submissions made by VSI in the court, it got government land on a 99-year lease on May 30, 1977. This shows that VSI is not the owner of this government land. Still, the VSI's name is mentioned on the 7/12 extract of this land, which is suspicious. Also, VSI has no legal powers to displace anybody residing on this land.""While it is said that Gat number 8 in Naigaon village, where the Bhils reside, is a government grazing land, there are documents showing it as a forest land. As per the Forest Rights Act (FRA), the tribals residing on forest land for more than three generations prior to December 13, 2005, cannot be displaced illegally. We are raising these points before the court and hope to get justice," he added.Meanwhile, the Bhils submitted an application along with videos to the court recently through a lawyer H H Patole, claiming that despite a "status quo" order, the VSI allegedly continued the construction of the compound wall in a manner that could cause damages to them. Sambhaji Kadupatil, a retired IAS officer and Director General of VSI said, "We are not displacing anyone. We have no rights to do so. We have a huge sugarcane plantation in VSI. We carry out important research activities. We are building a compound wall to secure the premises. We have requested the government to clear the encroachments and rehabilitate the Bhil families properly."When contacted, NSCT officer H R Meena said that an inquiry is on in the matter. As stated on the sugar institute's website, senior politician and former Union minister Sharad Pawar is the chairman of VSI's board of trustees and the president of its governing council.

### Fatehgarh police bust inter-state

### Defence Ministry signs contracts worth 10,147 crore for Pinaka ammunition



GNS News Agency, Feb 10

The Union Defence Ministry on Thursday (February 6, 2025) signed contracts worth ?10,147 crore for a variety of ammunition for the Army's Pinaka Multiple Rocket Launch Systems (MRLS). The ammunition also enhance the range of the Pinaka systems.

Contracts were inked with Economic Explosives Limited (EEL) and Munitions India Limited (MIL) for the procurement of Area Denial Munition (ADM) Type-1 and High Explosive Pre-Fragmented (HEPF)-Mk-1 (enhanced) rockets respectively for Pinaka MLRS at a total cost of ?10,147 crore, a Ministry statement said. In addition, a contract for upgrades in Shakti software has also been signed with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).

The ADM Type-1 ammunition has a specialised warhead to deliver a quantum of sub-munitions over a larger area targeting mechanised forces, vehicles and personnel, thereby denying specific areas to the enemy, the statement said. HEPF-Mk-1 rockets are the advanced version of inservice HEPF rockets, which have enhanced range to strike deep into enemy territory with precision and lethality, it stated. "These advanced ADM (DPICM) and HEPF ammunition will play a crucial role in bolstering the Indian Army's firepower by enabling precise and long-range strikes."The upgraded Pinaka is going to be the mainstay of the Army's long range rocket artillery. Last November, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) announced the successful completion of flight tests of guided Pinaka rockets of 75 km paving the way for its induction doubling the original range. Work is on to enhance the range to 120 km and further to 300 km. The fully automated 214mm Pinaka MLRS battery can deliver a salvo of 72 rockets on the target up to 75 km in 44 seconds. The Army has four Pinaka regiments in service and six more are on order.Beyond enhancing national defence capabilities, these projects have immense potential of direct and indirect employment generation by encouraging the Indian MSME sector through components' manufacturing, the Ministry added.

### Sheikh Hasina's speech: Bangladesh summons Indian High Commissioner

#### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Dhaka has summoned the Head of Mission of Indian High Commission in Bangladesh on Thursday (February 6, 2025) after Sheikh Hasina delivered a speech from India, accusing Chief Adviser of Bangladesh's interim government Muhammad Yunus of making a "meticulous plan" to murder her. The official has been summoned hours after Ms. Hasina's speech was broadcast on all online platforms of her party, the Awami League.

Ms. Hasina's speech followed the destruction of the 32 Dhanmondi residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by a mob. The building was demolished using heavy earth moving machinery despite police presence. In a statement, the Awami League accused the interim government of providing "immunity" and said, "Dr. Yunus and the entire interim government cannot escape liability for last night's destructive acts.""A game of destruction has started around Bangladesh which is going through a phase of chaos and upheaval. Bangladesh which was a role model of development across the world has become the land of terrorists and fighters. This is indeed a matter of great misfortune for us all," Ms. Hasina said in her speech.Calling Mr. Yunus government "completely unconstitutional", she said, ""He (Mr. Yunus) has come to power using money power and by stepping on the dead bodies of many people of our country. There was a meticulous planning by Yunus sahib to kill me and my sister." Also on Thursday (February 6, 2025), protesters in Bangladesh targeted the houses of several Awami League leaders. They also demolished a memorial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Dhaka. Bangladesh has been seeking the extradition of Ms. Hasina from India, where she has been residing since fleeing Dhaka in August 2024. In December 2024, Bangladesh sent a note verbale to India seeking her repatriation. India's Ministry of External Affairs too confirmed receiving the request. And in January this year, Bangladesh also revoked the passport of Ms. Hasina and 96 others for crackdown against protesters during the protests there last year.

### drug supply network, arrest 6

### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

The Fatehgarh Sahib district police in Punjab Friday informed they have arrested six drug traffickers and seized 2,56,846 drug tablets/capsules, 21,364 injections, and 738 vials (Avil) from their possession. The police also seized three vehicles used by the criminals. Those arrested have been identified as Parvinder Singh, Sahil, Pankaj Chaudhary, Shubham, Shahid and Wasim.Parvinder Singh was already booked in an attempted murder case in Mohali's Kharar (Sadar) police station, while another accused Sahil was earlier booked in a drug smuggling case. Meanwhile, Wasim was wanted in an attempted robbery case in Uttar Pradesh.Dr Ravjot Grewal, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Fatehgarh Sahib, said, "A case under the sections... of the NDPS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) Act was registered at Badali Aala Singh police station.""Using technical and digital assistance, one drug trafficker after another was traced and arrested, leading to a significant drug bust that dismantled an interstate drug supply network operating from Uttar Pradesh to Punjab via Haryana," she added.

Giving details of the case, the SSP revealed that the Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) Sirhind team arrested accused Parvinder Singh from Cholta Khurd village in Mohali district on January 27, and seized a large quantity of drug injections/vials and tablets. During the investigation, it was found that Parvinder Singh was both a drug addict and a supplier. He used to procure drugs from an individual named Sahil in Yamunanagar (Haryana) and supply them in Fatehgarh Sahib and Mohali.On January 29, during further investigation, Sahil was arrested from Yamunanagar, along with a large quantity of drug tablets/capsules. Sahil owned a gym supplement store in Yamunanagar, which he used as a front to distribute illegal medical drugs in Haryana and



Punjab. During interrogation, Sahil revealed that he sourced these drugs from Pankaj Chaudhary alias Virat, a resident of Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh.On January 30, the CIA team arrested Virat and his partner Shubham in Saharanpur. Shubham had illegally rented a warehouse in Saharanpur, where commercial quantities of drug injections, vials, and tablets/capsules were seized. During questioning, Virat confessed that he procured these drugs from Abdul alias Wajid, a resident of Meerut in Uttar Pradesh.On February 4, the CIA team raided Meerut and arrested Abdul's two partners, Shahid and Wasim.

Following their statement, the police raided Abdul's illegal warehouse, where commercial quantities of drug injections, vials, and tablets/capsules were seized. A manhunt is currently on to nab Abdul. The investigation revealed that this drug supply network spanned from Meerut (UP), Delhi, Saharanpur (UP), and Yamunanagar (Haryana) to Punjab. "This operation has significantly disrupted the interstate drug supply chain running from Uttar Pradesh to Punjab via Haryana. Further investigation is ongoing," SSP Grewal added.

# NASA warns of potential asteroid impact in 2032, scientists may consider deflection mission

#### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Hyderabad: Remember the Bruce Willis starrer Armageddon, in which a ragtag team of oil drillers land on an asteroid, which is hurtling straight to Earth, and blow-it up to save us?For the first time ever, scientists across the world might have to seriously consider a deflection strategy to address the threat of asteroid YR 4, which according to NASA, now has a 2.3 percent chance of striking Earth on December 22, 2032.A few days ago, NASA officials reported a 2.3 percent chance of the asteroid striking Earth in 2032, up from the earlier prediction of 1.9 percent. According to estimates, 2.3 percent chance means 1 in 43 chance of impact, with a 97.7 percent likelihood that the asteroid will miss.While the chance of the asteroid 2024 YR4 hitting our planet is slim, this is for the first time that scientists across the world might have to seriously consider a deflection mission soon.Based on information available, YR4 asteroid was discovered on December 27, 2024 by the Asteroid Terrestrial-impact Last Alert System (ATLAS) telescope in Rio Hurtado, Chile.Analysis by astronomers has indicated that the size of the asteroid is 40 to 100 meters, which is almost like a football field. The highest probability rate of hitting or impacting the Earth, the asteroid can reach, in the coming few years is 8, which means 100 percent chance of impact.Scientists and researchers have compared the YR4 asteroid to a 10 megaton bomb, which is about 1000 times more powerful than the nuclear bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

### Supreme Court orders protection to 'Discovery' offices after threats over Asaram Bapu documentary

The Supreme Court on Thursday (February 6, 2025) granted interim police protection to the officials of Discovery Communications India on a plea alleging threats by followers of self-styled godman Asaram Bapu following the release of the documentary series "Cult of Fear: Asaram Bapu". A bench of Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar issued notice to the Centre and Maharashtra. Karnataka, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, West Bengal and Delhi governments while directing them to ensure protection to petitioners Shashank Walia and others besides their offices."Issue notice returnable in the week commencing March 3, 2025. In the meanwhile, we request the police authorities to ensure that the petitioner gets to use the office and no threats of physical harm are extended to the petitioners," it said.Senior advocate Abhinav Mukerji, appearing for the petitioners, submitted the officials of Discovery Communications India faced threats from the followers of Asaram and it was difficult for them to travel freely in the country. The plea filed before the top court submitted on January 30, 2025, a mob gathered outside Discovery's Mumbai office and attempted an unauthorised entry.





### **Ranga Reddy**

## Back to the humble beginnings of Nandini in an obscure Kodagu town



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In the quiet town of Kudige in Kodagu, an old dairy facility stands as a reminder of the humble beginnings of what would become one of India's most iconic dairy brands, Karnataka Milk Federation's (KMF) Nandini. Once a bustling cooperative hub where fresh milk was collected from local farmers, the site now lies in decay, with weathered walls, rusting equipment, empty crates, and broken foundation stones. This reporter visited Kudige, the birthplace of Karnataka's first dairy cooperative, long before the rise of the Nandini as a brand, and found that while the original building was in a dilapidated state, a modern, fully operational dairy facility now thrives 500 metres away.Karnataka's Nandini milk brand has grown into a globally recognised name, engaged in a range of activities from sponsoring Scotland and Ireland's cricket teams during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup last year to constantly launching new products to diversify its business. It has been exploring new markets across the country, competing with Amul, India's largest dairy producer. However, the roots of this success story trace back to a modest beginning in Kudige back in 1955. The story of this humble origin has largely remained obscured

Malavika, a long-time resident of Kudige, explained the historical significance of the site, guiding this reporter through the derelict structure. "I have been working here in the Animal Husbandry Department for the past 20 years. My father also worked in this dairy. Now that operations have shifted to the new building, the old one has fallen into disrepair," she explained. Inside the old dairy building, the inauguration plaque remains surprisingly intact. It bears the inscription, "Milk Pasteurisation Scheme inaugurated by Lieutenant-Colonel Daya Singh Bedi, then Chief Commissioner of Coorg, on 24 July 1955." Malavika guided us through the premises, showing an old weighing machine, various dairy processing machinery, and even glass bottles that were once used to distribute milk. "From this dairy, milk was supplied to different parts of Kodagu, which was then a separate state called Coorg. My father often spoke about how local farmers would bring their milk here, which was then processed and distributed," she recalled.Despite its historical importance, the old dairy building at Kudige in Kodagu has been left in a neglected state.Despite its historical importance, the old dairy building has been left in a neglected state. The site, currently under the control of the Hassan Cooperative Milk Producers Union (a part of KMF), has not received adequate maintenance. Local residents have raised concerns about its deteriorating condition.

Rudrappa K., a local farmer, expressed his disappointment. "The government should recognise the importance of this building and convert it into a museum or heritage site to showcase how the milk cooperative movement led to the creation of a successful brand like Nandini. Right now, the structure is in terrible condition. People throw garbage inside, and some even trespass into the premises. The authorities, either the government or KMF, should step in and restore this building," he urged. Speaking to The Hindu, A.S. Premnath, former Managing Director of KMF, highlighted the historical significance of Kudige in Karnataka's dairy industry."Not many people know that KMF had its origins in Kudige. The first dairy cooperative was established here in 1955. KMF itself was founded in 1974 as the Karnataka Dairy Development Corporation (KDDC) under a World Bank-funded project. It was later renamed Karnataka Milk Federation in 1984," he explained. KMF currently operates 15 milk unions across Karnataka, sourcing milk from Primary Dairy Cooperative Societies and distributing it to urban and rural consumers. The federation has approximately 28 lakh dairy farmer members across the State.As Premnath points out, Kodagu is traditionally known for commercial crops like coffee, oranges, and cardamom, but not for dairy farming. This is probably why not many remember that it was also home to Karnataka's first commissioned dairy plant. "The Kudige dairy was established in 1955. Later, in 1974, an integrated project was launched to restructure the State's dairy industry on cooperative principles, laying the foundation for a new era of dairy development. With World Bank assistance, a dairy development project was initiated in 1975, initially covering Mysuru, Hassan, Tumakuru, and Bengaluru districts," he said.Premnath, who worked at KMF for nearly 40 years, was himself born and raised in Kudige. His father also worked at the dairy. "I have seen the journey of this Kudige from my childhood. The growth of KMF and Nandini is an incredible success story that started in this small village. I still remember how ghee was produced using firewood to boil the milk. 'Coorg Ghee' was a sought-after product back then, just like Coorg Coffee and Coorg Honey," he reminisced

plague that still remains intact. It bears the inscription, "Milk Pasteurisation Scheme inaugurated by Lieutenant-Colonel Daya Singh Bedi, then Chief Commissioner of Coorg, on 24 July 1955." In 2024, KMF recorded a 14% increase in milk procurement and a 10% rise in sales of milk and dairy products. As it continues to compete with other milk brands in South and West India, KMF has also expanded its presence in Delhi to further extend its footprint.

Of the nearly one crore litres of milk procured daily, KMF sells around 65 lakh litres as liquid milk, including UHT Goodlife and curd. About eight lakh litres are converted into milk powder for the Ksheera Bhagya scheme, which supplies milk to schoolchildren, while six lakh litres are used for producing milk-based products like ice creams and sweets.KMF Chairman Bheema Naik spoke about the cooperative's structure and its impact. "The Amul model of dairy cooperatives was introduced in Karnataka in 1974-75 with financial support from the World Bank, as well as Operation Flood II and III. The three-tier Anand Pattern structure — village-level dairy cooperative societies, district-level milk unions, and the state-level federation ---ensures sustainable dairy farming. KMF is among the few cooperatives that have successfully transformed dairying from a secondary occupation into a full-fledged industry," he said.Milk bottles still found at the old dairy facility at Kudige in Kodagu.

Despite its cooperative structure, KMF has every now and then found itself entangled in the ups and downs of Karnataka's politics, particularly during elections and milk price revisions. Ahead of the 2023 Karnataka State Legislative Assembly elections, a controversy erupted when the then-ruling BJP government allowed Amul to sell its products in Karnataka. This sparked allegations that Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah was attempting to merge KMF's Nandini brand with Amul. The move triggered widespread protests across Karnataka, with slogans like #SaveNandini and #GoBackAmul trending on social media. Protestors took to the streets, fearing that Nandini's identity and autonomy were under threat. However, despite these challenges, Nandini remains a strong, homegrown brand that has significantly shaped Karnataka's and India's dairy industry, experts in the sector say.

The love for Nandini in Karnataka transcends business, holding deep cultural significance. Kannada cinema legend Dr. Rajkumar served as Nandini's brand ambassador, free of charge, and even featured in the brand's first and only television commercial in 1996. His son, Puneeth Rajkumar, later continued the legacy, signing an agreement with KMF in December 2009, again without any fee. From a small village in Kodagu, Nandini has grown to become the second-largest milk cooperative federation in India. Reflecting on this remarkable journey, Premnath attributed KMF's success to unwavering consumer loyalty, and the dedication of lakhs of farmers. "The strength of Nandini lies in its cooperative spirit and consumer trust. The farmers who contribute to KMF have made it what it is today," he said. Milk bottles still found at the old dairy facility at Kudige in Kodagu.

While the dairy brand has seen remarkable success, challenges persist as milk unions urge the State government to increase retail prices to ensure better remuneration to the dairy farmers. The farmers have been demanding a hike in incentives, even as KMF faces a glut in milk production. In June last year, the KMF raised milk prices by ?2 per litre and added 50 ml to every 500 ml packet. However, KMF officials argue that this increment is insufficient. The federation is facing mounting financial losses from an unsold stockpile of skimmed milk powder (SMP), adding to the strain on the dairy sector. Amid this surplus, many of Karnataka's 15 milk unions have reduced procurement prices by ?2 per litre, triggering discontent among farmers. Currently, most unions pay ?32.5 per litre to farmers, but in districts such as Kolar, Mandya, and Ballari, the rate has dropped to ?30. Dairy farmers are also frustrated that the government's ?5 per litre incentive, introduced under the Ksheeradhaare scheme, has remained unchanged for over



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"I had gone for a field visit to a village in Bagalkot district last year when I came across a girl who had a bump that clearly indicated that she was pregnant. Upon enquiry, I found out that this 15-year-old girl was engaged to a boy and was not married. When I said that she was pregnant, the villagers fought with me and said that she was not even married. When I sent her to the hospital, we got to know that she was four months pregnant, and the families of both sides were genuinely not aware of the situation," said Tejaswini Hiremath, social scientist and former member of the District Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Bagalkot."In Bengaluru, a 13-year-old girl got pregnant and even delivered a baby. She had no awareness of what happened to her and did not even know the concept of pregnancy. When a case was registered, and she was asked to identify the man who did this to her, she showed an auto driver. But the DNA tests did not match. Later, she said she did not know who the man was. Ultimately, we could not catch the culprit in the case at all," shared Anjali Ramanna, former CWC member and women and juvenile rights advocate.

These are just some of the disturbing cases as the lack of awareness around sex and contraceptives, sexual abuse, early engagements and marriages prompted by socio-economic situations and traditional beliefs have led to an increase in underage and child pregnancies (aged below 18 years) in Karnataka in the post-COVID-19 period.According to data presented by Women and Child Welfare Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar in the Legislative Assembly session in December, 252 cases of underage pregnancies were registered before the Child Welfare Committee in 2021-22, 405 cases in 2022-23, and 709 in 2023-24. The Minister attributed this increase to changing family systems, usage of social media by children, increasing child marriages and POCSO cases, 'more love affairs among teenagers', and traditional practices. Activists who work on the ground lauded the government for at least acknowledging that there are cases of underage pregnancies rather than denying them. However, they said what is reported is a very small number of cases while the reality paints a graver situ-

One of the main causes of underage pregnancies is child marriage, which is still prevalent despite efforts from both activists and government officials. Tejaswini recalled how, in the post-pandemic years, children who were in the age group of 9-12 years were increasingly getting married."Before that, we usually saw cases where girls between the ages of 15 and 17 years were getting married. But during the pandemic, we saw really young girls, some of whom had not even lost all their baby teeth, getting married. This might have been because of the socio-economic crisis. Subsequently, in 2022, we saw a huge increase in the number of child pregnancies," she said. It is also noteworthy that the post-pandemic period was also the time when there was a lot of migration as people went back in search of jobs to bigger towns and cities. "Marriage is still considered an institution that guarantees safety and security, especially in rural areas. Around 2022, many men found jobs in cities, and those who had daughters who were around 15-16 years of age married them off for safety reasons,'

shared a resident from a village in Yadgir district. Migration to Bengaluru, especially from northern States, also led to an increase in the number of underage pregnancies found in Bengaluru, according to activists. "Men who are working in Bengaluru as carpenters, masons or construction workers often bring a few girls from their States here for household work. Those girls come from far-off places with no education and end up getting pregnant here," said Anjali. Anjali also spoke about how society views marriage and pregnancy as a means to 'tame women'. "There are a lot of families which fear that their daughters will fall in love with a boy of a different caste or class, and that is why they marry them off early. Then the couple will have no idea about how to handle their sex lives, and they get pregnant young," she said. She also spoke about how these kinds of pregnancies are also prevalent in urban settings. 'The girls will be going to schools with big names, and when the family gets to know that they are dating, they get them married. Such cases exist even in rich families and is not just limited to socio-economically weaker sections."With conversations about sex and contraceptives still viewed as

taboo in Indian societies, girls in child marriages often end up getting pregnant without intending to.

**Childhoods stolen as underage** 

"Girls do not get decision-making rights after marriage. Many are still not even aware that sex makes them pregnant," said Vasudeva Sharma N.V., Executive Director at Child Rights Trust, who has worked extensively with girls who were married and got pregnant before becoming adults."No one had spoken to the girls I worked with about contraceptives or safe sex. Even in hospitals, when they arrived, some of the staff asked them inappropriate questions and blamed the girl and her family. What is our system doing, especially in villages? There is no way that anaganwadi workers or ASHAs or general health workers are unaware of girls being married. Why do they not speak to them about prevention of pregnancies?"

Activists speak widely about systemic failure on many levels when it comes to underage pregnancies. They demand that doctors and medical workers should take more responsibility to prevent pregnancies."In hospitals, adults convince the doctors that the girl is dependent on her husband, and if the case is reported, then he will be sent to jail, and the girl will have to face the consequences. Hence, in many cases, they do not report it. What is being shared by them is only 5% of cases that come in," Tejaswini said.Considering the serious health risks that come with underage pregnancies, Vasudeva also argued that groundlevel health workers should be much more vigilant. "There is a high chance that many of these girls might be anaemic. This leads to abortions, which in itself can be highly dangerous. With no proper awareness, they get pregnant again within two months after the abortion. The ground-level health workers should monitor these things and advice the girls," he said.Patients in rural areas"In Bengaluru, we see cases of underage pregnancies more in rural patients than in urban ones," said Dr. Spurthy G. Janney, Consultant - Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Manipal Hospitals, Whitefield "Those in urban areas generally are aware of safe sex and contraceptives. Even then, when they come for consultation for other gynaecological issues, we educate them about safe sex and contraception."She added, "Among rural girls with teenage pregnancies, we also see a lot of cases of frequent pregnancies. In such cases, we usually call them in after the third or fourth month of delivery, counsel them about contraception and let them know that they should take at least a gap of 18 months before conceiving again. We also tell them about the barrier method of contraception. which is provided for free by the government, and if they have three children or more, then we also advise them about the family planning scheme."No govt. department

However, there is no specific government department which deals with these pregnancies. While the Women and Child Welfare Department keeps a tab on the cases reported and has officers to stop child marriages, the Health Department is only concerned with reporting cases which come to hospitals, according to the existing regulations. In fact, there is no data on the exact number of underage pregnancies in the State. While the CWCs only provide data about the number of cases registered, the Health Department says there is no authenticated data in this regard."It is the Women and Child Welfare Department which deals with underage pregnancies. Whenever our doctors get to know of such cases, they report it to the appropriate authorities. The treatment will not be denied, but since it will be considered a POCSO case, it will be reported to CWC, and they will take further action. We only render health services, said Sivakumar. K.B., Commissioner, Health and Family Welfare Department. Earlier in September 2024, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had sent out a circular to 10 government departments about prevention of underage pregnancies after the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) portal indicated that there were 28,657 such cases in the period between January 2023 and November 2023. This note included directions to the Health Department to solve the technical issues on the RCH portal and mandatorily register the proper age of the girls on the age matrix index. However

The inauguration plaque that still remains intact. It bears the inscription, "Milk Pasteurisation Scheme inaugurated by Lieutenant-Colonel Daya Singh Bedi, then Chief Commissioner of Coorg, on 24 July 1955."The inauguration

a decade despite increasing production costs

The Ksheeradhaare scheme was launched in 2008 with a ?2 per litre incentive, which was later increased to ?4 per litre in 2013 and ?5 per litre in 2016. However, since then, there has been no further revision, even as expenses for feed and maintenance have risen significantly. Adding to their woes, the State government has not disbursed these incentives for more than 10 months, leaving farmers struggling financially.Farmers' leader Kurubur Shanthakumar criticised the government, alleging that apart from withholding incentives, farmers are also being paid ?1 less per litre for their milk. "There are approximately 38 lakh dairy farmers in Karnataka, and over 90% of them are women. The government speaks about women's empowerment, yet it fails to ensure timely payment of their incentives," he said. He further emphasised that the success of the Nandini brand is due to the efforts of farmers, and therefore, they deserve to be adequately compensated

Interestingly, the name 'Nandini' was not chosen by officials at the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) but was suggested by the consumers who would go on to support and cherish the brand. According to A.S. Premnath, former Managing Director of KMF, in 1983, KMF decided to introduce a corporate brand identity for its milk and dairy products to strengthen its presence in the market. As part of this initiative, it reached out to consumers, inviting them to suggest a name for the brand. "The response was overwhelming, with a large number of consumers recommending the name 'Nandini.' Given the strong public preference for this name, KMF officially adopted 'Nandini' as the brand name for its dairy products," Premnath said.

## Police set up 4-member panel to probe illegal migration from Punjab

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The state police have constituted a four-member factfinding committee comprising senior officers to inquire into the issue of illegal migration in the wake of the recent deportation of Punjabis from the United States. Thirty people from the state were among the 104 Indian nationals deported on the C-17 US military aircraft that landed in Amritsar on Wednesday.Gaurav Yadav, Director General of Police (DGP), informed that the panel will be formed under the chairmanship of Parveen Sinha, Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), NRI; and will include Shive Verma, ADGP, Internal Security; Dr S Boopathi, Inspector General of Police, Provisioning; and Satinder Singh, Deputy Inspector General, Border Range. The DGP said the fact-finding committee has been directed to take appropriate action against any person found to be involved in committing illegalities and indulging in illegal migration or human traffick-

Yadav added that the panel has been empowered to co-opt any other police officer in the investigation process

and shall maintain coordination with the concerned senior superintendents or commissioners of police, who have been directed to provide all the required assistance and infrastructural facilities to the committee. As reported by The Indian Express on Friday, based on feedback from those who were deported from the US, the Punjab police plan to launch a targeted crackdown on travel agents who send people abroad through illegal "donkey" or "dunki" routes after promising them a legal way to migrate. An officer said that an estimated 20,000 Indians are likely to be deported from the US in the coming days, and that many among these are likely to be from Punjab. "With each illegal migrant having paid around Rs 30 lakh to the travel agents, the entire illegal 'donkey route' business is worth several hundred crores, if not thousands," said the officer. The police added that they have no information on whether other deportees will also arrive in military aircraft. "It could be that this flight was in a military aircraft to put up an 'effect' by the US authorities and other flights may be in chartered civilian flights," an officer said.

as of January 2025, Health Department officials said the portal's data about underage pregnancies were not authenticated

Minister for Women and Child Development Laxmi Hebbalkar also mentioned that the government has taken many steps, including broadcasting a 13-week series on radio in 2024 to raise awareness about underage pregnancies. She said 697 awareness programmes were held across the State in government and private schools, in which 5.75 lakh people participated. The government has also collaborated with an NGO to train the staff to prevent these pregnancies. Activists warn that if appropriate steps are not taken now to prevent these pregnancies, then the State and the country will suffer long-term human capital losses. "First of all, the birth rate of the country is on the decline. If our existing children are also subjected to pregnancies and these hardships, then what will happen to our human capital in a few years? The government should seriously think about this," remarked Tejaswini.

### Maharashtra govt clears way for ineligible beneficiaries to return money, new head in accounts opened

#### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

The Maharashtra government has opened a new head in its finance accounts as ineligible women who benefited under the CM Majhi Ladki Bahin scheme have started repaying the money they received. According to an estimate from the state Women and Child Development department, around one lakh women across the state have come forward to return the money they received despite not fulfilling the eligibility criteria of the scheme. In its order dated January 29, the Women and Child Development department has informed all district officials about the opening of a new head under which the money returned by ineligible women will be deposited. "As women started coming forward to various zilla parishad and local administration offices, officials conveyed to us that there is no head in financial accounts under which the money can be deposited," said an official from the department.

Last month, Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Aiit Pawar had said the government was planning to weed out beneficiaries availing the benefits of the scheme even though they don't meet the eligibility criteria.As per the government process, a head under finance accounts has to be opened in case money is to be spent or deposited for a particular reason. That money cannot be spent on any other purpose. Similarly, money coming to the government should also be deposited under a designated head. The government accounts till now had no mention of a designated head in accounts to deposit the money returned by the women."There are some women who received the money despite not meeting the criteria. Now those women are voluntarily coming forward to return the money. The money we are receiving will now be deposited under this



According to an estimate from the state Women and Child Development department, around one lakh women across the state have come forward to return the money they received despite not fulfilling the eligibility criteria of the scheme.

head," the official said. Sources said that with reports of the government scrutinising the existing list and possibility of action, a large number of women are coming forward to deposit the money. As per a primary estimate, around one lakh women across the state have come forward to return the money. The scheme offers Rs 1,500 per month to women up to 65 years of age with an annual family income of less than Rs 2.5 lakh. No member of their family should be a government employee, the beneficiary shall not own a four-wheeler or be getting monthly assistance under any other government scheme. According to the government, a total of 2.47 crore beneficiaries exist under this scheme.

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# Data from hospitals is critical in training AI and making healthcare better, says structural biologist Janet Thornton



#### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

"Do you know what ontology is?" asks Professor Janet Thornton, a pioneer in structural bioinformatics, as I sit down with her for a conversation. I shake my head in the negative. Taking a table in the room as an example, in a minute she explains the concept, which essentially is a framework that represents knowledge in a structured format and allows AI systems to understand it. I remember what she said previously during a more informal chat -- "Science is very easy if you try to understand it, if you break it down."Director Emeritus at the European Bioinformatics Institute (EBI), Prof Thornton led research groups studying the biology of proteins and ageing during her time at EBI and has been vocal about the importance of open data and tools. She was in Bengaluru to deliver a lecture organised by Shibulal Family Philanthropic Initiatives (SFPI), in collaboration with TIFR

The Hindu caught up with Prof Thornton to understand her views on the importance of data infrastructure in improving healthcare, developments in the field of bioinformatics and where studies could lead to.When you started off your career, there were about 20 known protein structures. And now there are about 200,000 structures... There were 230,000 in the database last Thursday. But now we can predict structures using Alpha Fold and AI, and they have predicted the structures for 214 million proteins. Going from 20 to 240 million is just phenomenal. It's like discovering a new world. With the technologies, crystallography and electron microscopy, and now the prediction built on that data, we can see the world of proteins that basically enact the body. And it's fantastic.Research has come a long way in this field. What does that mean for the health sector?

It has had an impact, but it's still really just developing. We know much more about our physiology - how metabolism works and how viruses invade. For example, we saw with the COVID virus how quickly the structures of the spike protein, which helped in the design of the vaccine, could be characterised. I think we've come a long way in our general understanding of proteins. Now, translating this knowledge into new medicines is only just starting. I don't think we're quite there, but I think eventually this will lead to a new way of doing medicine.I'm not a medical doctor, so this is just from my perspective. But often medicines only treat the symptoms. I think that will change because once we have enough data, we can improve the rational design of new medicines. I think every health service in the world is struggling with the demand, but I believe we will gradually improve our understanding, and that will impact medicine for everybody. I sit on the board of Health Data Research U.K. It's a government-funded organisation to try to coordinate health data and make it available for research. It's taken 50 vears to establish this huge set of data resources that can be used openly for basic biological research. Health data is guite different. And in my opinion, it's going to take 10 to 20 vears to coordinate that health data and make it accessible It's difficult because the health data relates to people. It's personal. So, there are ethical concerns which must be

ests. So, I think the impact at the moment is still for basic biological research. The impact on medicine is just beginning, mainly with genetic diseases. There are some diseases that are more tractable. But chronic diseases, like cardiovascular problems, dementia, diseases of old age and so on are much more challenging. I think these areas remain challenging. There are also opportunities with respect to the delivery of medicine in the hospitals. In the U.K., the NHS is really struggling because of the demand. I think there are ways to make hospitals more efficient and to handle the flow of patients.

Have you ever felt that when AI becomes an obsession, other critical areas of research in bioinformatics might get overshadowed?

The problem I see is different. In order for AI to be effective, you need good data. The only reason AlphaFold worked was because it was trained on 170,000 structures that had already been solved. The protein structure prediction problem is almost the ideal AI problem. When we look at health, the question is whether we can effectively use the data currently available. There's a huge amount of data, but it's not curated, stored, and shared. The lack of such data is a game-breaker. So, what question do you get the Al to learn how to solve? Adequately defining the question for the AI to solve is not easy and it is critically important. Then there's the problem of ontologies. If you don't use the same words, the computer doesn't know that it's the same object. Similarly, when it comes to health the descriptions of diseases are not sufficiently standardised making it difficult to combine different types of data.

The other big problem is that every human being is an individual. And we all have different genetic backgrounds. Things affect each of us differently. That's another complication. Capturing this data and making it available to improve clinical practice is difficult also because of the ethics and privacy concerns. Implementing solutions is another challenge due to the different procedures and protocols, often long and torturous. Then there is the commercial involvement. Drug companies don't share their data because commercially such data can be valuable. In the U.K. alone, we have different hospitals run by different Trusts, and they don't share their data. They don't store it in the same way. They don't use the same protocols. And that makes the data not so useful, so sorting that data out is a big, big problem. For health data, it's really challenging to make the data accessible for research. But it's a critical health infrastructure. We need to make the data from hospitals visible so that it can be used to train AI programs that really can tease out new information from data. But you need good data. You need clean data. And what you get out reflects what you put in, as always

What is the direction in which you like to see the research progressing and impacting humankind in the years to come?

I think I'm quite naive about this because I'm not a clinician. But there are 8 billion people in the world and out of these there will be somebody who has a similar life journey to me with the same problems and the same positives and negatives. We could see if we can somehow bring together all those life journeys. A doctor normally operates on his own experience which is somewhat limited with respect to the amount of information held by the doctor. My feeling is that if we could gather the data out there, there's the potential for better, more accurate prognosis and diagnosis. I'd like to see the real understanding come from all the different technologies we've got in life sciences. There's also the potential of improving ecology and agriculture. And then there is green chemistry. We've been looking at enzyme mechanisms. There are many new enzymes in the bacteria at the bottom of the sea and in wastewater and so



A Budget that is mostly good

#### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

The Union Budget has got many things right. Its projection of nominal GDP growth for 2025-26, at 10.1%, is reasonable and acceptable. The Economic Survey 2024-25 had indicated a real GDP growth in the range of 6.3%-6.8% for 2025-26. This provides some buffer if growth picks up more. The increase in the capital expenditure of the government in 2025-26 over the revised estimates of 2024-25 is estimated at ?1.03 lakh crore. But the capital expenditures in 2025-26, at ?11.2 lakh crore, are nearly the same as was indicated in the Budget of 2024-25 at ?11.1 lakh crore.

The overarching aim of the Budget was to accelerate growth and push India towards a developed country status. The required rate of real growth to achieve this is estimated differently including a rate of 8% in the Economic Survey for 2024-25. In any case, the country needs a definite pickup in growth rate. The various measures indicated in the Budget are welcome. In fact, some of these could have been implemented even earlier. The concession given to the 'middle-class' in terms of income-tax is welcome as a relief. But its impact on demand depends on the marginal propensity to consume of the households who are expected to largely benefit from these concessions and their consumption basket.

Gross tax revenuesGrowth in the Government of India's gross tax revenues (GTR) have trended downwards in recent years. The buoyancy of GTR has fallen for three successive years from 1.4 in 2023-24 to 1.15 in 2024-25 (RE) and then to 1.07 in 2025-26 (BE). As a result, growth in the Government of India's GTR has kept falling from 13.5% in 2023-24 to 11.2% in 2024-25 (RE), and to 10.8% in 2025-26 (BE). Within the government's tax revenues, the growth rate of Goods and Services Tax (GST) has also fallen from 12.7% in 2023-24 to 10.9% in 2025-26 (BE).

In fact, the structure of the government's taxation has moved away from indirect to direct taxes. The share of direct taxes in the government's GTR has increased from 52% in 2021-22 to 59% in 2025-26 (BE) which is a welcome development. Within direct taxes, however, it is personal income-tax which has performed better than corporate income-tax in terms of growth and buoyancy. However, even in the case of personal income-tax there has been a fall in growth from 25.4% in 2023-24 to 20.3% in 2024-25 (RE) and 14.4% in 2025-26 (BE). This fall in growth in 2025-26 (BE) is partly due to the announced income-tax concessions. In the case of corporate income-tax, the growth in 2024-25 (RE) is quite low at 7.6%. This growth has been raised to 10.4% in 2025-26 (BE). On the whole, assumptions regarding the government's tax revenue growth in 2025-26 (BE) appear to be realistic. In the case of non-tax

# The primary lessons from the Reagan air crash

### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

revenues, the main contribution has been in the form of dividends from the Reserve Bank of India and public sector companies, which together accounted for about ?3.25 lakh crore in 2025-26 - an increase of 35,715 crore over the revised estimates. Thus, the non-tax revenues have been raised from ?5.3 lakh crore (RE) to ?5.8 lakh crore in 2025 26 (BE)

Level of government expenditureTax and non-tax revenues, non-debt capital receipts and fiscal deficit together determine the size of government expenditure. As discussed, a gross tax revenue growth at a lower level of 10.8% appears to be realistic. Given the commitment to fiscal consolidation, the size of government expenditure as a percentage of GDP had to be reduced from 14.6% in 2024-25 (RE) to 14.2% in 2025-26 (BE). Growth in total expenditure, at 7.6% in 2025-26 (BE), is lower than the budgeted nominal GDP growth at 10.1%.

In fact, this was so even in 2024-25 (RE), when the government's total expenditure growth was 6.1% as against the nominal GDP growth of 9.7% as per the first advanced estimates. However, there has been a steady improvement in the quality of government expenditure as the share of capital expenditure in total expenditure has been improving. In fact, this share has improved by 10% points over the period from 2020-21 to 2025-26 (BE). Given the contemporary context, the Government of India has to build up largescale Artificial Intelligence (AI) infrastructure in order to facilitate the adoption of emerging technologies. In this context, China has taken a clear lead. The United States has recently announced an investment of \$500 billion for AI infrastructure. In the field of AI, India's technology companies have failed to anticipate developments. India should have done what China did. Perhaps, India should push these companies for research and development, by offering some tax concessions, if necessary. One wrong measure introduced in the Budget is to move away from fiscal deficit as an indicator of fiscal prudence. Contrary to what is stated in the Budget document, we are moving from a transparent to a less transparent indicator. As per the glide path given in the Medium-Term Fiscal Policy Cum Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement of the 2024-25 Budget, the fiscal deficit was to be brought down to below 4.5% by 2025-26. However, in the 2025-26 Budget, the practice of giving a glide path in terms of fiscal deficit is being discontinued. It has been stated that from now on, the focus will be on reducing the debt-GDP ratio annually. In the annexure statement titled 'Statements of Fiscal Policy as required under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003', alternative paths of the debt-GDP ratio with nominal GDP growth assumptions of 10.0%, 10.5% and 11.0% are given. The glide paths are indicated in terms of alternative growth assumptions and alternative assumptions regarding mild, moderate, and high degrees of fiscal consolidation. This makes the whole exercise vague and non-transparent. It is better for fiscal discipline to indicate specific fiscal deficit target for different years and the corresponding debt-GDP ratios for those years. It should clearly be shown by what year the FRBM Act targets are to be achieved. A larger claim on the available investible resources by the government will make it difficult for private investment to pick up.C Rangarajan is Chairman, Madras School of Economics and a former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. D.K. Srivastava is Honorary Professor, Madras School of Economics and Member, Advisory Council to the Sixteenth Finance Commission. The views expressed are personal

considered

The other side is that you want to make this freely available for research, but there are also commercial inter-

on that will be able to do new chemistries. So, if we learr how to design proteins that will do the green chemistry, that would be fantastic. It might even help to tackle climate change.

# U.S. doubles down on deportations amidst outrage over shackled Indian immigrants returned on military planes

GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Amidst outrage in India over the treatment of Indian deportees, the United States doubled down on its decision to fly the alleged illegal immigrants shackled and handcuffed aboard a U.S. Military C-17 plane. This is the first time a military plane has been used for such a flight, according to officials, and its use had been expressly ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump.When asked about the reason for the unusually harsh transport methods, that caused a furore in Parliament as well, U.S. Embassy spokesperson Chris Elms emphasised that the U.S. considered the move "critically important"."I can share that enforcing our nation's immigration laws is critically important to the national security and public safety of the United States. It is the policy of the United States to faithfully execute the immigration laws against all inadmissible and removable aliens," Mr. Elms said in Delhi on Thursday. On Wednesday, he had said that the actions sent a "clear message: illegal migration is not worth the risk."The tough statements indicate that the U.S. decision to use military planes for deportations is deliberate. Apart from India, the U.S. military's C-17s and C-130s have been used for a number of countries including Guatemala, Peru,



removed,'

illegal

be

Honduras and Ecuador as well as Colombia, whose President Gustavo Pedro objected to the use of the "undignified" manner of transport.In a video he released online, U.S. Border Patrol chief Michael W. Banks showed how the Indian deportees were lined up for the flight, with legs in chains and wrists held in cuffs. They entered the military transport plane with its rows and rows of seats crammed together for the longest such deportation flight thus far by U.S. military aircraft. The 24-second video showed masked seof curity personnel grinning broadly while overseeing boarding, and the video was set to loud and seemingly ominous music."U.S. Border Patrol and partners successfully returned illegal aliens to India, marking the

gress, he said that the U.S. using military transport," Mr. was deporting aliens on military aircraft "for the first time Banks posted on social media along with the video. in history", and that as a re-"This mission underscores sult America was being "respected again". According to our commitment to enforcing immigration laws and the U.S. Immigration and ensuring swift removals. If Customs Enforcement you cross illegally, you will (ICE) website, its arm the he Immigration Air Operations added.When asked about (IAO) is mandated to conthe reason behind the use of duct the transfer and remilitary aircraft, which is conmoval of detained aliens via siderably more expensive "charter and commercial air than chartered aircraft or transportation". It also opercommercial flights, the ates "Special High-Risk Charter flights" to repatriate spokesperson said that the aliens who may be security U.S. military was "supporting the administration's efrisks, using its inventory of 12 aircraft in the border forts to expedite the removal states of Arizona, Texas, migrants globally".Shortly after he Louisiana, and Florida, says was sworn in on January 20, the site, which makes no mention of military support Mr. Trump signed a number of executive orders, includfor its operations. According to the latest ICE figures, ing one declaring a national emergency at the border. there are 24,974 Indian na-Speaking to Republican tionals currently detained by members of the U.S. Con-ICE on criminal charges

The tragic mid-air collision on January 29, 2025 between a United States Army Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter and an American Airlines CRJ-700 flight while it was on the final approach path to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, Washington DC, killing 67 people, brings out several aspects of human factors that can result in a tragedy. In this case, the first was having politicians jump the gun by blaming others, even before a formal investigation began and the bodies were yet to be recovered from the watery grave of the Potomac river. U.S. President Donald Trump was quick to blame former U.S. Presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden for diluting U.S air safety standards, forgetting that it was he who held the reins in the interim four-year period. Pressures, opaque investigations in India

One saw the same kind of political one-upmanship just after the air accident at Mangaluru in May 2010 when the Minister of Civil Aviation, Praful Patel, declared that the airport conformed to all standards of ICAO Annex 14, volume 1. Dutifully, the court of inquiry committee that was headed by a retired Air Marshal of the Indian Air Force, glossed over all the blatant violations of the Airports Authority of India, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the airline, i.e., Air India Express, by blaming only the pilot. In all the air accident reports in India, one never gets detailed data from the digital flight data recorder and the cockpit voice recorder. Unlike in India, where the truth is hidden and restrictions placed on all access to information on the accident, photographs or data on the state of infrastructure, it is open in the rest of the world where one can analyse data with vital clues that are available. There is a big lesson to be learnt from the air accident in the U.S. The radar track and the air traffic control audio tracks were openly available and one could analyse and disseminate the facts instead of having doctored data and reports that have been vetted by a bureaucrat who ensures that there is nothing incriminating against the government and its agencies is published in the final report.Let us take what has been put out by media sources in the U.S. What is generally known is that the American Airlines flight was given a runway change by air traffic control to accommodate a departure. The change was accepted by the crew. The helicopter, PAT25 (or Priority Air Transport) had taken off from a base nearby for a Proficiency training flight at night and had been informed about the passenger flight. The air traffic controller had asked the helicopter crew whether he had the passenger flight in sight. The pilot responded by saying he was visual with the plane and he was given clearance to maintain visual and pass behind the passenger flight. This is where the human factor plays a big part. The flight was at night. Other than the navigation lights and the rotating beacon, the helicopter pilot had no other clue to make out the type of aircraft he had visual sighting with. His only information was based on the flight number. If one looks at the radar picture available to the public and the information from the air traffic tape recording, there was another flight which was behind the American Airlines flight, but approaching the main runway that the American flight was originally approaching before the American crew accepted a side step to a different runway. The 'hurry syndrome'

Did the helicopter pilot wrongly identify this second flight to be the American flight when he reported visual to air traffic control? If one looks at the radar track of this second flight and the track being followed by the helicopter to "cross behind" (as instructed by air traffic control), it is quite likely that the helicopter crew had focused on the second flight rather than the American Airlines flight and were fixated on being behind the aircraft they had perhaps misidentified. As both the helicopter and the American Airlines flight were below 1,000 feet above ground level, the collision avoidance system would not have sounded as it would have been inhibited below 1,000 ft.In aviation parlance, this is what one calls "Press-on-itis", or the 'hurry syndrome', where once you get fixated, all other inputs cannot influence your judgement. One needs a fresh and clear mind to be able to maintain situational awareness and spatial orientation. Fatigue and stress have a major role in these situations. The initial reports indicate there was only a single air traffic tower controller at Reagan handling the flights when, normally, two controllers are on duty. Soon after the Reagan accident, the visual media in India went on overdrive, with graphic presentations of the Charkhi Dadri mid-air collision in India, near New Delhi, on November 12, 1996. In this accident, a Kazakhstan Airlines flight from Chimkent, Kazakhastan to Delhi collided with a Saudi Arabian Airlines Boeing 747 flight from Delhi to Dhahran, killing 349 people The pilot of the Kazakh flight was blamed for not complying with air traffic control clearance. What people are not aware of was a DGCA official who was in-charge of the investigation was removed from the investigation when he submitted his findings. It was another official who finalised the report. It is needless to say that the last nine minutes of the digital flight data recorder of the Saudia flight was a blank. In the recent crash in South Korea, in December 2024, where a passenger flight landed with retracted wheels and crashed into an embankment housing the instrument landing system localiser antenna, South Korea, like India at the time of the Mangaluru crash, had not complied with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 14, Volume 1 Standard that mandated that all structures in operational area shall be frangible (from January 1, 2010). Yet, ICAO gave them a clean chit during the audits conducted.

The Korean jet's digital flight data recorder was also blank for the last four minutes.Let us not forget the case of two Indigo flights, on January 7, 2022 - one bound for Kolkata, and the other for Bhubaneshwar - that were departing from parallel runways at Bengaluru airport. The air traffic controllers had cleared planes for take-off. In the two runways at Bengaluru, one runway was to be used for takeoffs and the other for landings simultaneously. It was a narrow escape for both planes. Neither the airline nor the air traffic control reported the matter but the incident came to light during a safety audit. The lack of situational awareness and the lack of knowledge of the pilots on the functioning of the collision avoidance system were safety issues that were all swept under the carpet.On October 11, 2024, an Air India Express flight from Tiruchirappalli to Sharjah experienced hydraulic failure in one system. It circled for close to three hours before landing.



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# H-1B initial registration period to commence on March 7, 2025: USCIS



#### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

"The initial registration period for the H-1B visas, the most sought-after by Indian IT professionals, for the fiscal year 2026 will commence on March 7, 2025 and close on March 24, 2025," a federal agency has said. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows U.S. companies to employ foreign workers in special occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries such as India and China. Republican party supporters and Donald Trump's team disagree on H1B immigration debate"The initial registration period for the most sought-after H-1B visas for foreign guest workers for fiscal 2026 will open at noon Eastern Time (10:30 p.m. IST) on March 7, 2025 and run through noon Eastern Time (10:30 p.m. IST) on March 24, 2025," the U.S. Citizenship and Im-

migration Services (USCIS) said on Wednesday (February 5, 2025.)"During this period, prospective petitioners and representatives must use a USCIS online account to register each beneficiary electronically for the selection process and pay the associated registration fee for each beneficiary," it said. The registration fee is \$215.

It's a great programme: Trump appears to side with Musk in H-1B visa rowThe USCIS further said the FY 2026 H-1B cap will use the beneficiary-centric selection process launched in FY 2025. The U.S. fiscal begins on October 1, 2025. Indians are the main beneficiaries of the H-1B visas, which bring in the best of the talent and brains from across the world. Highly skilled professionals from India walk away with the overwhelming number of H-1B visas - which is Congressional mandated 65,000 every year and another 20,000 for those who received higher education from the U.S.According to the USCIS, under the beneficiary-centric process, registrations will be selected by a unique beneficiary rather than by registration. This new process is designed to reduce the potential for fraud and ensure each beneficiary would have the same chance of being selected, regardless of the number of registrations submitted on their behalf by an employer."If enough unique beneficiaries are received by March 24, then the agency will randomly select unique beneficiaries and send selection notifications via users' USCIS online accounts," it said."If enough unique beneficiaries were not received, then all registrations for unique beneficiaries that were properly submitted in the initial registration period will be selected," the statement said.

# Trump meets Japan's PM Shigeru Ishiba as China trade war simmers

#### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

U.S. President Donald Trump meets Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba for the first time on Friday (February 7, 2025) as two allies wary of China's rise in work to boost business and security ties while an escalating trade war threatens to rupture the global economy.Mr. Trump, whose first three weeks in office have shredded norms and shaken foreign capitals from Ottawa to Bogota, has taken a more conventional approach to Washington's longstanding Asia-Pacific allies, including Japan, South Korea, Australia and the Philippines.But those friendships may be tested as Mr. Trump's early fight with China over synthetic opioids and warnings of tariffs against other countries - Japan included - threaten to disrupt commercial relations in Asia and beyond.Mr. Trump put a 10% tariff on all imports from China in what he called an "opening salvo" in a clash between the world's two largest economies, sending consumers and businesses scrambling to adjust.

Japan is especially trade-dependent: it is a major exporter and counts on imports for much of its food and natural resources, and many of its firms are deeply invested in and reliant on China. Tokyo shares the hawkish outlook towards China of Mr. Trump's national security team over Beijing's global ambitions and extensive territorial claims in Asia, including the vital chip-producing island of Taiwan.At the same time, Japanese officials are wary of possible efforts by Beijing to court the U.S. President with promises of cooperation on key global issues, including trade. Mr. Trump spoke to Chinese President Xi Jinping days before taking office and has said he will discuss tariffs with him soon.Japanese officials speaking privately say they are comfortable in dealing with Mr. Trump's China hawks, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio and National Security Michael Waltz, but less so with those in the administration with strong business ties with Beijing, such as billionaire Elon Musk, who has developed a significant Washington power base."There's two foreign heads of state that have been received in the Oval Office," said Rahm Emanuel, Biden's ambassador to Tokyo. "That's Bibi Netanyahu of Israel, and Japan. So that's a good thing, and that's a good sign."Trump was close with the late Japanese Prime Min-



ister Shinzo Abe but has no relationship with Ishiba, who took office in October. That is something Japanese officials want to change, and they plan to invite Trump to visit Japan.Japan is girding for Trump to demand concessions to reduce the \$56 billion bilateral trade surplus and stave off the threat of tariffs.

Tokyo has been preparing some concessions, officials told Reuters, including considering offering support for a \$44 billion gas pipeline in Alaska. SoftBank CEO Masayoshi Son has also promised to invest hundreds of billions in artificial intelligence in the U.S.Options to increase manufacturing investment in the U.S., semiconductor chips and artificial intelligence are also expected to figure in the discussions."The Japanese are definitely thinking of ways to both reduce the deficit and create jobs in the United States in industrial sectors that are of particular interest to Donald Trump," said Kenneth Weinstein, head of Japan program at Washington's conservative Hudson Institute think tank. There are areas of tension beyond trade, including the attempted takeover of U.S. Steel by Japan's Nippon Steel . Former President Joe Biden blocked the deal but delayed its enforcement pending legal action; Trump has also vowed to block the deal. However, there are also solid signs of stability and continuity in ties and the two leaders are expected to formally agree to language touting their alliance and common views on the economy and security issues, including China and Taiwan, according to another official familiar with the discussions.

# U.S. officials now say Trump only wants to displace Palestinians from Gaza temporarily



#### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

President Donald Trump's top diplomat and his main spokesperson on Wednesday (February 5, 2025) walked back the idea that he wants the permanent relocation of Palestinians from Gaza, after American allies and even Republican lawmakers rebuffed his suggestion that the U.S. take "ownership" of the territory.Mr. Trump had called for "permanently" resettling Palestinians from war-torn Gaza and left open the door to deploying American troops there as part of a massive rebuilding operation. But Secretary of State Marco Rubio and White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said he only sought to move the roughly 1.8 million Gazans temporarily to allow for reconstruction. Even that proposal has drawn criticism from Palestinians, who are worried they may never be allowed back in if they flee, and from the Arab nations that Trump has called on to take them in.

Mr. Rubio, on his first foreign trip as secretary of state, described Trump's proposal as a "very generous" offer to help with debris removal and reconstruction of the enclave following 15 months of fighting between Israel and Hamas."In the interim, obviously people are going to have to live somewhere while you're rebuilding it," Mr. Rubio said in a news conference in Guatemala City.Mr. Leavitt said in a briefing with reporters in Washington that Gaza is "a demolition site" and referenced footage of the devastation.

"The president has made it clear that they need to be temporarily relocated out of Gaza," she said, calling it currently "an uninhabitable place for human beings" and saying it would be "evil to suggest that people should live in such dire conditions."Their comments contradicted Mr. Trump, who said Tuesday night, "If we can get a beautiful area to resettle people, permanently, in nice homes where they can be happy and not be shot and not be killed and not be knifed to death like what's happening in Gaza." He added that he envisioned "long-term" U.S. ownership of a redevelopment of the territory, which sits along the Mediterranean Sea.In a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Pentagon on Wednesday, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the military is "prepared to look at all options" for rebuilding Gaza. "We look forward to working with our allies, our counterparts, both diplomatically and militarily, to look at all options," Hegseth said.Egypt, Jordan and other U.S. allies in the Mideast have cautioned Mr. Trump that relocating Palestinians from Gaza would threaten Mideast stability, risk expanding the conflict and undermine a decades-long push by the U.S. and its allies for a twostate solution.

Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry issued a sharply worded reaction to Trump, noting its long call for an independent Palestinian state was a "firm, steadfast and unwavering position." Saudi Arabia has been in negotiations with the U.S. over a deal to diplomatically recognize Israel in exchange for a security pact and other terms."The duty of the international community today is to work to alleviate the severe human suffering endured by the Palestinian people, who will remain committed to their land and will not budge from it," the Saudi statement said."The idea of Americans going in on the ground in Gaza is a non starter for every senator," the South Carolina lawmaker told reporters Wednesday. "So I would suggest we go back to what we've been trying to do which is destroy Hamas and find a way for the Arab world to take over Gaza and the West Bank, in a fashion that would lead to a Palestinian state that Israel can live with."Mr. Rubio insisted that Trump's position "was not meant as a hostile move.

"What he's very generously has offered is the ability of the United States to go in and help with debris removal, help with munitions removal, help with reconstruction, the rebuilding homes and businesses and things of this nature so that then people can move back in," Rubio said. Still, the White House said Trump was ruling out sending U.S. dollars to aid in the reconstruction of Gaza.But Mr. Leavitt, like Mr. Trump, refused to rule out sending American troops into Gaza, saying of Mr. Trump, "he wants to preserve that leverage in negotiations."The Palestinians, Arab nations and others have rejected even a temporary relocation from Gaza, which would run counter to decades of U.S. policy calling for the creation of a Palestinian state with no further displacement of Palestinians from Gaza or the West Bank. The proposals also appear to trash months of negotiations by the Biden administration to draft a "day after" plan for the reconstruction and governance of Gaza. President Joe Biden had tried to lock in that plan - which calls for joint governance of the territory by the Palestinian Authority under U.N. stewardship and a multi-national peacekeeping force — before leaving office by inviting Trump's main Mideast envoy into final talks over a Gaza ceasefire.

### Blowing the cover: America's longstanding affair with television espionage

#### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

For Netflix, 2025 began with a worldwide streaming hit — The Night Agent: Season 2. The pervasiveness of spy entertainment in American media meant that success was more a matter of routine, and Americans have indeed eagerly loved and followed along with the fictional pursuits of their national intelligence agencies. It took a little over a decade since the television boom for spycraft stories to start syndicating over the medium. Since the 1950s, there has not been a decade in American television devoid of a spy staple. With each show shaping, deepening, and reflecting the anxieties of the public watching it, U.S. spy shows have come to define an omnipresent storytelling medium.

The reputation of "the spy" in worldwide media has certainly undergone severe rehabilitation. What was considered in early literature a profession of deceit, has become a personification of national interests. The rise of spy fiction in literature coincided with official efforts following the Second World War to establish a robust intelligence agency. The United States formed the CIA in 1947, and the Agency has since then built a symbiotic relationship with Hollywood.



justed and took a flight back home to spend more time on domestic issues. The agents started to become more cynical, with the 80s ushering in the age of the disillusioned spy.

# Guatemala gives Rubio a second deportation deal for migrants being sent home from the U.S.

### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo said Wednesday (February 5, 2025) his country will accept migrants from other countries who are being deported from the United States, the second deportation deal that Secretary of State Marco Rubio has reached during a Central America trip that has been focused mainly on immigration. Under the agreement announced by Arévalo, the deportees would be returned to their home countries at U.S. expense."We have agreed to increase by 40% the number of flights of deportees both of our nationality as well as deportees from other nationalities," Arévalo said at a news conference with Rubio.Previously, including under the Biden administration, Guatemala had been accepting on average seven to eight flights of its citizens from the U.S. per week. Under President Donald Trump it's also been one of the countries that have had migrants returned on U.S. military planes.El Salvador announced a similar but broader agreement on Monday. Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele said his country would accept U.S. deportees of any nationality, including American citizens and legal residents who are imprisoned for violent crimes.Both Trump and Rubio acknowledged the legal uncertainty of sending Americans to another country for imprisonment."I'm just saying if we had a legal right to do it, I would do it in a heartbeat," Trump told reporters Tuesday in the Oval Office. "I don't know if we do or not, we're looking at that right now.'

Rubio called it a very generous offer but said there were "obviously legalities involved. We have a Constitution."Immigration, a Trump administration priority, has been the major focus of Rubio's first foreign trip as America's top diplomat, a five-country tour spanning Panama, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. The agreements with El Salvador and Guatemala potentially help the Trump administration address what has always been a key sticking point in immigration enforcement since not everyone in the U.S. illegally can be easily sent back home. Venezuela, for example, has been a major source of migrants coming to the U.S. in recent years, but rarely can the U.S. deport Venezuelans back to their home country. But the U.S. already has a robust network set up to send people to several Central American countries.Guatemala will expand its capacity to receive not just Guatemalans, but also migrants from other countries who will then be repatriated to their home countries. The details still need to be worked out."However, the permanent answer to immigration is to bring development so that



no one has to leave the country," Arévalo said. To that end, a high-level Guatemalan delegation, including from the private sector, will travel to Washington in the coming weeks. Arévalo also announced the formation of a new border security force that will patrol Guatemala's borders with Honduras and El Salvador. The force will be made up of police and soldiers and will combat transnational crime of all kinds, he said. Rubio's trip has been dogged by the administration's dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development, including a late Tuesday order abruptly pulling almost all agency staffers off the job. After the news conference with Guatemala's president, Rubio headed directly to the U.S. Embassy, where staffers and their families who were unsure of their futures gathered to hear from their new boss. The meet-and-greet event was closed to the press, as was an earlier similar event in El Salvador. Both Guatemala and El Salvador have significant USAID missions. In Panama on Sunday before the shut down announcement, Rubio's embassy event had been open to journalists. From there Rubio wrapped up his Guatemala stop by visiting a local migration facility near an air force base where deportees are processed for integration back into their home communities. Under the measures announced Wednesday by Guatemala's president, the number of deportees is expected to rise by as much as 40%. The program has been supported by the U.S. State Department and Department of Homeland Security. Rubio also got a briefing on Guatemala's counternarcotics efforts, including the interception of at least four shipments of fentanyl precursors since late November totaling 127.5 kilograms (280 pounds), enough to produce more than 114 million doses of the drug.Rubio, who has offered exemptions to Trump's sweeping freeze on foreign assistance, has signed waivers to allow funding for both programs to continue, officials said."

Through radio shows and then early television, the American audience was made familiar with the "agent". They become an invisible, imagined first line of defence against enemy infiltration. Poring through declassified FBI and CIA files, showrunners created a prototype of the spy that continues to live on our television sets today. Driven by morals of patriotism over the greed of materialism, spies are compelling characters. With the U.S.' tendencies to play World Police, the spy genre has always had an interested audience in need of comfort and reassurance. That comfort is usually found at the end of a long drawn-out violent sequence, which is justified by the fact that the violence benefits American democracy. The plot structure of spy shows has shown little evolution, either safely transporting a secret object from point A to point B, or escaping something or chasing someone. Often, their enemies range from international counterparts, criminal organisations, or domestic terrorists creating mischief at home. The contours of the enemies do not matter as much as their existence.

It may be a lucky accident for the CIA that the commercial usage of television, the peak years of the Cold War, and the most powerful years of McCarthyism overlapped to brew an espionage storm. In the early 1950s, spies on television were less the result of creative imagination and more the derivation of FBI files. With communism as the main villain, shows carried the binary understandings of WWII world order. Scripts often parroted the black-and-white doomsday scenarios promoted by the government and justified the existence of intelligence agencies as guardians of the American ideal. Things had to be more relaxed in the coming decade, even as the American government was running amok internationally. Buoyed by the success of the first few James Bond films, espionage found a loyal audience and television was fast to respond. The 1960s saw television reach a saturation point with multiple shows running parallelly. Shows like The Man from U.N.C.L.E. (1964), and Mission: Impossible (1966) cemented the essentials of the American spy genre. Unlike their predecessors, these shows were optimistic, self-assured in the might of America, comprising a stylish core group who jetted off to European locations and mixed with suspense and humour, while bringing contemporary issues of race and gender to the fore. The decade saw genre blending as well with The Wild Wild West (1965), bringing cowboy spies to the screens. Finally, Get Smart (1969) wrapped the decade up with show-mocking and satirising the genre. The next two decades were a moment of self-reckoning for the American public who would go on to learn some uncomfortable truths about its government. In the last few years, the United States had not only faced the missile crisis, but had also actively contributed to the death toll of the Cambodian civil unrest, and still had troops on the ground in Vietnam. These international tensions were bookended by the Watergate scandal which seemed to blow the lid off. Accordingly, spies on TV ad-

The political shift to conservatism, with the landslide 1980 election of Republican Ronald Reagan to the White House, was reflected in Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan novel series which hit the press in 1984 and was appreciated publicly by Reagan. Meanwhile, on television, MacGyver (1985) and The Equalizer (1985) featured disenchanted leads, who were reconsidering the American espionage methods.With the fall of Soviet powers in the early 1990s, the American spy setup had to change its goalpost, and in the meantime invited influences from science-fiction and fantasy to release shows like The X Files (1993). Within two months of the 9/ 11 terrorist attack, three U.S. espionage shows were airing simultaneously: J.J. Abrams' Alias, Michael Frost Beckner's The Agency, and the Kiefer Sutherland-starring 24. Needless to say, these shows answered President George W. Bush's call for a "war on terror" with a jingoistic spirit that reignited public interest in intelligence agencies. When Sutherland as Jack Bauer completed his decade of American counter-terrorism, Claire Danes' Carrie Mathison came in from the wings to take the mantle of the spy who allayed American fear in Homeland (2011). The show shared the public's espionage enthusiasm with Joe Weisberg's period Cold War drama The Americans (2013). This decade-upondecade of television media wouldn't have been possible without the tacit support of the agencies portrayed in it. Information about covert missions is not made public in realtime. In this fog of secrecy, these fictional shows occupy the space of facts. The fact that it is common knowledge that the CIA and FBI commonly consult on the scripts, add a veneer of perceived legitimacy. Since the 1950s, the CIA has been eager to consult on scripts. Presently, it has become a more structured affair with FBI/CIA entertainmentindustry liaisons working closely with Hollywood directors. Homeland producer Alex Gansa, in a 2016 interview to IndieWire, candidly revealed the levels of access Hollywood gets. He admitted that a big part of the pre-production involved spending days in Washinton DC, in a "three-to-fiveday information-gathering summit with CIA officials and intelligence officers" who inform them of the most relevant risks to the U.S. These, he said, contributed to the Season 5 plot lines referencing Edward Snowden, West Asia, and Russian President Vladimir Putin. These agencies, therefore, script these shows themselves --- setting the agenda and deciding the next villain for American television.Spy shows have consistently ranked in the top 10 most-watched American shows each year. They now not only target the American public but seek to invite a global audience. The first season of Night Agent is the seventh most-watched English-language Netflix show ever. Yet, these shows have failed to grasp a semblance of nuance. Truth and facts often find themselves lost in exaggerated plots. Since this escapist thrill is what drives the audience to them, there is little incentive for change.What makes spies compelling to the audience beyond being civilian heroes, is their cool professionalism that ensures the safety of the American public. Maybe not in the real world, but in the world of spies, your national "enemy" is bound to lose. With Night Agent, we see this enemy taking the shape of the U.S. government itself, with corruption seeping into the bones of the White House



# To tackle digital banking frauds, Indian banks to have special Internet domain 'bank.in'



In a bid to tackle cyber security threats and rising instances of digital fraud, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will introduce the 'bank.in' exclusive Internet domain for all Indian banks. This domain, registrations for which will start in April, is expected to help customers identify genuine and legitimate websites of banks, and steer clear of suspicious ones. According to RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, the 'bank.in' domain rollout will be followed by the 'fin.in' domain for the country's financial sector.

Malhotra, who flagged the "surge in digital frauds" in India as a matter of concern, also announced that the central bank proposes to extend additional factor of authentication (AFA) to online international digital payments—using India-issued cards—made to offshore merchants who are enabled for such authentication. Currently, AFA is mandatory for domestic transactions only."The rapid digitalisation of financial services has brought convenience and efficiency but has also increased exposure to cyber threats and digital risks, which are getting sophisticated day by day. The surge in digital frauds is a matter of concern, warranting action by all stakeholders," Malhotra said while announcing these two measures in his statement on the central bank's bi-monthly monetary policy."Banks and NBFCs must continuously improve preventive and detective controls to mitigate cyber risks. They must develop robust incident response and recovery mechanisms, reinforced through periodic testing, for operational resilience," Malhotra added.

According to the Indian central bank, the new exclusive Internet domains for the country's banking and financial sector would help reduce cyber security threats and malicious activities like phishing, while streamlining secure financial services and enhancing trust in digital banking and payment services."The Institute for Development and Research in Banking' Technology (IDRBT) will act as the exclusive registrar. The actual registrations will commence from April 2025. Detailed guidelines for banks will be issued separately. Going forward, it is planned to have an exclusive domain viz, 'fin.in' for other non-bank entities in the financial sector," the RBI said in a release. On the additional factor of authentication for international online payments, the central bank said that it wants such transactions to have a level of safety similar to digital payments within India."Introduction of Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA) for digital payments has enhanced the safety of transactions which, in turn, provided confidence to customers to adopt digital payments.

This requirement, however, is mandatory for domestic transactions only... In order to provide a similar level of safety for online international transactions using cards issued in India, it is proposed to enable AFA for international card not present (online) transactions as well. This will provide an additional layer of security in cases where the overseas merchant is enabled for AFA. Draft circular will be issued shortly for feedback from stakeholders," the RBI said.

# Less restrictive policy and no explicit exchange rate targeting – takeaways from RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra's first monetary policy

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra made some interesting observations, which are indirect in nature but there are clear signals to the banking sector and other market participants about the rupee, liquidity management and monetary policy changes on the cards.Malhotra said that some banks are reluctant to on lend in the uncollateralised call money market. Instead, they are passively parking funds with the Reserve Bank. He asked the banks to actively trade among themselves in the uncollateralised call money market to make it deeper and vibrant for better signal extraction from the weighted average call money rate (WACR). This could be aimed at facilitating the orderly functioning of the market by avoiding any liquidity shortfall.While the market was expecting more liquidity infusion through various means, it has not happened.

It's apparent that he wants many banks which are flush with funds to lend it in the call money market to take care of the liquidity shortage in the system. This is at a time when the RBI intervened in the forex market to sell dollars in a bid to prevent a major slide in the rupee. Foreign investors were taking out money from the Indian market. The drainage of liquidity is mainly attributed to advance tax payments in December 2024, capital outflows, forex operations and a significant pickup in currency in circulation in January this year, he said.Currency in circulation has risen by Rs 1.80 lakh crore, or 5.3 per cent, to Rs 35.99 lakh crore as of January 2025

Governor said the RBI's interventions in the forex



RBI has been employing all tools at the RBI's disposal to face the multi-pronged challenges.

Less restrictive policy on the anvil?

Malhotra also hinted the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), while continuing with the neutral stance, felt that a less restrictive monetary policy is more appropriate at the current juncture. This could be an indication that the MPC might change the stance from neutral if the inflation-growth dynamics turns favourable in the forthcoming policies. There are expectations of two more rate cuts in the calendar year 2025 if inflation moves in the projected trajectory. It's clear that the new governor wants growth also picks up and he said "we should aspire for 7 per cent growth". He says the on a fresh assessment of the macroeconomic outlook. The RBI is committed to conduct monetary policy and take such measures, as appropriate, which are timely, carefully calibrated and clearly communicated, to facilitate conducive macroeconomic conditions that reinforce price stability, sustained economic growth and financial stability, he said. Though the RBI cut the Repo rate, the markets were not very enthused as the reduction was on the expected lines and they were hoping for a change in the stance from neutral with more liquidity infusion. The benchmark Sensex fell by 198 points, or 0.25 per cent, to 77,860.19 and NSE Nifty lost 43 points, or 0.18 per cent, at 23,559.95. Bank shares languished with the BSE Bankex declining by 0.49 per cent. The initial reaction of bond markets has been one of disappointment, with yields inching up a few basis points. The benchmark 10-year bond yield was at 6.70 per cent. Interest rates are expected to soften over the next few months. The rupee gained 15 paise at 87.43 against the dollar

# Social media post claims this exercise is good for diabetics; an expert, netizens are not convinced



After we decoded the benefits of calf muscle tapping for diabetics, we wanted to understand if doing a deep squat with a mobile torso helps diabetics — much like a social media post claimed. On Instagram, physiotherapist Madz Mariwa said: "Simple exercise for DIABETIC patient", and many users wanted to know how the exercise "applies specifically to a diabetic patient".

Since we also wanted an answer to that question, we

turned to Dr Ravi Shekhar Jha, director pulmonology, MD, MRCP, Fortis Hospital, Faridabad who stressed that there isn't a specific exercise that's uniquely designed or exclusive for people with diabetes. "However, regular physical activity, in general, is crucial for managing diabetes because it helps burn calories, improve insulin sensitivity, and control blood sugar levels," said Dr Jha. "In the video, it seems the influencer is trying to target the pancreas which is related to insulin release. However, we must know that the pancreas is an exocrine and endocrine gland and not a muscle (that can be trained by exercise)," said Dr Jha.

According to the expert, when influencers promote a "specific exercise" for diabetes, it might be "more about marketing or emphasising certain benefits of that exercise rather than it being the only or best option". "While some exercises may be particularly effective for blood sugar control, like strength training or aerobic exercises, the key is consistency in any form of physical activity that burns calories and improves overall fitness," said Dr Jha.It's important to approach such claims with a healthy dose of skepticism and rely on guidance from healthcare professionals, who can provide personalised advice based on an individual's health status and needs."Always remember that a balanced routine combining various forms of exercise — cardio, strength, and flexibility — is typically the most effective way to manage diabetes," said Dr Jha.

Vijay Varma recalls going 'blank' during a crucial night shoot scene on Dahaad set: 'Main atka tha abhi'; why memory lapses happen

"Main atka tha abhi. (I was stuck recently). The recent memory I have is from Dahaad where I went blank. Everyone was there. It was a night scene with four cameras rolling. It's a big moment in the series. Uss raat me na mere se dialogue nikal rahe theek se (I was neither able to say the dialogues properly), or I am fumbling or getting blank. I struggled with it for three hours. Just could not achieve it. People were getting anxious," recalled Varma.

What he did next was unanticipated. "I started laughing," shared Varma, adding, "Whenever I was fumbling, I laughed. I said, what to do, it wasn't happening. Aaj nahi nikal raha hai. We had shot for 70 days and this was the first incident there."Stressing that he "didn't want to beat myself for it," the actor continued: "I wasn't even apologising to everybody that I am fumbling because I feel that an actor is not a machine. Emotions need to be generated. It could very well be that something may not work out at one point. It's a human condition. Actors have to allow themselves to fail in front of the camera. It's okay."He further shared that he told the director that he was there in the scene emotionally but "not able to say the lines properly". "Trust me, if the emotions are correct, I will look after it during dubbing. I told him so. I dubbed the entire scene. You wouldn't even find it out," Varma said during a conversation with Sunny Hinduja.

Taking a cue from this incident, let's learn why we may go 'blank' sometimes.Consultant neurologist Dr Sudhir Kumar, Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad said there could be various underlying reasons for going blank or fumbling. "The commonest reason could be stress or anxiety. Another could be sleep deprivation. Lack of sleep the previous night



can result in cognitive disturbances. Losing just one hour of sleep may adversely affect memory and other cognitive functions, and it could take up to four days for the cognitive functions to return to baseline," Dr Kumar told indianexpress.com.

"If a person is not focused on a particular task and is trying to do multiple things at the same time, they could suffer from episodes of memory lapses, as attention and concentration may be compromised," said Dr Kumar.Dr Kumar also cautioned that one should not forget a real brain disease. "Episodes of fumbling and memory issues could be a beginning of mild cognitive impairment. If these issues become frequent or if they disrupt the normal day-to-day functioning, a neurologist should be consulted for evaluation," said Dr Kumar.

# 'After a point woh sab cheezein latak jaati hain':

market focus on smoothening excessive and disruptive volatility rather than targeting any specific exchange rate level or band. While he says the exchange rate of the Indian rupee is determined by market forces, he might be favouring some depreciation in the rupee – a clear change in the stance as during the time of the previous Governor, there were clear efforts to keep the rupee from depreciating sharply. The Indian rupee (INR) depreciated by 3.2 per cent against the US dollar since November 6, 2024, the day the presidential election results were announced in the US, largely mirroring the 2.4 per cent appreciation in the dollar index during the same period. The RBI has used the forex kitty to prevent a crash in the rupee. At the same time, he's hinting that the RBI may not be averse to the idea of a steady depreciation in the rupee in line with other currencies.

The Indian economy, though continuing to remain strong and resilient, also did not remain immune to these global headwinds, with the Indian Rupee coming under depreciation pressure in the recent months. Malhotra said the

## 'Real estate to make big strides, middle-income home buyers to gain': Experts react to RBI repo rate cut

Marking another major relief to middle income consumers, within a week since the commencement of the Budget Session 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced a repo rate cut of 25 basis points, bringing it down to 6.25 per cent. After keeping the rate unchanged for 11 consecutive policy meetings, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), comprising three RBI members and three external members, made the decision to change the borrowing rate. The move also marks the first rate cut since the pandemic.

As the current year's retail inflation is projected to be 4.2 per cent, the central bank, under the leadership of its new governor Sanjay Malhotra, reduced the rate. The rate was kept constant owing to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation being more than the 6 per cent threshold. With the Budget exempting middle income group I (under Rs 12 lakh annual income) from income taxes, the borrowing rate cut is expected to redirect consumer spending to long term investments, especially in the real estate sector. In light of this, several industry experts have welcomed the move.

BankBazaar CEO Adhil Shetty, said, "With the tax rate cuts earlier this month, the salaried and the middle class have received a double boost to tackle inflation and boost household savings."If you have a 20-year home loan at a rate of 8.75% and had paid 12 EMIs by March, with a rate cut of 25 bps kicking in from April, your interest savings will improve by 8417 per lakh," he added.Samir Jasuja, the founder and CEO of PropEquity, said, "The 25bps cut in repo rate, along with the announcements in the Budget to-

wards boosting consumption, will help increase economic activity and direct investments towards the real estate sector especially in the affordable and mid-income housing. Making borrowing cheaper will not only help homebuyers, both new and old, but also provide liquidity to the developers."Mr. Garvit Tiwari, the director and co-founder of InfraMantra, said, "While the luxury real estate segment may not be impacted much, this move will immensely benefit affordable and mid-income housing. Declining urban consumption is a cause for concern and with this cut, some reversal is likely in the coming quarters."Vishal Raheja, founder and managing director of InvestoXpert.com, said, "Lower borrowing costs will enhance homebuyer sentiment, making housing loans more affordable and boosting residential sales. The tax relief announced in the Budget, coupled with this rate cut, will increase disposable income and potentially revive demand in the housing sector." Sunil Sisodiya, founder of Geetanjali Homestate, said, "Lower interest rates have historically encouraged fence-sitters to take decisive steps towards property investments, driving demand across residential and commercial segments. With the inflation outlook stable and economic growth projected at 6.7%, we anticipate increased liquidity in the market, making real estate an even more attractive asset class.""We see this as a significant opportunity for first-time buyers and investors looking to capitalize on a more favorable financial environment," he added.Kushal Rastogi, the founder and CEO of Knight Fintech, said, "For fintech lenders, this cautious stance translates into a careful approach to uncollateralized short-term lending.

### Urvashi Rautela opens up about Botox; can repeated treatments cause skin sagging?

Botox has become one of the most popular cosmetic procedures worldwide, with many opting for it to achieve a youthful appearance. While it promises smoother skin and wrinkle reduction, its long-term effects remain a topic of debate. Actor Urvashi Rautela recently shared her thoughts on the disadvantages of Botox, emphasising how repeated use can lead to sagging skin over time. In an interview with Hindi Rush, she said, "See, botox, about this thing I would say there are a lot of disadvantages also attached with it. Jab bhi koi ladki ya female woh karayegi, so after a point aap dekhenge woh sab cheezein latak jaati hain. Phir aap unko fix karne ke liye dobara usko karayenge, phir uske kuch side effects aate hain... phir aap kuch karayenge, phir side effects aate hain. It is a personal decision."

She added, "To me, touchwood, I'm from the Himalayas; I am a pahadi girl. Pahadi people, not just me, aap jayenge Uttarakhand mein dekhenge aapko beauty hi beauty nazar aayegi har jagah. My father is so good-looking, my mother, my naani looks like Vyjayanthimala. So, humare toh already high cheekbones hote hain. Touchwood, to each their own, it's a personal decision, but because I was a science student and mera humesha se veh raha hai ki scientifically sab cheezon ke peeche jaanna... kya components hai iske andar, kya ingredients hai, kya side effects hai... aur bhi bahut saari cheezein aa gayi hain market mein. Aap jayenge Ozempic aa gaya hai abhi market mein. There's Mounjaro in the market. Everybody is going crazy about it. Har kisi ko woh chahiye but kya kabhi kisi ne koshish kari ki uske side effects aur disadvantages kya hain?

So, can repeated Botox treatments cause skin sagging over time?

Dr Gunasekar Vuppalapati, senior reconstructive, aesthetic plastic surgeon at GVG Invivo Hospitals, tells indianexpress.com, "The idea that repeated Botox injections cause skin sagging is a common misconception. Botox works by temporarily relaxing the muscles that cause wrinkles, preventing excessive facial movement that leads to fine lines and creases. It does not weaken the skin itself but rather limits muscle contraction."Botox does not lead to sagging if administered correctly and appropriately. However, improper use - such as excessive dosing or incorrect injection placement - can cause temporary muscle weakening, which might contribute to a 'heavy' or droopy appearance. This effect is not permanent and typically resolves as the Botox wears off. In some cases, prolonged muscle inactivity can cause mild atrophy (muscle thinning), which may contribute to subtle changes in facial structure over time. However, this is not the same as skin sagging, primarily caused by natural aging, collagen loss, and gravity. How can individuals decide whether Botox is right for them, and what precautions should they take before undergoing the procedure?



Dr Vuppalapati says, "The decision to undergo Botox should be based on individual aesthetic goals, skin condition, and medical history. Consulting with an experienced aesthetic surgeon or dermatologist is essential to determine whether Botox is the best option or if alternative treatments may be more suitable."Before undergoing the procedure. individuals should research the qualifications and experience of their provider. Botox should always be administered by a licensed professional with expertise in facial anatomy to ensure natural-looking results and minimise complications."It is also important to have realistic expectations," says Dr Vuppalapati. "Botox does not permanently stop ageing but helps soften wrinkles and prevent new ones from forming. Patients should also disclose any medical conditions, allergies, or medications they are taking, as certain conditions such as neuromuscular disorders may contraindicate Botox use.

### Founder and CEO of Karyon Bio, USA, highlights role of AI and Bioinformatics in healthcare

Hyderabad: As AI continues to refine the blueprint of life, the fusion of Bioinformatics and Artificial intelligence would remain at the heart of personalized medicine, drug discovery, and genomic research, shaping the future of global healthcare, said Srinivas Thirunagari, Founder and CEO of Karyon Bio, California, USA.During an invited talk entitled 'AI, Bioinformatics and the future of Healthcare: Innovations and Opportunities' organized by the Department of Computational and Systems Biology, School of Life Sciences, in association with the Federation of Asian Biotech Associations (FABA) here.





### **TUESDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2025**

# Sai Pallavi, Naga Chaitanya shoulder a layered romance but get bogged down by superficial drama



Ranga Reddy

Thandel Movie Review: We've always heard that distance makes heart grow fonder. But very rarely is this showcased with as much pining and soul as Chandoo Mondeti does in Thandel. With the ever-dependable Sai Pallavi playing Sathya and a highly efficient Naga Chaitanya playing Raju, Chandoo weaves a tale of romance that blossoms over the cracks in voices, the fragrance of a worn shirt, and the wind caressing a flag tied to a lighthouse. The elements are the witness to this love story that finds itself thriving in the analog even during the digital era. It is beautiful how Sathya even looks at Raju. There is a wonderful mix of reverence, romance, exasperation, and a weird sense of contentment that she exudes in her eyes whenever she is around Raju, who wonderfully showcases vulnerability that can only be seen in a heartfelt romance. As long as Thandel focusses on the ups and downs of this relationship, it sails quite smoothly. But the moment the film enters the murky waters of Pakistan, Thandel throws restraint to the wind, and turn into a heroic tale of unlikely heroes, whose sorrow gets lost in the heroism.

Thandel revolves around a group of Srikakulam fisherfolk who spend nine months in Gujarat waters and return home to their loved ones for a month every three months. This is their livelihood and runs the homes of almost every family in this fishing hamlet. Raju's father, a much-loved leader of the hamlet, passed away at sea, and yet, his mother believes this is a way of life, and doesn't deter her son from sailing into the ocean. Similarly, Sathya too understands that his inner heart always beats for the sea, and accommodates long durations staying away from him. She even rejoices in his ascension to 'Thandel' aka leader of the hamlet, and is genuinely proud of him. But when a butterfly flutters its wings in a nearby house, it leads to a cyclonic after-effect in the story of Sathya and Raju.

While Chandoo gets the initial portions of this fallout really well, the moment this story gets sidestepped to include the happenings inside the Pakistan jail, things start getting queasy. Of course, the true story of 22 fisherfolk caught by Pakistan for trespassing into their territory, and languishing in their prison for months together makes for a compelling story. But Chandoo and Co are burdened by the initial decision to mount it as an against-all-the-odds love story, and they get the love story so right that the odds don't really work in favour of the narrative.

It is not just the Pakistan prison narrative that proves to be a deterrent to the film but also the character of Karunakaran, who plays a thankless role in his Telugu debut. Of course, he is a lot of fun, but his equation with Sathya doesn't really get fleshed out enough for it to register even a semblance of an impact. The same with Divya Pillai's character, who plays the template 'hero's friend' albeit, this time as the 'heroine's friend.' There is a gender reversal but the beats are the same. Despite her story being the first domino that falls, there is very little focus on her, and even at a very important moment in the last act, her feelings are completely discarded to focus on the lead pairing. Such issues become really glaring mainly because there is so much happening around the central love story that it gets very distracting. Even back in the Pakistan jail, there is a largely one-note representation of what was happening, and it becomes too iingoistic, and less patriotic. In many ways, the film may remind us of Mani Ratnam's Roja, which was also about a woman running from pillar to post to secure the release of her husband kidnapped in Kashmir. It was also based on a true story, and a play on the story of Sathyavan-Savithri. The touches of both the film and the story are seen in Thandel, however, it fails to ask the bigger questions that come from such a daunting task. Why should a single woman go through all this when it is something that the bureaucracy should have taken on suo moto. Why didn't the State and Union governments do the necessary thing without making a woman go through various ways to bring it to their notice?But those are questions that can wait, because Thandel doesn't really explore the psyche of the fisherfolk caught in the neighbouring country's prison. We don't really know what goes through their minds despite letters being written and tears being shed. There is absolutely no sense of human drama in these portions, and instead, we are left to see Raju play the thandel for them in a fight against a ruthless group of Pakistani prisoners whose only aim is to humiliate India and Indians

While using real-life incidents to explain the red-tape involved in the release of the fisherfolk is interesting, the timeline is never clear, and we are told it's been months since it happened, but we never actually feel it. Even when there is an almost anti-climactic showdown in the Pakistan prison, which is once again, inspired from what actually happened, the focus shifts towards the romance and not the plight of the prisoners. This takes away from the agonising wait of the 22 innocent men, and we feel it doesn't do justice to their stories. What we actually feel is the love that binds Sathya and Raju together despite their own decisions holding them apart. This dichotomy is wonderfully accentuated by the music of Devi Sri Prasad, which is undoubtedly the soul of the film. He becomes a different beast altogether in such romantic films, and throughout Thandel, we understand why he is one of the best at what he does. Of course, he uses the Bujji Thalli song throughout the film in various forms, but every single time, the strings used in the background score always manages to tug at our own heartstrings. Another wonderful aspect of Thandel is the rich visual quality, courtesy Shamdat's work, that ensures that the vast expanses of the sea feel as familiar as the stormy waters of Gujarat and the dusty cells of Pakistan. Love comes in different forms. Despite generations of various arts trying to define what love is all about, we have always found ways to find a new and personal dimension of love. In Thandel, as the credits roll, we understand that the weight of love and the burden of life intertwine with each other in the hope that the former might just win any battle with the latter. But the fact that there was space for just one love story to bloom rather than 22 life stories to come to life is why Thandel is a lovely romance that doesn't go all the way because it falls short of becoming an effective drama.

## Harshvardhan Rane reflects on film's 'painful' BO failure, hopes 'it does what it didn't do earlier'

# Himesh Reshammiya delivers latest cringe watch; fans say, 'Gunda walked so this film can run'



Himesh Reshammiya's mass actioner Badass Ravi Kumar hit the theatres today and the social media users are already in love with the Keith Gomes directorial, albeit ironically. Many called it a tribute to 1980s masala entertainers and people are already sharing 'completely unhinged' dialogues from the film as memes. The film's box office collections have surpassed expectations, earning more than Khushi Kapoor-Junaid Khan starrer Loveyapa which also released today.Several audience reviews flooded Twitter, with most of them talking about Badass Ravi Kumar's 'paisavasool content'. A user wrote, "Badass Ravi Kumar is a Low Budget Monstrous Film with Strong Content. People in the Theatre are Whishtling. This film has the potential to Emerge as a Blockbuster on the Box-Office. Himesh Reshammiya did better acting than Salman and Akshay." "#HimeshReshammiya's #BadassRaviKumar films don't need a review Coz this is real cinema," another viewer tweeted.A film enthusiast even compared Badass Ravikumar to the 1998 cringe watch Gunda, featuring Mithun Chakraborty, Mukesh Rishi and Shakti Kapoor. "Gunda" walked so that #BadassRaviKumar can run," he tweeted, along with both the film's posters. Another viewer wrote, "Ravi Kumar is a character you won't forget anytime soon! So much swag!"Starring Himesh Reshammiya as the protagonist and superstar Prabhu Deva as the antagonist gangster, the film also stars Kirti Kulhari, Johnny Lever, and Sanjay Mishra. The film is a typical combination of huge heists, slow-motion scenes and illogical stunts. The music has been composed by Himesh Reshammiya, with Ganesh Acharya's choreography. Badass Ravikumar is a spin-off to the film The Xposé (2014). Talking about the opening day box office numbers, according to the industry tracker Sacnilk, the movie earned around Rs 90 lakh from its morning shows on Friday. On the other hand, Khushi and Junaid's Loveyapa managed to make just Rs 44 lakh. In addition, the rom-com had a 5.6% occupancy rate in the theatres, while the action drama delivered a 13% occupancy rate.

# Struggling Dharmendra broke into Dilip Kumar's house, watched the actor sleep: 'Began to fancy that Dilip and I were siblings'

Dharmendra was still a college student in Punjab when he was convinced that he and Dilip Kumar, the movie star who dominated Bollywood, were siblings. Dharmendra and Dilip Kumar did not know each other, and were not related in any way, yet, as fans often tend to believe, he thought that Dilip Kumar was his brother. Such was his passion for the star that Dharmendra went to Dilip's house during his first visit to Bombay, on the second day itself, and found himself standing at the star's bedroom door. When the Mughal-e-Azam star screamed in terror, Dharmendra ran out of his house. Dharmendra recalled this anecdote in Dilip Kumar's autobiography, Dilip Kumar: The Substance and the Shadow, where he shared that in 1952, when he was still studying in Ludhiana, he came to Mumbai for a short visit during which, he was determined to meet Dilip Kumar. "For some inexplicable reason I began to fancy that Dilip Kumar and I were siblings," he wrote. The next day, he went up to the star's bungalow in Bandra and it just so happened that the gate of his house did not have a security guard. So, Dharmendra just let himself in.

He recalled that after finding his way from one door to another, he found himself at his bedroom door. "I wasn't stopped at the gate by anybody, and so I walked right into the house through the main door. There was a wooden staircase leading to a bedroom upstairs. Again, nobody stopped me, so I climbed up the stairs and stood at the entrance to one of the rooms," he shared. Dharmendra recalled that he saw a "fair, slim, handsome" man sleeping on the couch and as the man the sensed someone's eyes on him, he "woke up somewhat startled." This man was Dilip Kumar. "He sat up and stared at me, quite taken aback to see a total stranger standing gingerly at his bedroom door gazing admiringly at him. As for me, I couldn't believe my eyes: It was Dilip Kumar, my idol, in front of me. He called out to a servant loudly. Now scared, I ran down the staircase and bolted out of the house looking behind to see if I



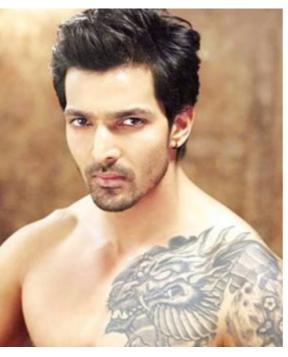
was being followed." he shared. Dharmendra shared that he ran for a while and after he reached a safe place, he looked back at his actions, and questioned himself. "I realised how reckless I had been by intruding into the privacy of a star. So what if there was no watchman at the gate and no family member in the house to stop me?" he wrote.Six years after this incident, when Dharmendra won a talent competition and actually got a chance to meet some celebrities from the industry, he ran into Dilip Kumar's sister. "I saw her leaving and I ran after her requesting her to [arrange to] meet Dilip Sahab. I told her I firmly believed that he was my brother too," he said. When he finally landed at Dilip Kumar's door, this time with an invitation, Dharmendra couldn't believe his luck. "When I was leave ing, he took me upstairs to his room and gave me a sweater from his cupboard because it was a bit chilly and he had noticed I was wearing just a thin cotton shirt. He hugged me and saw me off at the gate. I can still feel the warmth of that hug because it was genuine," he wrote.

Harshvardhan Rane and Mawra Hocane starrer Sanam Teri Kasam has been making headlines since the announcement of its re-release in theatres. Directed by Radhika Rao and Vinay Sapru, the 2016 film was a box office failure, but gained a cult following after its OTT release. Sanam Teri Kasam got significant appreciation eventually from the audience over time. In an interview with SCREEN recently, lead actor Harshvardhan got candid about the movie's re-release, original lifetime numbers, and much more.

During the conversation, the actor was asked about how he feels that his passion project Sanam Teri Kasam is re-releasing at the theatres and he says, "I hope it does what it didn't do earlier, that's it. Kya feel karoon main? Everyone was asking me everywhere to bring this film back. The only anecdote I remember is that we all were expecting this film to do much better than what it did. That void has pushed me today to request everyone to release this. Nau saal hogaye hain (It has been nine years), every year they keep losing faith, but my faith keeps increasing," continuing, "When it didn't perform well, we all (the producers, director, actors) felt that pain, a tug in the heart."

Thanking the trend of re-releases with his own special metaphor, Harshvardhan says with a smile, "Even after parents get divorced, they get married again sometimes. As a child, I am very happy with this marriage. I am up for remarriages and re-releases." He hopes that the film earns more with the re-release than the original box office numbers just like Tumbbad and Laila Majnu did, "If I was good at prediction, I would have done it nine years ago. I hope so that happens."The actor further adds, "I was standing below my producer's office screaming my lungs out to bring this film back. Mujhse zyada toh kaun hi hope karega? I had such an uninhibited approach to this. Many people said that you can't be really going below a producer's office and ask him for a re-release, that's unheard of. But, maine kahan mujhe yahi aata hai (I only know this). This is how I am, if I am into something, I put my skin in the game.'

Ask Harshvardhan if the previous box office run felt unfair, and he says, "No, it is absolutely fair. It's fair because I myself don't watch newcomer film, so how can I complain about that? I will be so fake and such a hypocrite if I blame them for not watching my film."He adds, "It's all connected, a cycle. If you are a newcomer, there's less awareness, which means less eyeballs, leading to less ticket sales, and less ticket sales means less shows and the movie goes out. It will be foolish of me to not look at the logical parts of it and complain how people do on podcasts. That's why I don't do podcasts."Meanwhile, Khushi Kapoor and Junaid Khan (daughter and son of late actor Sridevi and actor Aamir Khan, respectively) are newcomers, whose film Loveyapa released today. However, Harshvardhan knows and hopes that they don't meet with the same fate as him. "Awareness hai na unka. Awareness is the key. I am very happy they don't have to go through what I had to. They are also human beings, they might also have expectations. I hope they don't have to go through the same void



In an interview with SCREEN, actor Harshvardhan Rane opened up about the re-release of Sanam Teri Kasam, its orginal box office collection, and much more.

and pain that I went through. I will pray that for any actor on the planet because it's a strange place to be in," he says.

The sequel of Sanam Teri Kasam has already been announced, with Harshvardhan returning to reprise his role. However, he reveals that everything will come in motion only if the re-release receives a good response. "Every ticket is a step towards Sanam Teri Kasam 2. Motivation is always through commerce. When you make money, you want to make more products which make more money," adding that the female lead actor hasn't been locked yet."Step by step chalenge, nothing on the female lead yet. After seeing the final collections now, everyone will be intrinsically motivated to make part two. There's something called a trial reel on Instagram, agar reel banaane ke lie confirmation chahie, toh film banaane ke lie toh chahiye na baba. In the real world, one needs that validation," he shares.In other news, Sanam Teri Kasam's female lead and Pakistani actor Mawra Hocane recently tied the knot with actor Ameer Gilani. Ask him if they have spoken after her wedding or re-release announcement, "To be honest, I am not in touch with her. The directors, producers, actors, we all felt so much pain in the beginning, that we all lost touch. It was very painful for all of us. When you see a void in your dreams, you want to just stay quiet and be with yourself," concludes Harshvardhan.

## Namita Thapar refuses to be seen with gift presented by Shark Tank India pitchers, tells them to learn from Zerodha: 'I will never wear this'

Two founders named Harshit and Manali pitched their lifestyle accessories brand, Hexafun, on the latest episode of Shark Tank India. But they received a unanimous no from the panel of 'sharks'. Anupam Mittal was especially dismissive during the pitch, as he found fault with the founders' products and their pricing. Hexafun produces handkerchiefs, socks, and other such accessories for prices that are higher than those of Jockey and other competitors. They asked for Rs 1 crore for 4% equity, valuing their company at Rs 25 crore.

Before their pitch, they presented the 'sharks' with customised hankies. Namita Thapar immediately spotted a typo on hers, and said that it is unacceptable on a platform like Shark Tank to present something that isn't up to the mark. "I appreciate the love with which you've given the hanky to me, but I'm not going to wear something with a spelling mistake. You're spread too thin, you're trying to do too much at once," she said.

She also criticised the name Hexafun, and cited the example of Zerodha to explain what a brand name should accomplish. "I always cite the example of Zerodha – zero means zero, and 'rodha' in Sanskrit means 'hurdle'. Zerodha is such a beautiful word, and you can instantly connect it to the business. But your name is so difficult to understand," she said. Manali tried to explain what the name means, but Aman Gupta cut her off. "Puri zindagi explain hi karte reh jaoge," he said.Aman was also unconvinced about the point of hankies. "You're trying to revive a dying category; what's the point?" he said. "I will be shocked if you tell us you're making money." And Aman was right. In the five years that they've been operational, Hexafun has been burning crores. The founders said that they've spent Rs 4 crore of their



own money, plus more than Rs 2 crore of friends and family on the business. Kunal Bahl said that they need to go back to the drawing board and re-evaluate their entire business. He said that every start-up hits a 'point of reckoning' after which they have to regroup, and said that he, too, experienced something similar a decade ago. Anupam, however, was more harsh in his feedback. Like Namita, he found fault with both the products and the business. "Itna low quality," he said, looking at an accessory bag with threads coming out of it. He was also unimpressed by a suitcase cover, which he described as impractical. "Why would anyone buy Rs 3000 ke kapde for 5000 ka suitcase?" he asked. All five 'sharks' backed out of the deal, leaving Harshit and Manali empty-handed.

## Armaan Malik talks about his 'Pehla Nasha' moment with wife Aashna Shroff

Mumbai: Singer Armaan Malik recently shared a beautiful memory with his wife, Aashna Shroff, recalling his own "Pehla Nasha" moment. When asked about a real-life moment that captured the thrill of first love, Armaan reminisced about his first date with Aashna. In an exclusive interview with IANS, Malik shared, "I'm a romantic at heart, so I've had many such moments. But if I had to pick one, I'd say my Pehla Nasha moment was with my wife, Aashna. The first time we went on a date back in 2017, I definitely felt

that heart-fluttering excitement. That feeling of being with someone you truly love and want to know more about—it's a special experience."Armaan and Aashna were reportedly dating since 2019. The couple tied the knot in a private ceremony on December 28, 2024. Sharing their wedding photos, they wrote on Instagram, "Tu hi mera Ghar."Armaan also spoke about his latest single, "Pehla Nasha 2.0," and said, "We created this version with immense love and dedication. There's always a huge responsibility when recreating such an iconic and legendary song."

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"I just wish the best to Rashford and to (Villa man-

season.Amorim brushed aside talk of a potential return for

Rashford at the end of the season. Rashford's deal with

Villa includes an option to make the move permanent for a

reported 40 million pounds (\$50 million)."Like we said be-

fore, we are fighting for our jobs until the summer. So, I am

just focused on these games. Thankfully about Marcus, he

is in Birmingham now with Unai, so you can take these

questions to another coach. We are just focused on our

# **Rohit Sharma fails again, but Shubman Gill, Shreyas** Iyer, Axar Patel steer India home



GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Rohit Sharma failed, but the performance of Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, and Axar Patel stood out as India proved too strong for England to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match ODI series in Nagpur. The batting effort came on the back of a splendid bowling performance that restricted England to 248 after they were 71 for 0 in 8 overs at one stage. It was an all-round performance from India across all three departments. India were without Virat Kohli, who missed the game due to a knee injury he suffered on the eve of the match, and captain Rohit fell for two runs. But fifties from Shubman Gill (87), Shreyas lyer (59), and Axar Patel (52) eased them past the target in 38.4 overs.

Gill recently admitted to losing concentration in the red-ball format. Most of his dismissals in Australia were a sort of "brain fade." But in the ODI format, where he was India's best batter leading up to the 2023 ODI World Cup before dengue forced him to miss a couple of matches, he looked at ease. There was no lapse of concentration as he almost took India home. Under the lights, India were in a spot of bother after they lost debutant Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rohit Sharma guickly. Shubman, who was batting at No. 3 in the absence of Virat Kohli, first forged a 94-run stand with Shreyas Iver and then took India closer to the total with a crucial 108-run stand with Axar Patel.Gill's innings on Thursday was a two-part knock. In the first half, he was required to play the second fiddle to Shreyas lyer, who was at his marauding best before he took charge. Gill picked Archer's slower delivery and whacked it through square leg. In the same over, Jofra cranked up 145 kph, and Shubman's bread-and-butter flat-batted pull shot was out. Later in the 27th over, there was another brace of fours off Archer, and the second one in particular captured his poise and skill. He had to wait for the ball on the slightly two-paced pitch and unfurled a lovely late steer past backward point. The only false shot Shubman played cost him his wicket. On 87, and in search for some quick runs to finish the innings, he backed away outside leg but was cramped for room and mistimed his shortarm jab pull. The ball hit his bat twice, and lobbed towards mid-on where Jos Buttler took a good catch.

Shreyas Iyer walked into a semi-crisis as India were 19 for 2. Jofra Archer was bowling close to 150 kph, and it looked like England might give India a scare. They had a short-leg in place to test him on the short ball in the 7th over. Off his 7th ball, he pulled a back-of-length delivery from Archer over midwicket boundary. Archer bent his back for the next ball and got it to climb higher but gave some width outside off and lyer's slash had the ball fly over third man. From that point on, he kept whacking the ball all around the park. There was a nonchalance in the way he batted in this inning. He cut, he pulled, he swivelled, he drove, he swept, he reverse swept, he showed his deft touch, ran hard between the wickets, and with this knock settled the debate about his importance in India's ODI side. The best of the onslaught was saved for Brydon Carse. He hit three boundaries off the England pacer in the 10th over of India's innings. The third ball was placed past backward point, then he played a lovely square drive and ended the over with an exquisite cover drive. There was a reverse slap against Adil Rashid and a paddle sweep off Jacob Bethell, which helped him bring up his fifty in 31 balls. His knock ended while he tried to paddle Bethell again and was pinned. But the Indian management will consider another box ticked with lyer getting back into his groove.Axar was promoted ahead of Rahul and as ever, he played the situation perfectly, using his long reach to belt the ball and also rotated the strike adroitly. England were off to a pulsating start, reaching 75 without loss, and looked set to post a formidable total. India bowled and fielded well, and captain Rohit Sharma's captaincy was also top-notch, but like in the T20Is, England proved to be their own worst enemies. On the eve of the match, England captain Jos Buttler, who top-scored with a fine 52, had rued his side's inability to execute their plans according to the match situation. He had said, "You want to be aggressive, you want to be conservative, you want to be measured, you've still got to go out there and execute it and play it well." England were certainly aggressive, and with Buttler and youngster Jacob Bethell (51), they were conservative as well, but they were far from being measured. The wickets of Salt and Duckett were sheer brilliance from Shreyas Iyer and Yashasvi Jaiswal, but it was reckless from both openers. Iyer ran back from point to make a sliding stop near the boundary and that dive made Duckett freeze at non-striker's end and Salt had to abort his plan for the third run and try getting back but was too late. Duckett was caught by a tumbling Jaiswal running back from midwicket and lunging. Root was pinned by Jadeja with a zipping armer, and Brook was hurried by Rana's bouncer. England captain Jos Buttler couldn't believe what he had done to Axar Patel's half-tracker. The ball, which deserved to be put in the stands, was top-edged by Buttler to short fine leg, where Hardik Pandya took an easy catch.Livingstone ducked under a Rana bouncer and charged down a couple of balls later but could only edge the wild swing off the bouncer to the wicketkeeper. Brydon Carse, who had rescued England multiple times in the T20Is, tried to slug Shami out of the park but had his stumps rattled.

## Pakistan officially rule out injured opener **Saim Ayub from Champions Trophy**

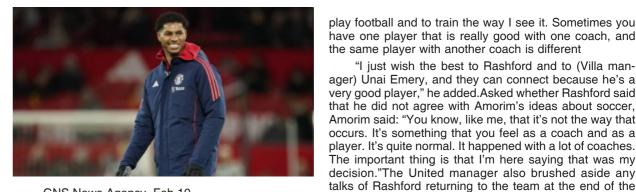
### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Saim Ayub Pakistan vs AustraliaPakistan's Saim Ayub raises his bat after making 50 runs against Australia during their one day international cricket match in Adelaide, Australia,

The Pakistan Cricket Board on Friday officially ruled out opener Saim Ayub from the Champions Trophy, a decision which was an open secret since his name was not in Pakistan's announced squad for the tournament. A few weeks back, PCB chairman Mohsin Nagvi had also ruled out Avub's availability, saving they are not going to risk the player's future for the Champions Trophy."Pakistan opener Saim Ayub is progressing well in his recovery from a right ankle fracture and will continue his rehabilitation in England. Following comprehensive MRI scans, X-rays, and medical assessments, Saim has been ruled out for 10 weeks from the date of injury (3 January). His availability for the New Zealand tour will be subject to clearing all fitness tests and medical requirements," a statement from PCB read.Pakistan will tour New Zealand for five T20Is and three ODIs from March 16 to April 5, which will be followed by the Pakistan Super League starting on April 8.Saim had frac-



# 'I couldn't put Marcus to see the way you're supposed to play football': Ruben Amorim on what led to Rashford's Manchester United exit



### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim said that he let star forward Marcus Rashford leave the club for Aston Villa because the forward couldn't follow his methods. The 27-year-old Rashford joined Villa on loan the day before Europe's winter transfer window closed, having not played for United since mid-December."I couldn't put Marcus to see the way you're supposed to

### players at the moment," he said. **FIFA says January transfer** spending reached record levels in 2025

#### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

Clubs worldwide spent a record \$2.35 billion on international transfers in men's soccer in the January window, nearly a 58% increase from last year, world soccer's governing body FIFA said in a study published on Friday. According to FIFA's International Transfer Snapshot, the amount is also 47.1% higher than the previous record set in January 2023 when there was a total outlay of \$1.57 billion.With 5,863 international transfers taking place between January 1 and February 4, it also marks a 19.1% increase from last year's record for the highest number of players making moves in the January window. English clubs topped the table for spending on international transfer fees last month, spending \$621.6 million in total.

Reigning Premier League champions Manchester City alone spent over \$224 million to sign Omar Marmoush, Nico Gonzalez, Abdukodir Khusanov, Vitor Reis and Juma Bah.But the most expensive player signed in January was Colombian forward Jhon Duran, who moved from Aston Villa to Saudi Arabian club Al-Nassr for around 77 million euros (\$79.97 million) plus add-ons.FIFA said Germany (\$295.7 million), Italy (\$223.8 million), France (\$209.7 million) and Saudi Arabia (\$202.1 million) completed the list of the top five countries for their clubs' January spending.On the other hand, clubs in France received the highest amount



in transfer fees at \$371 million, followed by clubs in Germany (\$226.2 million), England (\$185.2 million), Portugal (\$176.4 million) and Italy (\$162 million).Brazil had the most incoming international transfers (471) while Argentina had the highest number of outgoing players (255). Women's soccer also had a record \$5.8 million spent on transfer fees in January, which represents a whopping 180.6% increase on the previous record after 455 international transfers were made.English clubs led the way in women's soccer too, with \$2.3 million being spent on players, while they also made the most incoming international transfers with 39 sianinas

# Sreesanth issued show cause notice by KCA for 'false and defamatory' statements over Sanju Samson omission

### GNS News Agency, Feb 10

The Kerala Cricket Association (KCA) has issued a show cause notice to former India cricketer S Sreesanth for making "false and defamatory" statements against the association in a television show. Sreesanth had questioned



tured his ankle on the first day of the second Test against South Africa in Capetown. Before that, the opener was in blistering form scoring two ODI hundreds against the Proteas. He was also named in the recently-released ICC ODI team of the year. Pakistan, who are the hosts of the Champions Trophy are all set to start their campaign on February 19 against New Zealand in Karachi's National Stadium. After that, they will move to Dubai to take on arch-rivals India on February 23 and will end their group stage commitments with a match vs Bangladesh in Rawalpindi

# 'I was diagnosed with hyperthyroidism, which led to a weight loss of 10 kg,': Fakhar Zaman on being dropped from Pakistan squad



Attacking opener Fakhar Zaman has been axed from the Pakistan side after having a poor 2024 T20 World Cup. However, he has been brought into the side for the upcoming Champions Trophy 2025. Before getting dropped from the squad Fakhar would also criticize Pakistan Cricket Board for dropping Babar Azam from the side during a Test series against England.

GNS News Agency, Feb 10 Attacking opener Fakhar Zaman has been axed

from the Pakistan side after having a poor 2024 T20 World Cup. However, he has been brought into the side for the upcoming Champions Trophy 2025. Before getting dropped from the squad Fakhar would also criticize Pakistan Cricket Board for dropping Babar Azam from the side during a Test series against England.

While there have been speculations if that was also part of the reason behind his getting dropped Zaman would clear the air and say he was diagnosed with a health condition. "Anyone can fall sick. I was diagnosed with hyperthyroidism, which led to a weight loss of 10 kg and weakened my muscles. This was the only reason I was out of the team-there was nothing else. I am fully fit now, but the first four to five matches in domestic cricket were tough. and I felt as if I had forgotten how to play," Zaman said on podcast with Salman Butt. In the last edition of Champions Trophy in 2017 Fakhar played a crucial role in Pakistan's win

He scored a squash-buckling ton in the final to help Men In Green lift the trophy. "I will try my best to make this Champions Trophy even more memorable for myself and the team. I believe he will perform well as an opener and make things easier for me.

While Zaman can win games on his day he can also be inconsistent at times which has frustrated the Pakistan supporters. "The big problem is Fakhar Zaman. He is an unorthodox hitter, but when someone like that gets out of form, it takes some time to find solutions on the drawing board. He's a bottom-handed player, plays on the leg-side, somehow he adjusts with that and scores," Former Pakistan cricketer Ramiz Raja said on his YouTube channel once on his technique.

KCA on their decision to overlook Sanju Samson from the domestic white-ball season for Kerala. Samson was reportedly omitted from India's ICC Champions Trophy 2025 squad for not playing the Vijay Hazare tournament.

KCA said its show cause notice was not for Sreesanth showing support to Samson, but for "making false and defamatory statements" which. KCA said, was a violation of his contractual terms as the co-owner of the Kollam Sailors franchise in the Kerala Cricket League. In its response to Sreesanth's comments, KCA brought up the infamous spotfixing case against Sreesanth to say that it always supported players, even if they were in jail, which was a dig at the former India pacer."When Sreesanth was in jail facing allegations in the infamous match-fixing scandal, KCA officials visited and supported him. Although the court quashed the criminal case, it is a fact that he has not been acquitted in the match-fixing case. In such a situation, there is no need for Sreesanth to take up the protection of other players," the statement read.

In 2013, Delhi Police had arrested Sreesanth on charges of spot-fixing. Sreesanth was one of three Raiasthan Royals players to be banned from cricket for his involvement in the 2013 IPL spot-fixing scandal. In July 2015, the Patiala House court dropped all charges against Sreesanth, Chandila, and Chavan in the spot-fixing case, saying there was no prima facie case under MCOCA (Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act) to be made out against them. Then, in March 2019, the Supreme Court lifted the lifetime ban on him."It was only because of KCA's protective approach that Sreesanth was given opportunities in matches including the Ranji Trophy after completing his sentence. It is worth investigating whether other associations have taken such a favorable approach towards players involved in match-fixing," it further guoted. Sreesanth had

asked which international player KCA had managed to produce after Samson. At this, KCA slammed Sreesanth's "ignorance about Kerala cricket" before listing out names of players: "Sajna Sajeevan, Minnumani, Asha Shobana, and junior players like Joshitha V.J. in the Under-19 World Cup winning team, Najla CMC in the Under-19 team, and Mohammed Inan in the Under-19 Asia Cup team.

However, Sreesanth did not back down after the show cause notice, instead lambasting KCA in an interview with Kerala media outlet Onmanorama where he questioned why KCA has been overlooking Malayalis and getting players from the other associations. "They (KCA) take players from other states to play for us. For what? Disrespectful to our Malayali cricketers," he said."We have just one player at international level, Sanju. Let's all support him," Sreesanth said. "The so-called KCA has not produced an international cricketer since Sanju. We have great players like Sachin, Nidheesh, Vishnu Vinod, and many others, but are they (KCA) pushing them to play at higher?" he questioned.Earlier, explaining why Samson was ignored, KCA secretary Vinod S Kumar told "Sanju had sent an email stating that he would not be available for the camp. The team had a short camp in Wayanad without him. Naturally, we only considered those who were part of the sessions for selection. There

# Shubman Gill's steady knock of 87 guides India to 4-wicket win over England in 1st ODI

Nagpur: Vice-captain Shubman Gill orchestrated India's chase with grace, while debutant Harshit Rana dazzled with the ball as the hosts registered a four-wicket win against England in the series opener here on Thursday.Gill (87), Shreyas Iyer (59), and Axar Patel (52) rose to the occasion, guiding India to a commanding chase after Rana (3/53 from 7 overs) and the seasoned left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja (3/26 from 9) shared six wickets between them, dismantling England for a below-par 248.Rana's fourth over, which claimed the twin wickets of Ben Duckett and Harry Brook, decisively stifled the England innings, putting India firmly in control as the visitors never managed to rebuild despite fifties by skipper Jos Buttler (52) and Jack Bethell (51). Chasing a below 250 score, Gill anchored the innings, forging key partnerships with lyer and Axar that became the backbone of India's chase. He adapted perfectly to the match situation, playing the perfect foil to Iyer when the Mumbai batter was in full flow, then stepping up as the mainstay, steering India towards victory.lyer, walking in at 19/2, unleashed a counter-attacking knock, filled with sizzling shots, including back-to-back sixes one a pull shot over deep mid-wicket off Jofra Archer and the other a reverse switch-hit four off Adil Rashid.On the back of a stellar domestic season, lyer played with confidence, finding gaps effortlessly and taking on the aggressor's role, with Gill remaining steady at the other end. But once lyer, trapped LBW by Bethell after being struck flush on the front pad, was dismissed,

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