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Man kills friend in Hyderabad's Chandanagar, surrenders

Hyderabad: A man was killed allegedly by his friend after an argument at Gopinagar in Chandanagar on Saturday.

The victim, Mohd Nazeer (35), a private employee and resident of Gopinagar, and the suspect, Mohd Faqrudin, were close friends and belonged to the same neighbourhood. According to the police, on Friday night around 10 pm, Nazeer's friends, including Faqrudin, took him to Gopi Chervu in the neighbourhood on the pretext of discussion. It is suspected that they got drunk and ended up arguing over an unknown matter. The assailant attacked the victim with a blunt object on the head and other parts on the body grievously injuring him. Nazeer was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries.

Two held in Jubilee Hills for selling cigarettes to minors

Hyderabad: The Telangana Anti-Narcotics Bureau along with Jubilee Hills police conducted a sting operation and caught two persons who were found selling cigarettes to minor boys. The minors who were buying the cigarettes were also detained.

Acting on tip off, the TSANB kept surveillance on two kirana shops located at Jubilee Hills and noticed that the shop owners were selling cigarettes to minor boys. The team recorded the activity using hidden cameras and took into custody the shop owners Gandham Pramila (48) and K Venkateshwar Rao (55).

Delhi CM Gupta meets PM Modi; city ministers oversee road repairs, projects



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta met Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his residence on Saturday evening as her Cabinet ministers hit the road and started reviewing repairs of potholed roads and reviewed pending projects across the city. During the meeting with PM Modi, CM Gupta thanked him for giving a "daughter of Delhi" a chance to serve the people as Chief Minister, said one of her aides. Before leaving for the PM's residence, CM Gupta greeted her well-wishers from the first floor balcony of her home in Shalimar Bagh in the morning. Using a public address system, CM Gupta announced that on meeting PM Modi she would convey, on behalf of all women and daughters of the city, gratitude for selecting a "Daughter of Delhi"

to serve the city. "On the first day in office, we approved the Ayushman Bharat scheme of PM Modi in the first Cabinet meeting," she said, promising not to waste even a single day and continue serving the people. "Our mission is to achieve Viksit Delhi as mandated by PM Modi," she said.

"Viksit Delhi's journey has to be covered by all of us together," she said, ending her public address with chants of "Jai Shri Ram" and "Bharat Mata ki Jai". Later, the Chief Minister held a meeting with the officials of the PWD department for improving infrastructure and discussed issues related to the dug-up roads, damaged roads and traffic in Delhi and gave directions for improvement.

PWD Minister Parvesh Verma inspected the Barapullah Phase-3 project and assured speedy payment and environment clearance that have alleged delayed progress in work. Speaking to mediapersons near Sarai Kale Khan in South East Delhi, Verma said he had also issued strict instructions for removal of encroachment across Delhi roads. "We want road contractors to guarantee 10-year life for roads so that they do not need frequent recarpeting," he said. During another field visit at Khajuri Khas crossing in North East Delhi, Law and Labour Minister Kapil Mishra said, "Arvind Kejriwal's govt made the condition of roads in Delhi worse. Everywhere, the roads are either broken or dusty, there are potholes and waterlogging and under the new work culture all Cabinet ministers and officials will have to work 24 hours and repair the roads immediately."

Telangana CM Revanth Reddy Accuses BRS and BJP of Undermining Caste Census Efforts



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has leveled serious allegations against the Bharatiya Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), accusing them of conspiring to undermine the crucial caste census process. Speaking to the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Saturday, Reddy warned of potential legal challenges arising from the caste census, underscoring the importance of this initiative for the welfare of the weaker sections of society. Reddy highlighted a promise made by Senior Congress Leader Rahul Gandhi to conduct a caste census if the Congress party were to come to power in Telangana, emphasizing that the formation of the Congress government was a collective decision by those representing marginalized communities. "The Backward Classes (BC) caste census is being conducted to fulfill the promise given by our leader," he said.

In his statements, Reddy criticized former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) for reportedly conducting a survey in just one day, claiming it was a mere "crow count" lacking credibility. He accused KCR of withholding survey details for political gain and dismissed the comprehensive survey conducted during his tenure as "false." Reddy pointed out discrepancies in the categorization of Scheduled Castes (SCs), alleging that KCR inaccurately listed 86 castes when there are actually only 56. He expressed concerns about errors in the surveys brought forth by KCR's administration, challenging anyone to identify these mistakes. Reddy asserted that the Congress party's survey, led by the Planning Department, was conducted meticulously without allowing for any misinterpretations. The Chief Minister also questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's claims of representing the BC community, calling on Union Minister Bandi Sanjay to publicize the findings of the BC survey conducted by Congress in 2011, if he truly cared for the community's interests. "The survey details need to be published to ensure fair representation for BCs," he insisted, suggesting that widespread demand for transparency in BC figures could compel a national dialogue on the issue. Reddy further stated that making these figures public could pose challenges for certain influential social groups within the BJP. He questioned why BRS leaders, including KCR, KTR, and Harish Rao, have yet to register their caste details, implying that they are apprehensive about scrutiny from those who represent the majority. In a final note, Reddy contrasted the BRS's approach with that of the Congress party, stating that while KCR categorized data into four groups, the Congress has effectively taken details across five categories for a more comprehensive understanding of the community structure in Telangana.

Telangana CM Revanth Reddy to Convene Key Meeting with BC Leaders

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

In a pivotal move amid the evolving political landscape of Telangana, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is set to convene an important meeting with leaders from the Backward Classes (BC) on Saturday at 11 am at Praja Bhavan in Hyderabad. B. Mahesh Kumar Goud, the president of the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC), will also play a significant role in the discussions.

The meeting is expected to provide clear guidance to the party's BC leaders while also serving as an opportunity to further sensitize them about upcoming government initiatives. This gathering gains added importance in light of the state government's recent announcement to conduct a caste census for the first time and to organize special assembly sessions to implement reservations in local government elections, as well as in education and employment sectors. By reaching out to BC communities during this crucial meeting, the Congress leadership aims to send a strong signal of prioritizing their needs and concerns. Furthermore, the discussions are anticipated to result in a well-defined action plan to effectively implement government policies and reforms in collaboration with BC leaders moving forward.



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SLBC tunnel roof collapses in Nagarkurnool, KTR accused govt.

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

An accident in the SLBC tunnel has led to a dramatic roof collapse at the 14-kilometre mark on the left side, resulting in the entrapment of several workers. The incident occurred near Domalapenta in Nagarkurnool district at 8:30 am on Saturday. At the time of the collapse, 50 workers were present in the tunnel. Thankfully, 43 managed to escape to safety. However, eyewitnesses report that seven individuals remain trapped inside, including Gurjeet Singh, Sannet Singh, Manoj Rubena, Sandeep, Santosh, Srinivasulu, and Jatka Hiran. Rescue teams successfully extracted three of the trapped workers, who have since been rushed to Genco Hospital in Srisailem for medical attention. Ongoing rescue operations are focused on locating and saving the remaining four individuals, raising growing concerns among their worried families. Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy is on site,



closely monitoring the unfolding situation and coordinating rescue efforts. Meanwhile, the BRS working president K Taraka Ramarao slammed Congress government holding them the responsible of the incident and demanded that the trapped men be rescued as early as possible.

A dozen workers injured in SLBC tunnel collapse in Telangana, several more trapped inside



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

About a dozen workers were injured and a few more were trapped in an accident in the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel, which reportedly collapsed for about three-metre length, early on Saturday (February 22, 2025). The injured were rushed to the TG-Genco hospital near Domalapenta in Nagarkurnool district. According to the information reaching here and irrigation authorities quoting the working agency (Jaypee Associates) staff, the accident happened around 8 a.m. at the 14 km length of the left tunnel of the twin tunnel project taken up in 1983 from the Srisailem reservoir side. Over 50 workers were engaged in the tunnel work being executed with the help of a tunnel boring machine (TBM). The irrigation authorities from Nagarkurnool who rushed to the tunnel were overseeing the rescue operation with the help of the police.

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy expressed shock at the accident and instructed Minister for Irrigation N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, Advisor Aditya Nath Das and other top officials of the irrigation department to rush to the accident site. He also directed the District Collector, police, fire services and HYDRRAA authorities to rush to the site to speed up the rescue work. Before flying to the accident site by a chopper Mr. Uttam Kumar Reddy said he had the information that all the workers had come out safely and only five were trapped inside as water and mud had piled up due to the caving in of the tunnel roof. After a gap of about five years, work on the SLBC (Alimineti Madhava Reddy Project - AMRP) project has resumed on February 18 as the State Government has decided to complete the tunnel work by December 2026 to realise the objective of providing irrigation facility to about 4 lakh acres in the combined Nalgonda district and also provide drinking water to the fluoride-hit areas, about 200 villages, in the district.

The work agency has resumed the work by arresting

the seepage of water and taking up the lining of the tunnel completed so far to prevent any chances of collapse. The project was given administrative approval for ₹2,292 crore in 2005 and its estimated cost was revised to ₹3,153 crore in 2017 and it was revised again in 2024 to ₹4,637 crore, as per the revised estimates. About ₹2,646 crore has been spent on the project works so far. According to the project authorities, the total length of the twin tunnels was 44 km to draw 30 tmc ft assured water from Srisailem reservoir and of the total tunnel length 9.559 km tunnel work was pending.

Vinod Kumar asks govt to take up Medigadda repair works

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

KARIMNAGAR: Senior BRS leader and former MP B Vinod Kumar demanded the State government to take up repair works on the Medigadda barrage.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy should take the initiative and start the work immediately by consulting State Dam Safety officials and the Engineer-In-Chief (Irrigation), he said, pointing out that it would be possible to store water in the dam and supply it to agricultural fields in the next season if the works were completed by June or July. Stating that the government should first take steps to protect standing crops, Vinod Kumar said the government should draw Medigadda backwaters by operating Kaleshwaram motors and fill water in Annaram, Sundilla and Yellampalli projects. Later, water should be supplied to agricultural fields to protect standing crops.

In a letter to the Chief Minister, the BRS leader said farmers were facing trouble in getting water to their standing crops only because of the foolish decisions of Revanth Reddy. If the BRS was in power, the repair works of Medigadda would have been completed and water would be supplied to farmers. Despite heavy floods in the last rainy season and the recent earthquake, the Medigadda barrage had not budged, he said. The State government was neglecting the barrage on the pretext of the National Dam Safety Authority's report. It was clearly mentioned in the NDSA Act that the owner (the State government) should take a decision on irrigation projects. Besides NDSA, there was a dam safety authority in the State too. The State government should take a decision by consulting them. Why are Revanth Reddy and the Centre neglecting the barrage, he asked.

Centre won't approve BC reservation Bill: Bandi

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Peddapalli: Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar said that all the surveys are indicating the sure victory of the candidates supported by BJP in the MLC elections. He called upon BJP workers to show their courage in this election. He reiterated that if the BJP MLC candidates are elected in this election, they will take the responsibility of making them public representatives in the upcoming local body elections.

In the context of the MLC elections, a meeting of BJP Panchis Prabhari (one in-charge for every 25 voters) was held in Peddapalli on Friday. The meeting, chaired by district president Sanjeeva Reddy, was attended by Union Minister Bandi Sanjay, BJP MLA Venkataramana Reddy, former MLAs Chintala Ramachandra Reddy, Kasipeta Lingaiah, Gujjula Ramakrishna Reddy, BJP Teacher and Graduate candidates Malka Komaraiah, Ch Anji Reddy and many local leaders.

Speaking on the occasion, Bandi Sanjay said that lakhs of workers dream of bringing BJP to power in Telangana at least once, and many have died without fulfilling that dream. He said that his goal is to bring BJP to power in Telangana this time. He reminded that in Peddapalli district too, the Naxalites had put up big posters demanding the killing of people like Gujjula Ramakrishna Reddy, Dugyala Pradeep Rao, Kasipeta Lingaiah and Komala Anjaneyulu. However, he said, they fought the Naxalites without fear and raised the saffron flag. Bandi Sanjay said that the BJP is strongly opposed to including Muslims in



the BC list in the name of reservations for BCs. "We have a tribe, birth name, birth star. We tie a thread. Our traditions are different. And how can Muslims be included in the Hindu list?" he questioned. On the one hand, they are reducing the BC population. The government is saying that it will give 42 per cent reservation, but out of that, they are giving 10 per cent to Muslims. How can the BCs remain silent if the Congress is betraying the BCs. That's why if the bill is sent to include Muslims in the BC list, there is no point in the Center approving it and it will be sent back.

Ex-RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das appointed second principal secretary to PM Modi

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

New Delhi: Former Governor of Reserve Bank of India Shaktikanta Das was on Saturday appointed the second Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. PK Mishra, a retired IAS officer of the Gujarat cadre, is currently serving as the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister. According to an official order, the tenure of Das, a retired IAS officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre, will be "co-terminus" with the term of the Prime Minister or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to the general public at large that, Rathod Hanuman Prasad S/o Rathod Mohan R/o Banjara Colony, New Housing Board, Adilabad is intending to advance loan from State Bank of India Branch Dhanlaxmi Lodge, Adilabad, by mortgaging, Plot No. 27, in Sy. No. 53/2 (Nearest H. No. 2-255/56), Measuring 40' x 50'=2000 Sq Fts, Situated at Village Savargaon(T), MDI: Mavala, Dist. Adilabad, within the limits of Adilabad Municipality. That, the Original link document No.64/2001 is lost. If any one has any claim, right, title or interest of any kind in the said property, they may contact the undersigned within 7 days of the publication of this Notice, with all documents of claim and title. If no objection is received within 7 days, then the bank will proceed to complete the other formalities for the mortgage and if any claim and objection arise, it shall be deemed to have been waived.

Dt: 22-02-2025

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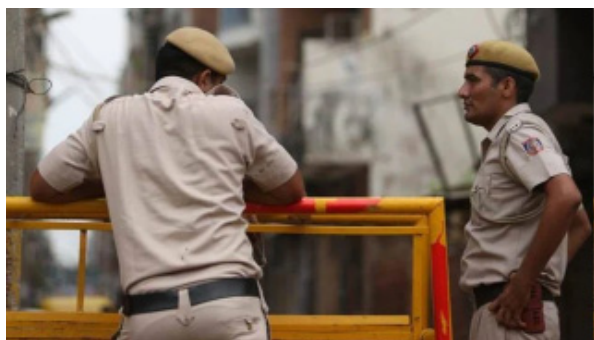
Anti-graft push

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) came to power in Punjab on the promise of eradicating corruption, positioning itself as an alternative to traditional parties tainted by graft. However, after its recent electoral setback in Delhi and corruption charges against its own leaders, the AAP now finds itself struggling to defend its moral high ground. The latest crackdown in Punjab — marked by the suspension of Muktsar Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Tripathi and the dismissal of 52 police personnel — raises the question: is this a genuine purge or a desperate bid to reclaim lost credibility? The state government's move to overhaul the Vigilance Bureau and remove its chief Varinder Kumar signals an attempt to tighten its grip on corruption investigations. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has emphasised his administration's "zero tolerance" towards graft, warning officials to either act against corruption or face consequences. On paper, these actions reinforce the AAP's commitment to clean governance.

However, the timing of this anti-corruption push cannot be overlooked. In Delhi, senior AAP leaders, including Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, have been jailed on corruption charges, leaving voters disillusioned. The party, which once prided itself on transparency, now faces allegations that its anti-corruption rhetoric is selectively applied. While it has been swift in targeting bureaucrats and lower-level officials in Punjab, it has struggled to counter opposition attacks on its own tainted leadership in Delhi.

This contradiction has left voters wondering whether the AAP can truly deliver on its founding promise. If the party wants to restore public confidence, it must apply its anti-graft stance consistently, ensuring accountability within its own ranks as well. Otherwise, its claim of being a clean alternative may soon lose all credibility, turning its biggest strength into its greatest weakness.

Jailed gangster Hashim Baba's wife held over drug peddling charges



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Hashim Baba, Hashim Baba wife drug peddling charges, drug peddling charges, Delhi Police Special Cell, Delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs Hashim Baba, whose real name is Ashim, was born in 1982 in Indira Vihar in Gokulpuri. Hashim's family hails from Aghapur village in Gajraula, near Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh. Police officers said his father left his village and came to Delhi to his brother's home in Jaffrabad. Jailed gangster Hashim Baba's wife has been arrested over charges of drug peddling by the Delhi Police Special Cell, officials said on Wednesday. Around 225 grams of heroin was allegedly recovered from her possession when she was going to deliver it.

A senior police officer said Zoya, 33, was arrested from Northeast Delhi's Welcome. "Police received information that she was indulging in drug peddling and acting on this input, police gathered evidence against her. On Wednesday morning, police received information that she was going to deliver the consignment to someone in her car. A trap was laid and she was arrested red-handed from the

spot along with 225 grams of heroin," the officer said, adding that a fresh case on the charges has been registered against her.

Last year, gangster Hashim Baba was arrested from Bihar jail in connection with the murder of a gym owner, Nadir Shah, in South Delhi's Greater Kailash. He claimed in a "judicial confession" that another jailer gangster Lawrence Bishnoi was behind the hit. "Hashim was in Bihar jail in 2021 when Bishnoi came to Bihar from a Punjab jail and they became close friends. After around six to seven months, he moved to Punjab and came back again... In 2023, he was moved to Sabarmati Jail, and around two months ago (in August) last year, he started talking with Hashim over the phone frequently... He (Hashim) has claimed that Bishnoi in a video call showed his two cellphones and also claimed that there were good arrangements for him in the jail," police said. Hashim Baba, whose real name is Ashim, was born in 1982 in Indira Vihar in Gokulpuri. Hashim's family hails from Aghapur village in Gajraula, near Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh. Police officers said his father left his village and came to Delhi to his brother's home in Jaffrabad.

Hashim also allegedly orchestrated the 2016 Karkarduma court shooting to eliminate Chenu Pehelwan. In 2019, another case under the stringent MCOCA (Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act) was registered against Hashim and the Abdul Nasir Gang by the Crime Branch. "In November 2019, police intercepted a call between one of Hashim's associates and his wife. He planned to meet her at a building in Subhash Park. Police laid a trap and asked him to surrender, but he came out and opened fire with his pistol. He was shot in his left leg and arrested by the Special Cell. Since 2019, despite being in jail, he has allegedly ordered six killings," the officer said.

Appoint a Dalit MLA as Leader of Opposition: Maliwal to Kejriwal

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

With Delhi's new Chief Minister and Council of Ministers set to take oath on Thursday, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal wrote to party national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday, urging him to appoint a Dalit MLA as the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly. She reminded him that he is yet to fulfill his promise of appointing a Dalit Deputy CM, a commitment he made during the Punjab Assembly polls. "Now, as the time has come to appoint the LoP, this is an opportunity for you to stand by your words. Appointing a Dalit MLA to this position would not just be a political decision but a strong step toward social justice and equal representation," she said in her letter. She further stated that those who trusted Kejriwal's promise deserve to see it honoured, and this is the right time to ensure meaningful representation. Meanwhile, convening a high-level meeting with AAP's office bearers at the party headquarters on Wednesday, Delhi state convener Gopal Rai directed the 70 Assembly presidents to submit a detailed review report on the role of all officials in the recently held AAP said the findings will be discussed with Kejriwal, following which top performers will be honoured and corrective action will be taken against those found lacking.

The meeting was attended by all state vice-presidents, including Jitender Singh Tomar, Jarnail Singh, Rajesh Gupta, and Kuldeep Kumar, among others. After the meeting, Rai said, "During the meeting, each member presented an oral report of their respective constituencies. The experiences of all participants in this election, along with their suggestions for the future, were discussed," he added. He added, "Based on this, it has been decided that before initiating the



restructuring process of the organisation, a review report on the roles and responsibilities of all office bearers in the election will be submitted by the Assembly presidents to the party's state office within the next 10 days. "Rai further said a review report will be prepared for every worker and office bearer at the Assembly, ward, and mandal levels, assessing those who played a positive role, those who had a negative role, those who dedicated their efforts across Delhi, and those who switched to another party during the election.

"This report will be submitted within 10 days. Based on this, discussions will be held with AAP national convener Kejriwal. As per his directives, individuals who played a positive role will be honoured within the organisation, while those who had a negative role will be engaged in discussions, and necessary steps will be taken accordingly," he said. Rai further said this is part of the restructuring process. "In the next phase, responsibilities will be assigned to those who have demonstrated positive contributions," he said.

CM chosen, all eyes now on Delhi's Cabinet

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

The incoming Delhi cabinet is tipped to include leaders who would maintain a balance of "both youth and experience" alongside organisational participation in mind, sources said. The Bharatiya Janata Party's first cabinet in Delhi in 27 years is likely to reflect the "diverse hues" of the Capital's caste and community spectrum, sources said. According to party insiders, the composition of the incoming Cabinet was likely to include leaders from the Jat, Sikh, Scheduled Caste, Punjabi, Brahmin and Purvanchali communities. Delhi Cabinet, Rekha Gupta, Delhi Chief Minister, Delhi BJP, Jat, Sikh, Scheduled Caste, Punjabi, Brahmin and Purvanchali communities, Delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs BJP leaders at the legislature meeting. (Gajendra Yadav) "Legislators such as Parvesh Sahib Singh, who defeated AAP's Arvind Kejriwal in New Delhi, Manjinder Singh Sira from the Rajouri Garden constituency, Ravindra Kumar Indraj from the Bawana constituency, Kapil Mishra who won from Karawal Nagar, Ashish Sood who won from Janakpuri, Pankaj Kumar Singh who is the Vikaspuri MLA, Vijender Gupta who has won three consecutive assembly elections from Rohini and Mohan Singh Bisht from Mustafabad are likely to get key responsibilities," a party source said. "While Parvesh, Sira, Indraj, Mishra, Sood and Singh are frontrunners for berths in the council of ministers, Vijender Gupta and Bisht are likely to get significant responsibilities in the Delhi Legislative Assembly. The party wants to send out a message of both inclusion as well as underlining that organisational loyalty is not overlooked by the BJP," the source added. Of these, only Mishra has been part of the Delhi government earlier — as a minister in the AAP government between 2015 and 2017. Vijender Gupta was the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly between 2015 and 2025. Bisht, meanwhile, is a six-time MLA. A senior BJP leader said the party's choice of elevating Rekha Gupta, a first-time legislator, to the office of Chief Minister — she is the only woman Chief Minister in BJP-ruled states in the country — underlined Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on both increased participation in political and public life by women leaders as well as youth and organisational loyalty. "This underlines the PM's vision on bolstering the participation of women in politics; whether it is bureaucratic positions or organisational ones, the PM always lays stress on throwing his weight behind the advancement of women candidates or leaders, as the case may be," a BJP leader said. On the other hand, another leader said, the BJP's choice in Gupta, was also to "honour" what he has, more than once, termed the party's "silent vote base" of women cutting across religious, community and class lines. "What the PM has, in several of his speeches across the country, under-

Congress' Alka Lamba turns back the clock, shares 30-yr-old photo of her and Rekha from DUSU days



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Alka Lamba, Rekha Gupta, DUSU, Delhi Chief Minister, Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU), Delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs Rekha Gupta became DUSU president in 1996. She is a first-time MLA. As the BJP named first-time MLA Rekha Gupta as the Delhi Chief Minister on Thursday, Congress' Alka Lamba started turning pages of a photo album from 30 years ago.

Two women, standing on stage soon after their victory in university elections — they were Gupta and Lamba stand side by side in a grainy photograph. "As soon as I heard that Rekha has been declared as the Chief Minister of Delhi, I went back to my student days. 30 years ago, we both took oath as the office bearers of the Delhi University Students' Union," Lamba, who lost to former Delhi CM and AAP's Kalkaji MLA Atishi in the Assembly polls, said. Posting the photograph on X, Lamba wrote, "This memorable picture from 1995 — when Rekha Gupta and I took oath together. NSUI won the post of President of Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) and Rekha won the post of General Secretary from ABVP. Congratulations and best wishes to Rekha Gupta... Congratulations on becoming Delhi's fourth woman Chief Minister. We the people of Delhi hope that ma Yamuna will be clean and our daughters will be safe."

Recalling her college days as a student leader, Lamba said both had ideological differences but were united to fight for women's safety and security on campus. "I was a Gandhian and she was a staunch RSS supporter... We used to have ideological fights but we both were 20 years old and had to juggle both college and politics... and we had only one year," she said. "Back then, we did not have mobile phones or social media... When I heard her name, I took out my old album and searched for the pictures..." said Lamba. Congratulating Gupta, Lamba said, "I am happy to see the growth of Rekha in politics. She contested for the first time and became a minister... She is a grassroots level supporter of the Sangh and her trust and faith are fruitified today... She is a hard worker... She will have challenges as a first-time MLA and CM..."

'Sabko Dekha Aa Gayi Rekha': Celebrations erupt at Delhi CM's home in Shalimar Bagh



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Following the BJP announcing her name as its CM pick on Wednesday night, Rekha met Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena to stake claim to form the government. When she got home later, she was met by a sea of supporters. Climbing atop a car, she addressed the gathering. "All those who have come here, my seniors, my friends thank you to all," she said. "You have seen my struggle and supported me, especially in these 10 years... The responsibility I have is the result of your love and blessings. PM Narendra Modi considered me capable enough to bring me to this position... I want all of you to come to the oath-taking ceremony tomorrow." Delhi CM Rekha Gupta, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi CM home, V K Saxena, Vinai Kumar Saxena, Rekha Gupta, Delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs Supporters celebrate her appointment, Wednesday night. (Gajendra Yadav) Speaking Rekha said: "This is Modi ji's vision for women-led development. He gave a chance to a regular girl from a regular family. My priorities will be to meet the commitments we have made in Delhi and work on the vision of PM Modi for Delhi. All schemes started for women by the PM, we will implement them all." "The team of 48 MLAs will be working towards that. I will work with capability and honesty," she added. "Delhi is going to get a new chapter of development and Delhiites will get their rights." Right before Rekha arrived, people from across Shalimar Bagh and Pitampura as well as BJP workers from the area were dancing on the streets to the beats of the dhol and bursting fire-crackers. Inside Rekha's house, on the ground floor of a four-storey building, her relatives and friends danced to the chants of 'Sabko Dekha Aa Gayi Rekha' and 'Narendra Modi zindabad'. Manish Gupta, Rekha's husband, said he is excited to work alongside his wife. "I'm thankful to PM Modi and I am looking forward to supporting my wife. Currently, I am waiting for her to come back so that we can celebrate this new role together," he told. "Rekha's mother-in-law Meera Gupta told "I am elated that she won. Whatever the AAP couldn't do, she will. She is a good daughter-in-law and will prove to be a good CM too." Her neighbours recollected the work she did in the constituency. Rishabh Jain (30) and Sandeep Jain (45) from Shalimar Bagh, BJ block, said she is the ideal CM candidate. "We want her to take care of Delhi the way she took care of this area of Shalimar Bagh and Pitampura," they said. Yogendra Gupta, poorva mandal adhyaksh of the BJP from Shalimar Bagh, said: "I have worked with her from the start. She did development work in Pitampura, got LED lights installed, developed parks, looked after stray animals and collaborated with RWAs as well." Tarachand Sharma, a resident of the nearby AL Block of Shalimar Bagh, said her victory is the result of her work. "She fixed street lights and improved the conditions of parks. Whenever you call her, she will come to solve problems. Vo ekdum zameen se judi hui hai (she is connected to the ground)," said 42-year-old Sharma, who works at Delhi University. "Thodi nazdeeki bani rahe, jaise abhi vo humari baat sun leti thi, vaise hi aage bhi nazdeeki bane rahe (We hope that the closeness that we have with her doesn't change.



lined as the silent support base for the BJP, women, is what this choice seems to underline. This became more than clear in the results of the Haryana and Maharashtra elections — the fact that women voters were firmly behind the BJP — and helped the party across the finish line; this choice, that too in the capital of the country, sends across a national message in honour of the women of India," the leader added.

Telangana presents case as KWDT-II commences final arguments

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Hyderabad: The Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II) on Wednesday commenced its final arguments with Telangana's senior counsel CS Vaidyanathan presenting the State's case. The tribunal, chaired by Justice Brijesh Kumar along with members Justice Ram Mohan Reddy and Justice S Talapatra, is set to hear arguments for three days. Vaidyanathan provided a comprehensive overview of Telangana's stance on the Krishna river water sharing issue. He highlighted the historical context of the Krishna basin and its sub-basins, explaining the changes in state boundaries post-1956 reorganization. He emphasized that many areas in Telangana, initially planned to be served by gravity-based irrigation schemes, were left unaddressed by the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. Telangana argued that the current water allocation to its projects is insufficient and that an assured water supply would benefit approximately 80 lakh people in the Krishna basin. The counsel criticized the administrative arrangements made by the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh government, which he claimed were biased in favour of the Andhra region.

Bird flu outbreak in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, chicken off Bengal zoo menu



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Bird flu outbreak in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh Bird flu outbreak, Bengal zoo, chicken off Bengal zoo menu, Kolkata news, West Bengal news, Indian express, current affairs New diet for zoo animals to continue till March. The West Bengal Zoo Authority (WBZA) has stopped incorporating chicken into the diet of animals in state zoos as a preventive measure after the outbreak of bird flu. According to sources, eleven state-run zoos (including mini zoos) are instead using goat, lamb and pig meat for the animals that are following a carnivore diet.

This diet began in the first week of February as per the guidelines of the Central Zoo Authority, and is expected to carry on till the end of March. "Several measures are being taken for the bird flu season, such as not using chicken in diets, the spraying of pesticides, forbidding those feeding birds in rescue centres from feeding birds in the zoos, and regular handwashing. Prevention is better than cure," said Saurabh Choudhury, member-secretary of WBZA while speaking with The Indian Express. The move comes after the death of three tigers (one tiger and two tigress) and one leopard (female) due to the H5N1 or Avian Influenza (AI) virus at Gorewada Rescue Centre in Maharashtra's Nagpur. Earlier this year, the Government of India issued a red alert to all the zoos, rescue and transit centres in the country. After this, the Central Zoo Authority advised all zoos to be alert in detecting any symptoms among the animals. Meanwhile, Karnataka's health department has been on high alert after the virus' outbreak in South India, including Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. As no zoo has a poultry farm of their own, they generally procure chicken from a local market. Tigers, lions, leopards, jackals, jaguars, and hyenas among others are offered meat in their daily diet. Predominantly, buffalo and chicken meat are provided. Some of the birds — now under strict watch — are also usually given meat.

As Awadhi, Braj & Bhojpuri ring out in House, Speaker underlines 'regional connect'

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

A DAY after the state Assembly witnessed animated discussions over a demand by Samajwadi Party (SP) leaders that Urdu should be included along with other regional languages as options for translation of house proceedings and opposition against English as an option, the Assembly on Wednesday saw members speaking in regional languages such as Braj, Awadhi and Bhojpuri. BJP MLA and former minister Shrikant Sharma, who hails from Mathura, set the ball rolling by speaking in the Braj language. Sharma congratulated Speaker Satish Mahana for the initiative and pointed out that while they speak regional dialects at home but often do not do so after they step out of their houses. He expressed confidence that the move would help youngsters to "connect more with their respective regional languages."

Then, rebel SP MLA Manoj Kumar Pandey, who is from Rae Bareilly, spoke in favour of the move — in Awadhi. His address was followed by BJP MLA Ketakee Singh from Ballia, who, speaking in Bhojpuri, also thanked the Speaker for the move. Speaker Satish Mahana asked if anyone wanted to speak in Bundelkhandi, but none of the MLAs came forward. Later in the day, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasised that all these regional languages are part of "Devnagri lipi" and the Assembly is only giving options — including English — and not making their use



compulsory. However, SP legislators, including Leader of Opposition Mata Prasad Pandey, continued to oppose the move to introduce English and again flagged the alleged "non-inclusion" of Urdu among the languages of translation. Later in the day, another SP rebel MLA, Rakesh Singh, also raised the issue of some of the opposition MLAs allegedly not standing or giving due respect to "rashtra gaan" (national anthem) when it was played after the Assembly re-assembled around 12:30 pm on Tuesday. In response, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna requested the Speaker to check the CCTV footage and take action so that such an act is not repeated.

Wearing handcuffs, Cong MLAs hold protest: 'No action taken by Centre, state over ill-treatment of deportees'

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

The issue of alleged ill-treatment meted out by the US to illegal immigrants from India echoed outside the Gujarat Assembly with Congress MLAs arriving on the premises wearing handcuffs and slogan banners on the first day of the Budget session of Gujarat Legislative Assembly. Standing outside the Assembly, the Opposition MLAs raised slogans against the Central as well as the Gujarat government for allegedly not taking any action against the manner in which the deportees were flown in from the US earlier this month. Gujarat Leader of Congress Legislative Party Amit Chavda stated that the party will raise the issue during the budget session as well. "We will raise the issue of atrocities and humiliation committed against Gujaratis by the (Donald) Trump government in the Assembly and demand the government's answer," Chavda stated. A number of deportees, who arrived in three US military aircraft that landed in Amritsar, belonged to different parts of Gujarat.

"This important issue is related to the respect of the nation and its youth. Against the claims of becoming the vishwa guru of the double-engine BJP government, youth are not getting jobs and they don't see their future secured. After spending Rs 75 lakh to Rs 1 crore, they illegally went abroad to fulfill their dreams," Chavda stated. Nine of the total 12 MLAs of the Congress wore handcuffs fashioned out of chains and donned banners announcing "videsh ma Gujaratiyon par atyachar ni bharmer kem chhup che double engine sarkar? (Why is the double-engine government silent about the rampant atrocities against Gujaratis abroad?)" Chavda further said, "America treated them as terrorists or worse. They were handcuffed and chained and



sent back in the Army plane where there is no facility of food or sanitation." He said, "On the other hand, the President of Colombia made arrangements to bring back the people of his country with dignity. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who calls himself a good friend of Trump, wasted the taxpayers money by organising events like 'Howdy Modi' and 'Namaste Trump'. When the Prime Minister went to America, he hugged Trump again but did not utter a single word about the insult to the Congress legislators further pointed out that relatives of many Indians who are still abroad are concerned. "Even Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel is not ready to speak a word. The Prime Minister of the country, who is a Gujarati, is also not ready to utter a single word despite going to America. This shows their weakness. This is a failure on the part of the government. People of Gujarat and the country are seeking a response from them as this (the treatment) amounts to humiliation of 140 crore Indians," Congress MLA from Jamalpur Khadia, Imran Khedawala.

QR codes on houses, no new taxes in Surat civic body's draft budget

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

QR codes on houses, South Gujarat, Surat Municipal Corporation, Surat, Ahmedabad news, Gujarat news, India news, Indian express, current affairs The use of advanced technology is expected to benefit students of SMIMER college. SMC has also planned to create a bone bank and tissue bank for the first time in South Gujarat.

QR codes on all houses, mobile app to pay taxes, and the first bone and tissue bank in South Gujarat: These were among the things proposed as civic body chief Shalini Agarwal presented the draft budget of Rs 9,603 crore for 2025-26, a jump of Rs 885 crore from last year, before the Standing Committee of the Surat Municipal Corporation No new tax burden has been imposed on the citizens keeping in mind that the city will go for civic elections later this year, said sources. According to the draft budget, QR codes will be installed on roads, tourism places, women's hostels, and individual houses, among other places. The SMC will introduce a new method of paying taxes through WhatsApp mobile application. For the first time in the country, QR codes will be installed on every house, said Surat Municipal Commissioner Agarwal. Through QR codes, real-time data collection will be carried out. These QR codes will eventually be linked to more services. The new draft budget also talked about a road-inspection cell, under which a mobile application will be created to check the quality of a road and its durability.

In terms of health, SMC has planned to spend Rs 10 crore to purchase medical equipment for carrying out robotic surgery at SMIMER hospital. The use of advanced



QR codes on all houses, mobile app to pay taxes, and the first bone and tissue bank in South Gujarat: These were among the things proposed as civic body chief Shalini Agarwal presented the draft budget of Rs 9,603 crore for 2025-26,

technology is expected to benefit students of SMIMER college. SMC has also planned to create a bone bank and tissue bank for the first time in South Gujarat. Another plan includes installing 100% rooftop solar panels on civic body-run schools across the city. Apart from this, plantation of 10 lakh trees will be done in different phases. Specialised gardens, too, will be set up for rain water recharging.

Hearing PIL on stampede, Delhi HC asks Rlys: Why sell excess tickets?



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Hearing a PIL on the February 15 stampede, the division bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela sought a response from the Centre and Railways. "If you fix the number of passengers to be accommodated in a coach, then why do you sell... why do the number of tickets sold exceed that number? That is a problem... If you implement a simple thing in letter and spirit, such a situation can be avoided. On rush days, you may increase that number to accommodate the rush... but not fixing the strength to be accommodated in a coach, this provision appears to have been neglected all along," the bench said in oral remarks. The PIL — filed by a Delhi-based organisation of lawyers, entrepreneurs and professionals, Arth Vidhi, through advocates Aditya Trivedi and Subhi Pastor — seeks the court's directions to the government for implementation of provisions of the Railways Act, 1989, specifically Sections 57 and 147. According to Section 57, the Railways has to fix the maximum number of passengers per compartment, and display that number inside or outside each compartment in Hindi, English and one or more regional languages used in the area. Section 147 deals with trespass, providing for punishment up to six months in prison.

The PIL also seeks the court's directions to the authorities to provide for compensation as under the Act. Appearing for the Indian Railways, Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta said no directions were required as they

are already bound by the law. As the court pointed to non-implementation of the provisions, Mehta assured that the Railway Board would look into the issues. The court suggested that the Railway Board, in its reply, could include the steps to be taken to ensure implementation of the provisions. "... Prayer is to direct Railways to frame guidelines for issuance of general class unreserved tickets for benefit and safety of the general people. We have already issued a circular in this regard but some poor people do come and sit there... We have country-specific issues. During rush hours, such cases arise. Railways will go into this question," Mehta said. ... Third prayer is to direct compensation that has already been given. Of course, it cannot be enough. We respect loss of life," he said. New Delhi Railway Station Last photo of Poonam along with her grandson at the railway station. Her son in law Pappu showed it on his phone while he sat outside the emergency ward (Express Photo: Sakshi Chand) The PIL said that "unlimited issuance of tickets, without ensuring adequate facilities such as additional coaches, proper queuing systems and regulated boarding processes, directly contributed to the chaos and loss of lives." The incident "highlights gross negligence on the part of the Railway authorities in managing crowd control and ticket issuance in the unreserved category," it said. "The unregulated issuance of general class tickets, without cap on the number of tickets sold for a particular train, leads to dangerous overcrowding especially during peak travel seasons..."

The lack of proper guidelines for unreserved ticketing and the absence of crowd management mechanisms amount to a violation of the fundamental right to life," it said. Citing The Indian Express report, the PIL said that on an average, 7,000 tickets are booked at the New Delhi Railway Station between 6 pm and 8 pm daily; this increased to 9,600 general class tickets on the day of the incident. The Union of India, through the Secretary, Ministry of Railways, the Indian Railways North Zone, Railway Board, Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety, and National Disaster Response Force have been made respondents to the PIL. The court instructed the respondents to file a short affidavit responding to the issues raised in the PIL while posting the matter for March 26.

Pradhan at GLS convocation: Foundation of India's success lies in modernising its educational system through NEP

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Dharmendra Pradhan, GLS convocation, National Education Policy, educational system, Ahmedabad news, Gujarat news, India news, Indian express, current affairs A student being awarded during the eighth convocation ceremony of the GLS University. The foundation for India's future success lies in modernising its educational system through National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, said Union Minister of Education Dharmendra Pradhan. Pradhan made these remarks while addressing the audience virtually during the eighth convocation ceremony of the GLS University in Ahmedabad. Pradhan reflected on the transformative power of education and its role in shaping India's future.

During the convocation, Justice CK Thakker was recognised with an Honorary Doctorate for his contributions to law and education and Tushar Shukla for his contributions to Gujarati literature and culture. Highlighting the significance of the NEP 2020, Pradhan emphasized the vision behind the policy of creating an inclusive and holistic education system. "The foundation for India's future success lies in modernising its educational system through NEP 2020, which aims to foster innovation, critical thinking, and adaptability to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century," he said. Meanwhile, GLS University presi-



dent Sudhir Nanavati shared his vision for the varsity and its mission to "nurture future leaders" while emphasising the importance of lifelong learning. Nanavati encouraged the graduates to "continue striving for excellence" in their respective fields, reminding them that their "education was just the beginning of a larger journey." During the event, 34 meritorious students were awarded gold and silver medals while 34 others were awarded with the 'Best Student' awards across multiple faculties such as law, computer applications, IT, management and design among others. At least 58 doctoral students were awarded PhD degrees.

3 detained for selling videos of women patients



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Ahmedabad Cyber Crime Police, gynaecological examination, selling videos of women patients, Ahmedabad news, Gujarat news, India news, Indian express, current affairs JCP Singhal said that the primary investigation has found that the three accused were in contact, through virtual numbers, with hackers from Romania and Atlanta in the US. The Ahmedabad Cyber Crime Police on Wednesday apprehended three men for allegedly uploading and selling private videos of women on social media platforms. The videos appear to be CCTV camera footage of women undergoing gynaecological examination at a hospital. So far, police have come across three YouTube channels and one Telegram group but the numbers are subject to change since there are multiple other videos, origins of which are being investigated.

According to the police, the three accused, aged between 20 and 25 years, were arrested from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. The three accused — Prajwal Ashok Teli from Maharashtra's Latur, Prajapati Rajendra Patil from Sangli in the same state, and Chandraprakash Phoolchand from Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj — were apprehended and detained by separate police teams. They are being transported to Ahmedabad on transit remand, said Sharad Singhal, JCP (Crime), Ahmedabad City Police. According to police, Class 12 passout Teli is the alleged mastermind of the gang while Patil was the one who had given his mobile phone number for registration on Telegram group. Further, it was his bank account that has been linked to the subscription payment for those seeking to join the group, said the police. Third accused Phoolchand, who has also studied till Class 12, is the administrator of one of the YouTube channels. The matter came to light during social media monitoring by the Ahmedabad Cyber Crime Police, which immediately filed an FIR on behalf of the State under

the provisions of Information Technology Act on Monday. According to sources, the videos that first came under scrutiny by the police included the CCTV footage from a camera installed in the gynaecological examination room of a Rajkot-based nursing home. Subsequently, the police launched a probe and narrowed down on three men.

International hackers JCP Singhal said that the primary investigation has found that the three accused were in contact, through virtual numbers, with hackers from Romania and Atlanta in the US. The modus operandi of this group, according to the police, was however not limited to this one hospital. They had allegedly hacked CCTVs of other hospitals, and public places such as malls and commercial buildings. Officials said that these cyber criminals had "abused the lax cybersecurity" of various facilities to hack into these systems through a "decentralised method, editing out the videos of women and uploading snippet-like teasers on YouTube and offering up these videos for sale for anywhere between Rs 800 and Rs 2,000 to those seeking to access such "voyeuristic" material". The police are probing the locations and number of videos illegally accessed and sold by the accused. Investigation into the money trail is also underway, said the police. JCP Singhal stated that prima facie, the police had not found involvement of any staff from the Rajkot nursing home in the racket.

Cyber Security SHIELD 2025 concludes in Hyd

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Hyderabad: Cyber security experts on Wednesday urged people to be more vigilant and proactive in taking preventive measures and avoid becoming victims of cybercrimes. On the concluding-day of the two-day conclave on Cyber Security SHIELD 2025 at HICC on Wednesday, experts acknowledged that society at large is fast moving towards complete digitisation.

Speaking on the occasion, Director General of Police (DGP), Telangana State, Jitender said that innocent people are losing money in cyber frauds. "We must ensure that their hard-earned money is not lost," he said. Telangana State pioneered in cyber security by establishing Telangana Cyber Security Bureau (TGCSB) with a mission to create a secure digital environment through transparent, unbiased, and efficient practices, he added.

Gujarat Medical Council imposes 3-yr ban on two accused doctors in PMJAY 'scam'



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Gujarat Medical Council, PMJAY racket, PMJAY, PMJAY scam, Gujarat Medical Council imposes 3-yr ban on two, Ahmedabad news, Gujarat news, India news, Indian express, current affairs Two PMJAY beneficiaries had died on November 11 last year following an angioplasty procedure. The Gujarat Medical Council (GMC) on Wednesday said it has suspended the medical registrations of two doctors, accused in the alleged PMJAY racket, for a period of three years. The decision came into effect on February 11. While an order was passed against Dr Sanjay Mulji Patolia, a Bariatric Surgeon and Director of Ahmedabad Bariatrics and Cosmetics Pvt Ltd, the holding company of Khyati Multispecialty Hospital, the other was against Dr Shailesh Kumar Amrutal Anand, the former General Manager of the PMJAY scheme in Gujarat. Notably, two PMJAY beneficiaries from Mehsana district had died on November 11 last year following an angioplasty procedure at the Khyati

Hospital. Two days after the deaths, an FIR filed by the Gujarat government in the case had alleged that the deceased did not require the procedure in the first place.

In case of Dr Patolia, the order stated, "As provided by section 22(1)(b)(i) of the Gujarat Medical Council Act, the name of Dr Sanjay Mulji Patolia, one of the Directors of Khyati Multispecialty Hospital, who is registered for MBBS and MS Surgery, is to be removed from the register of medical practitioners for the period of three years." The inquiry in this case was undertaken on the request of the Additional Director of Medical Services. Taking suo motu cognizance of the matter, the GMC took into consideration the report of the medical expert committee of the Gujarat government and heard arguments on behalf of Dr Patolia by his wife. Notably, Dr Patolia and eight others from Khyati Multispecialty Hospital were, on November 13, 2024, booked in three separate FIRs for culpable homicide not amounting to murder and other serious crimes in the racket they were allegedly running by abuse of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana-Mukhyamantri Amrutam (PMJAY-MA) scheme. In case of Dr Anand, the order stated, "As provided by section 22(1)(b)(i) of the Gujarat Medical Council Act, the name of Dr Shailesh Kumar Amrutal Anand, Government Official connected with PMJAY, who is registered for MBBS and DMC, is to be removed from the register of medical practitioners for the period of three years." In this case, the council heard arguments on behalf of Dr Anand by his brother. On December 17, 2024, Dr Anand was booked along with eight other accused for allegedly being part of the conspiracy to grant approval of PMJAY cards for people ineligible to be beneficiaries under the scheme, besides forgery and criminal breach of trust.

Rajasthan gets its first 'Green Budget'; focus on Bijli, Sadak, Paani



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

RAJASTHAN DEPUTY Chief Minister and Finance Minister Diya Kumari on Wednesday presented the state's first "Green Budget" even as she underlined the government's focus on the essentials of Bijli, Sadak, Paani as well as health and agriculture. Presenting the Rs 5.37-lakh crore state Budget 2025-26 in the Assembly, she also said the government aims to provide 1.25 lakh government and 1.5 lakh private jobs in the next year.

Beginning her address with the acknowledgement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "guidance" in the first year of the Bhajan Lal Sharma government, she said the state government has fulfilled 58 per cent of its Sankalp Patra (manifesto) and 73 per cent of the announcements it made in its first Budget. She said that with the aim of attaining Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, the state is bringing its first Green Budget with a provision of Rs 27,854 crore, which is 11.34 per cent of the scheme expenditure.

She announced the creation of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan-2030, as well as Centre of Excellence for Climate Change with Rs 150 crore. She also said that 10 crore trees will be planted while subsidies will be given to 2.5 lakh farmers for natural farming. Additionally, as part of green initiatives, water harvesting structures will be created in over 4,700 villages with Rs 2,700 crore, and there will be introduction of a Rajasthan Circular Economy Incentive Scheme and Rajasthan Vehicle Scrap Policy. Also, there will be creation of Waste to Wealth Parks in all district headquarters, a Clean and Green Technology Development Centre with Rs 250 crore, and a Green Aravali Development Project with Rs 250 crore, among others. In the address lasting more than two hours, Kumari quoted Mahatma Gandhi, B R Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Swami Vivekananda, A B Vajpayee, PM Modi and Gopaldas Neeraj, apart from the Rigveda and the Mahabharata. Touching upon Gen Z, Artificial Intelligence, startups, and student suicides, the Deputy CM criticised the previous Congress government over creation of new districts. Former CMs Ashok Gehlot and Vasundhara Raje and former Deputy CM Sachin Pilot were among those absent in the House.

For water, the Deputy CM said the state government aims to provide water connections in 20 lakh households in the upcoming year, apart from Rs 425 crore for drinking water in rural areas. She also announced the CM Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban), which entails works worth Rs 5,830 crore, as well as installation of 1,000 tubewells and 1,500 handpumps, creation of a contractual cadre of technical officers under JJM with 1,050 posts. For energy, she said that with the aim of making the state self-reliant and energy surplus, there will be an additional production of 6,400 MW, apart from works of 5,700 MWs, and 10 GW production through the private sector. Additionally, 50,000 new agriculture connections and 5 lakh domestic connections will be given. The Deputy CM also announced construction or repair of state highways, bypass roads, flyovers, bridges, among others with a cost of over Rs 5,000 crore. She said that work on nine Greenfield Expressways with a cost of about Rs 60,000 crore would be undertaken on a Hybrid Annuity Model/Build Operate Transfer model. With about Rs 6,000 crore, work would be done on 21,000 km of non-patchable roads in a phased manner. Under this, in the first phase, works worth Rs 10 crore would be undertaken in each Assembly constituency while for Assemblies in desert areas, this amount would be Rs 15,000 crore.

Rural towns with over 5,000 population will get an Atal Pragati Path and in the first phase, works worth Rs 500 crore would be undertaken in 150 villages. For agriculture, she announced works worth Rs 9,300 crore under Ram Jal Setu Link Pariyojana (modified PKC - ERCP), upgradation of ERCP Corporation to Rajasthan Water Grid Corporation, which would undertake works worth Rs 4,000 crore, subsidy worth Rs 1,250 crore for Drip and Sprinkler Irrigation System, subsidy worth Rs 900 crore for farm ponds, solar pumps, etc., increasing PM Kisan Samman Nidhi to Rs 9,000 per year, increase in bonus over Minimum Support Price for wheat to Rs 150 per quintal, and organising Global Rajasthan Agri-Tech Meet. Kumari also announced Rs 100 crore each for Dang, Magra, Mewat and Brij area development schemes, an increase in Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub Plan to Rs 1,750 crore, creation of Guru Golwalkar Aspirational Blocks De-

velopment Scheme for the most backward 35 blocks of the state, and a Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Shehri Vikas Yojana for sewerage, drainage, sanitation and waste disposal with Rs 12,050 crore, construction of 500 pink toilets in urban areas. For industry, she said the number of online permissions under the single window system have been increased to 149, and that a competitive index for various departments will be created, apart from a Global Capability Centre (GCC) Policy and the Rajasthan Trade Promotion Policy.

While works worth Rs 750 crore are underway under Tourism Infrastructure and Capacity Building Fund, the Deputy CM, who is also the Tourism Minister, announced additional works worth Rs 975 crore for tourism infrastructure development. These include developing 10 sites as Iconic Tourist Destinations and conservation of Shekhawati havelis. She also announced Rs 100 crore for Tribal Tourist Circuit and Rs 20 crore for development of certain sites under Rural Tourism, and works at War Museum in Jaisalmer. A provision has been made for the pilgrimage of 50,000 senior citizens in AC coaches, instead of sleepers, in trains in addition to air travel. For youth, she announced the Rajasthan Employment Policy - 2025, apart from Vivekananda Rozgar Sahayta Kosh with Rs 500 crore. Apart from the goal of providing 2.75 lakh government and private jobs, she also announced schemes for first-time entrepreneurs and an aim of having 1,500 new startups. Additionally, she announced more CCTV cameras in schools, Atal Tinkering Labs in 1,500 schools, new Sainik Schools, Digital Planetariums, Innovation Hubs, Open gyms, etc.

For Health, Kumari announced Rs 3,500 crore under the Mukhyamantri Ayushman Arogya (MAA) Yojana fund for free tests and medicine, apart from interstate portability for health benefits outside state under MAA Yojana. Also, she announced Rs 1,300 crore for strengthening the Tertiary Care System, and creation of posts of 750 doctors and 1,500 para medical personnel, Diabetic Clinics in all district hospitals, Fit Rajasthan Campaign with Rs 50 crore, and a new AYUSH Policy. Under Social Security, she announced increase in social security pension to Rs 1,250 per month, artificial limbs up to Rs 20,000 for 1 lakh differently-abled, a Rs 350-crore Gig and Unorganised Workers Development Fund, 35,000 scooters for girl students, milk for children in the 3-6 age group in Anganwadis for five days a week instead of three, addition of 10 lakh people under the National Food Security Act, and opening of 5,000 fair price shops.

For better law and order in the state, she announced a Rajasthan Nagrik Suraksha Adhinyam, creation of 3,500 police jobs, and a Sardar Patel Centre for Cyber Control and War-Room with Rs 350 crore. With the aim of "good governance", she announced the creation of an Ambedkar Institute of Constitutional Studies and Research in Jaipur, and Rs 1,000 crore for establishing district-level offices in eight new districts, which were created during the previous Ashok Gehlot government.

Delhi HC gets two more judges, taking total strength to 41

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

delhi high court, delhi high court judges, Supreme Court Collegium, delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs Bhatnagar has been the Principal District and Sessions judge of Shahdara, Karkardooma Courts since June 2023. She joined the Delhi Judicial Services in 1992 and was promoted to Delhi Higher Judicial Services in August 2003. During her nearly three decades of service, she has held courts in almost all areas — including civil, criminal, labour laws, and family courts — at various court complexes in Delhi. She also served as Joint Registrar on a deputation basis for about two years from September 2005 to September 2007.

The Centre on Wednesday notified the appointment of two new judges to the Delhi High Court. This takes the strength of the court to 41 judges, against the sanctioned strength of 45 permanent judges and 15 additional judges. The nod for the appointments comes around two weeks after the Supreme Court Collegium had recommended the elevation of judicial officers Renu Bhatnagar and Rajneesh Kumar Gupta on February 5.

Bhatnagar has been the principal district and sessions judge of Shahdara, Karkardooma Courts since June 2023. She joined the Delhi Judicial Services in 1992 and was promoted to Delhi Higher Judicial Services in August 2003. During her nearly three decades of service, she has held courts in almost all areas — including civil, criminal, labour laws, and family courts — at various court complexes in Delhi. She also served as Joint Registrar on a deputation basis for about two years from September 2005 to September 2007.

Gupta is presently posted as Principal District & Sessions Judge (South-East), Saket Court Complex. She joined the Delhi Judicial Service in 1992, and was subsequently promoted to the Delhi Higher Judicial Service in the year 2006.

Violations continue in Chandni Chowk's regulated zone despite deployment of home guards



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Even as home guard volunteers are deployed to restrict the access of a regulated zone in Chandni Chowk following an order in December last year, the Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation (SRDC) has flagged continuing violations in a letter to the Delhi Traffic Police. In the letter, the SRDC attached photos of various locations where the absence of home guards from the designated locations of boom barriers led to unrestricted access to motorised vehicles in the restricted zone — the 1.3-km-long pedestrianised stretch from Red Fort to Fatehpuri Masjid. SRDC Managing Director Ravi Dhawan sought Delhi Traffic Police's intervention in the matter in the letter dated January 16 and underlined that two integrated police booths should be operationalised with immediate effect.

Senior traffic officials confirmed that they have received

the letter. "We have filed a written reply to their letter and necessary measures are being taken. The matter is also in the High Court so it will not be right to comment at the moment," the official said. "It may be noted that a decision was taken by the Home Department on December 1, 2024, to deploy at least 75 home guard volunteers (45 with Delhi Traffic Police and 30 for boom barriers) for traffic management in Chandni Chowk Redevelopment Area w.e.f. 16 December, 2024. However, it is noted that even deployment of the home guards has failed to restrict access of motorised vehicle in the regulated zone since the boom barriers are either left open or are remaining unattended by the home guards," the letter signed by Dhawan stated. "As such, it is requested to personally intervene and plug the loopholes in the existing pattern of deployment vis-a-vis operationalisation of boom barriers. An action taken report may kindly be sent periodically so that same is incorporated in the submission before the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi," Dhawan said in the letter. Earlier, Deputy Commissioner (City-SP Zone : MCD) had also requested to provide additional manpower to assist the zonal staff in enforcing the regulations to comply with the High Court directions to keep the stretch encroachment-free from illegal loading or unloading; or unauthorised cycle rickshaws. Coordination with Delhi Traffic Police and MCD to prevent all kinds of illegalities, whether encroachments or traffic violations, within the restricted area, as mandated by the Hon'ble High Court was subsequently requested in a letter dated December 17, 2024.

Fake MoU, missing docs place nine DUSIB officials under ACB scanner



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, DUSIB, Anti Corruption Branch, delhi Anti Corruption Branch, delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs The case was filed after a complaint was received from the Vigilance Branch of the DUSIB. A fabricated memorandum of understanding (MoU), missing labour certificates and cement bills; and claims of a project being undertaken during the lockdown period in 2020 amid the pandemic when construction activities were restricted: these are some of the discrepancies that have placed at least nine officials of the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) under the Anti Corruption Branch (ACB) scanner in an alleged fraud to the tune of over Rs 15 lakh. ACB chief Madhur Verma confirmed that an FIR was registered on Tuesday under sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act, cheating, and criminal conspiracy over alleged irregularities and bogus payments.

The case was filed after a complaint was received from the Vigilance Branch of the DUSIB. The officials of the C-10 division were allegedly involved in a bogus project for the improvement of internal lanes in an area of Patel Nagar under a scheme related to SC/ST settlements. In the com-

plaint, concerns were also raised regarding the manipulation of project records, unauthorised payment approvals, and failure to follow due process. "There is a circular issued by the Budget & Finance Officer (BFO), DUSIB, dated May 5, 2020, wherein certain conditions have been mentioned. The dates of collection of samples by the QC (Quality Control) unit fall between March and May 2020 — a complete lockdown period," the FIR states. There is documentary evidence that the department has been duped and bogus payment to the tune of Rs 15,21,445 has been made in the case, it adds.

During the inquiry into the matter, ACB officials said, a fabricated MOU was found on record in the file pertaining to the alleged work wherein the private contractor had hired a firm, M/S Wondermix ready mix Concrete Pvt Ltd, for the supply of ready mix concrete (RMC). Upon questioning, the director of the company, however, denied any relation with the MOU and termed it as "bogus", the inquiry revealed. As per the records of the quality control unit of DUSIB, some tests were allegedly conducted by the QC unit, and a site inspection was done. However, there were no records of RMC supplied at the site, raising questions about the authenticity of the inspection and further implicating the QC officials in the conspiracy. "A number of discrepancies were found during verification of the facts such as missing labour certificates, cement bills, and signatures on the first and final bills raised serious concerns about the legitimacy of the work done and showed a blatant disregard of the officials for established procedures and protocols," an official said. The FIR raises questions, claiming the work could not have been carried out as the entire country was under a complete lockdown between March 26, 2020, and June 8, 2020 due to Covid. Even after June 8, only the urgent and important work could be carried out in an emergency and that too with the prior permission of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), the FIR claims.

1,200 'Marathi mannos' head for national capital to attend three-day Sahitya Sannam

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

AMID beating of dhols and lezims and a grand welcome to a "granth dindi," as many as 1,200 people, which mainly included authors, writers and literary enthusiasts, left for Delhi to attend the 98th Marathi Sahitya Sannam organised by Sarhad Pune and Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Mahamandal. A special train 'Mahadji Shinde Express' was arranged for the attendees, which departed from Pune station around 3pm on Wednesday. Accompanying them till Ahilyanagar was none other than Maharashtra minister Uday Samant, who holds the Marathi language portfolio. The Marathi Sahitya Sannam is being held in the national capital after 71 years for three days, starting from February 21. The Sannam will be held at Talkotra, which has historical significance as it is the site of the 1737 battle in which Marathas led by Bajirao Peshwa defeated the Mughals. The last conference was held in October 1954. The event will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Vigyan Bhavan on Friday. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and NCP (S-P) chief Sharad Pawar will attend the sannam. Pawar is the head of the reception committee for this year's Sannam. "To travel along with 1200 people from the literary community is a world record. When four litterateurs come together, we get to hear some good thoughts. At the same time, there is a possibility of verbal duels as well. But for the sake of positivity, disagreements is a sign of liveliness. Literature is a part of Maharashtra's culture. The Sannam is helping preserve our culture," said Samant on board the train as it left for Delhi. The train is expected to reach Delhi on Thursday afternoon with two halts at Ahilyanagar and Jalgaon.

"Though the formal inauguration of the Sannam will happen at the hands of the Prime Minister on Friday, its unofficial opening happened on board the train. Minister Uday Samant did the honours and in no time, authors, writers and poets took the centre stage," Sanjay Nahar, who heads Sarhad, an NGO, told The Indian Express. Literary enthusiasts lapped up every moment on board the train. "I feel like the sannam has already started. The train is full of literary community. There is an intellectual exchange going on," said Manju Awalkar, a Puneite. "Everyone is keen to be in Delhi and attend the Sahitya Sannam. The atmosphere was already created on board the train," said Shirish Shinde, another Puneite.

When Samant inaugurated the "sannam" on board the train, Dr P D Patil, Chancellor of Dr P D Patil deemed university, veteran litterateur Dr Sangeeta Barve, Marathi "Sahitya Yatra" Sannam chief Sharad Tandale, executive president Vaibhav Wagh, treasurer Sharad Gore, among others, were present. As prominent literary figures and enthusiasts started arriving in the afternoon, the Pune railway station wore a festive look. At the start, tributes were paid to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on his birth anniversary. The



"granth dindi" which arrived from Pandharpur was given a rousing welcome. The "dindi" also left by the train to Delhi. Stating that backing litterateurs was equivalent to backing Marathi mannos, Samant said, "Supporting Marathi mannos means supporting entire Maharashtra. By naming the special train after Mahadji Shinde, it has given us a moment of pride. This sannam will help take Marathi language across the world." "Marathi Sahitya Sannam is a glorious tradition of literature and culture. Through this sannam, we are saluting the bravery of Mahadji Shinde. His courage, patience and leadership makes every Marathi mannos feel proud," said Dr P D Patil.

Court junks defamation case against AAP's Saurabh Bharadwaj

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Saurabh Bharadwaj defamation case, defamation case, Saurabh Bharadwaj, AAP, Aam Aadmi Party AAP, delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) former MLA Saurabh Bharadwaj. Citing a delay in filing the complaint, a Delhi court on Wednesday dismissed a criminal defamation case against Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) former MLA Saurabh Bharadwaj. The complaint against the AAP leader was lodged by the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Suraj Bhan Chauhan. Chauhan had alleged that Bharadwaj defamed him during a press conference in September 2018 by falsely claiming that an FIR was lodged against him. The limitation period in filing the complaint was three years from the alleged date of the offence. Initially, a defamation complaint filed by Chauhan was dismissed in November 2022. Chauhan then filed another complaint after a delay of 760 days. "...none of the grounds pleaded by the complainant to seek condonation of delay is found to be justifiable. Hence, this Court is of the opinion that the complainant is not entitled to the condonation of delay in filing the present complaint.

Tesla in India: Trump says unfair to U.S. if Elon Musk builds factory in India



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

U.S. President Donald Trump has said that if Tesla were to build a factory in India to circumvent that country's tariffs, it would be "unfair" to the U.S., in an interview with Fox News which aired Mr. Trump called out India's high duty on cars during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the U.S. last week but agreed to work towards an early trade deal and resolve their standoff over tariffs. Tesla's CEO Elon Musk has long criticised India for having import tariffs

of around 100% on EVs which protect local automakers such as Tata Motors in the world's third largest auto market, where EV adoption is still at a nascent stage. Mr. Trump said it is "impossible" for Mr. Musk to sell a car in the South Asian nation.

"Every country in the world takes advantage of us, and they do it with tariffs... It is impossible to sell a car, practically, in, as an example, India," he said. India's government in March unveiled a new EV policy lowering import taxes substantially to 15% if a carmaker invests at least \$500 million and sets up a factory. Reuters reported on Tuesday that Tesla has selected locations for two showrooms in the Indian cities of New Delhi and Mumbai, and posted job ads for 13 mid-level roles in India. It does not currently manufacture any vehicles in India. Mr. Trump said it would be "unfair" to the U.S. if Mr. Musk did decide to build a factory there. "Now, if he built the factory in India, that's okay, but that's unfair to us. It's very unfair," Mr. Trump said in the interview. Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Mr. Trump's plans for reciprocal tariffs on every country that taxes U.S. imports have raised the risk of a global trade war with American friends and foes.

President's Rule and the road ahead



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

The Narendra Modi-led BJP government at the Centre has finally done the inevitable by imposing President's Rule in Manipur on February 13, after dragging its feet for over 21 months, and four days after N. Biren Singh resigned as Chief Minister. The change in political gear stems not from the BJP's first-order-of-preference, but as an escape route to avoid an imminent fall of its government and an impending constitutional crisis in the State. However, this crisis, along with the belated imposition of President's Rule, presents both challenges and opportunities for the BJP-led central government and for various stakeholders in Manipur's violence to restore normalcy and establish trust and legitimacy in the Indian State and its institutions. The BJP's last resort to President's Rule to avert a constitutional crisis has busted the myth around BJP's electoral USP of a double-engine sarkar, which has been projected as the hallmark of efficiency, stability, and strength. The most formidable challenge is therefore to creatively use President's Rule as an opportunity to reverse this and establish what Michael Mann, the eminent political sociologist calls the 'infrastructural power' of the State. This is premised on the assumption that the biggest casualty in over 21 months of violence has been the erosion of trust and legitimacy of the State and its institutions.

Extensive reports show how the complicity and partisan role of the State government and its police forces during this violence have not only ruptured shared territorial space but have also drastically eroded citizens' trust in the State government. Under Mr. Singh's populist leadership, the State government is seen to have capitulated to the Meitei ultranationalist and majoritarian agenda. This point is brought into sharp relief by a recent forensic report by Truth Labs submitted to the Supreme Court, which confirms a 93% similarity between the YouTube voice samples and the alleged audio of Mr. Singh in a leaked tape, where he allegedly made self-incriminating claims about his role in starting and perpetuating the violence. Seen against this context, the imposition of President's Rule must be seen as a necessary but not sufficient step towards establishing the State's 'infrastructural power' to restore normalcy and constitutional order in Manipur. If the capacity of the State to autonomously regulate State-society relations is the hallmark of this power, then it must not recapitulate to powerful ultranationalist and majoritarian agendas of social forces and populist leaders. These leaders harvest the insecurity complex of the gullible public to falsely project themselves as messiahs who will restore an elusive, glorious indigenous past to secure the survival of the community and the State from the unwanted 'others'.

It is worth underscoring how Friedrich Ratzel's idea of lebensraum was weaponised during Nazi rule in Germany in the 1930s when the unwanted Jews 'others,' were violently targeted to protect the purity of the German Aryan race and the Third Reich. That this has unusual resonance with the militant ultranationalist and populist drive to restore Manipur's indigenous past should shudder us and affirm our resolve not to feed these politics anymore. This is not to suggest the permanent inseparability between reviving one's glorious past and violent targeting of the 'unwanted' others to secure one's survival. The 'ideological apparatus' of the State can play a crucial role in detoxifying militant ideas and reorienting our political culture and political socialisation in ways that promote our connected and shared past. The present and future pathways of communities and the State must be built on the principles of justice, mutual trust, respect, and recognition of each other's distinctiveness. Along with this, it is imperative that the State must be seen to uphold the rule of law and the constitutional order to secure

not only equality of all citizens before the law but also equal protection of the law.

Outsourcing law and order to vigilante and armed groups, using them as proxies to further ultranationalist and majoritarian agendas, randomised stereotyping, and selectively targeting a community, among others, must be stopped. They must be firmly dealt with in accordance with the relevant provisions of the law without fear or favour.

Only when the State rises above partisan interests and insulates itself from powerful forces can it effectively regulate State-society relations in Manipur, to promote trust and legitimacy of the State and institutions. As M. Sajjad Hassan, a former bureaucrat-turned-academic-activist with extensive field experience in Manipur and Mizoram, has reminded us, identity crisis and its attendant violent conflicts stems primarily from a 'legitimacy crisis' of the State and not the other way round. For Mr. Hassan, 'building legitimacy' of State institutions is the most critical challenge in deeply divided places if social order, peace, and stability were to be preserved. Once the infrastructural power of the State is established, concerted attempts must be made to demobilise and disarm armed groups across the divide. Accountability must be fixed expeditiously for the atrocious crimes committed during this violence to deliver justice. Establishing normalcy and durable peace in Manipur, which has witnessed protracted armed insurgency, requires a negotiated political solution and not merely a law-and-order approach. Declaring Manipur as a 'hill State' is one such solution offered by certain quarters to neutralise a separate administration demand by the Kuki-Zomi-Hmar groups. Although a plausible proposition, its implications on extant sub-State constitutional asymmetry under Article 371 C must be carefully assessed. Behind this prescription lies a political project to arraign the hills-valley institutional binary, and a refusal to acknowledge the systemic manipulation and persistent refusal to devolve meaningful autonomy to the tribal people, as a source of structural violence. Flattening and homogenising institutional arrangements in ways that dissolve the extant sub-State constitutional asymmetry and the protective discrimination enjoyed by the tribal groups on matters pertaining to representation, jobs, and land rights is the surest means to perpetuate an oppressive and assimilationist structure. Couched in the language of civilisational unity, this may cohere with and be particularly appealing to the BJP's nationalist agenda. However, it is grossly insensitive to the distinct and autonomous societal cultures of the valley and hill tribal communities. Any attempt to use President's Rule as a ruse to centralise powers and dissolve extant sub-State constitutional asymmetry as a facade to perpetuate the oppressive rule of the dominant community is unlikely to secure Manipur's 'territorial integrity'. On the contrary, it may further bolster and legitimise the Kuki-Zomi-Hmar groups' demand for a separate administration.

Given the longstanding historical foundations of distinctive sub-State constitutional asymmetry and protective discrimination, securing durable peace in Manipur impels an affirmation, not dissolution, of the existing institutional regime. Disrupting the already lopsided power balance between the hill tribal and valley communities in favour of the latter is only a recipe for disaster, as it will normalise structural oppression and injustice against the former. The current spell of President's Rule must leverage a sincere and objective audit of institutions in the State to decentralise, rather than centralise power. Rectifying the existing gaps in representation, and effective redistribution of goods and services to all communities must be the corollary. The opacity and inadequacy in how institutions represent, redistribute, and give voice to diverse communities have spawned a vicious cycle of mistrust, democracy deficits, and violence in Manipur. The challenge is to recalibrate existing institutions in ways that strengthen sub-State constitutional asymmetry to effectively cater to the legitimate needs and demands for distinctive recognition, representation, and redistribution within and between groups. Any misguided attempt to pander to the majoritarian whims and fancies which perpetuate oppressive rule and threaten to disrupt and endanger our constitutional foundations and values must be avoided, and resisted, at all costs. Kham Khan Suan Hausing is Professor and former Head, Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad. He is also a Senior Fellow, Centre for Multilevel Federalism, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi. Views expressed are personal.

PM Modi's tariff 'gift' to Trump: Trade talks, China strategy & defence deals

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will come bearing gifts when he meets U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday (February 13, 2025), hoping concessions on tariffs, fresh business deals and the prospect of cooperation on China will win Mr. Trump's favor. Mr. Trump, not yet one month into his presidency, has wielded the threat of tariffs against friend and foe alike to try to extract new trade deals, investment or law enforcement help. India may not be an exception: Although Mr. Trump had a warm relationship with PM Modi in his first term, he has called India a "very big abuser" on trade and his levies on steel and aluminum hit India particularly hard. Ahead of his White House meeting on Thursday (February 13, 2025), PM Modi has readied promises including increased liquefied natural gas, combat vehicle and jet engine purchases, according to Indian government officials who declined to be named.

Indian officials are also looking at trade negotiations, possible deals on U.S. agriculture exports to India and investment in nuclear energy, along with tariff cuts in at least a dozen sectors, including electronics, medical and surgical equipment, and chemicals. Those are areas Mr. Trump's team believes India needs to make improvements, according to another person familiar with their thinking. It's a "gift" for Mr. Trump, said one of the sources, who declined to be named as they previewed a private meeting. For his part, PM Modi wants help with the case of billionaire Gautam Adani, an ally of his who was indicted by the Justice Department in November over an alleged bribery scheme. Mr. Adani denies wrongdoing. Another thorny issue will be in the background: the alleged intelligence plot to assassinate a Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in the United States during the administration of Mr. Trump's predecessor, Joe Biden. This time, the tariff issue will be front and center, said Richard Rossow, head of the India program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. "It's going to be a boxing match," he said. "I think India is willing to take a few hits, but there's a limit." The U.S. has a \$45.6 billion trade deficit with India. Overall, the U.S. trade-weighted average tariff rate has been about 2.2%, according to World Trade Organization data, compared with India's 12%. Mr. Trump's administration has vowed reciprocal tariffs on every country that charges duties on U.S. imports, a move that will ratchet up fears of a widening global trade war.

What Trump wants?

Mr. Trump wants more assistance from India on un-



authorized immigration. The country is a major source of immigrants to the United States, including a large number in the tech industry on work visas and others in the U.S. illegally. PM Modi is expected to meet one-on-one with Elon Musk during his trip to Washington, two people familiar with the plans told Reuters. The billionaire is a key Mr. Trump ally and his Starlink company's bid to enter the South Asian market could come up for discussion. India may prove critical to Mr. Trump's strategy to thwart China, which many in his administration see as the top U.S. rival. India is wary of neighboring China's military buildup and competes for many of the same markets. PM Modi also worries that Mr. Trump could cut a deal with China that excludes India, according to Mukesh Agha, president of the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum lobbying group. "Even though much of the talk will be on the bilateral relationship, on trade, on immigration, defense purchases, the China thread will weave through the meeting," said Lisa Curtis, an India-focused former White House official during the first Mr. Trump administration now with the Center for a New American Security think tank. Still, India tries to avoid direct confrontation with Beijing and maintains a foreign policy of "strategic ambiguity" to avoid picking sides in major international conflicts. That approach has also meant that India has continued its ties with Moscow as it carries out its war with Ukraine. India has remained a major consumer of Russian energy, for instance, while the West has worked to cut its own consumption since the war started. Mr. Trump spoke on Wednesday (February 12, 2025) with both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy about starting negotiations to end the war in Ukraine. The U.S.-India meeting will offer clues as to what, if any, pressure Mr. Trump wants major outside powers to apply to advance those talks.

AI-fit cameras in Similipal Tiger Reserve send poaching plummeting

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

"Last year, we lost two of our men to poachers," Samrat Gowda, deputy director of the Similipal Tiger Reserve in Odisha, said. "Every time we come across them, the poachers are armed with a loaded gun." But such encounters have become much less common of late. As part of an early alert system called TrailGuard AI, the Similipal Tiger Reserve was fitted with 100-150 cameras loaded with an artificial intelligence (AI) model. The cameras relay images of people and wildlife entering the forest to the model, which looks for the presence of poachers among them. Earlier, we didn't know when poachers entered. Now we have clear information about the area the poachers are in, so our people are prepared," Gowda said. In the last 10 months, TrailGuard AI has helped wildlife officials at Similipal arrest 96 poachers and seize more than 86 country-made guns. In December alone, the team arrested over 40 poachers.

"House raids based on photo identification have given very good results," according to Gowda. "If this trend continues, I'm hopeful poaching can be reduced by at least 80%. Once that happens, naturally, our people will be safer, along with the forest and wildlife." Proactive enforcement The AI-enabled cameras are tucked away in the reserve's thick vegetation. They operate on a low-power mode by default but switch to a high-power mode when they sense movement, and capture an image. The camera then performs AI inference on the edge, meaning it uses the chip inside to sort between various object classes such as 'animals', 'humans', and 'vehicles' in the image. If the AI deems it necessary, it autonomously transmits an image using the cellular system attached to the camera to an end-user in 30-40 seconds. "We have set up a control room in our headquarters, with a big screen, where we are alerted whenever there is a photo update," Gowda said. "We then immediately transmit the information on our WhatsApp groups and VHF radio." Catching poachers in the forest still isn't straightforward. Wildlife officials use intelligence sources to identify the poachers caught on camera. These sources include their regular staff, who go undercover with poachers to collect information about who they are, the villages they hail from, and other details.

"Once we get 100% confirmation that these are the people that entered the forest, we will raid their house or village and arrest the person and forward them to the court with proper documentation," according to Gowda. He also stressed the importance of proactive enforcement mechanisms backing up the inputs provided by TrailGuard. "Getting photos is the easy part, but after that what you do is most important. We are actively going and raiding [houses] and bringing people in. So both the technology and our on-

ground efforts complement each other to give us good results," he added. According to the latest department report, the arrests in 2024 led to one conviction, which was obtained within six months — fast, according to Gowda. His colleagues are hoping for two or three more convictions soon. TrailGuard AI was conceived and made by Nightjar Technologies, a social impact enterprise in Gurgaon that develops remote surveillance devices for conservation settings. Its founder Piyush Yadav identified the design of TrailGuard camera systems to be what makes it unique. "There are two units," he explained. "One is the camera unit, the size of a pen, and the other is the battery/communication unit, the size of a notepad. They are attached using a two-meter-long cable. So it's not bulky but is rather a spread out design." Gowda said the smaller footprint of the device reduces the chances of poachers stealing them. But according to him, TrailGuard's best feature is its battery life. "There are so many other technologies available for live transmission, but the [TrailGuard] battery lasts for six months to one year based on the number of photos it sends," he said. "We don't have to go in and change the battery again and again." They are not very costly compared to other technologies," he added. According to Yadav, TrailGuard AI cameras cost roughly Rs 50,000-53,000 per unit. The villages in and around Similipal are occupied by tribal communities. Hunting is part of their culture, even if many of them have moved away to other forms of sustenance. They need to be able to access the forest, too. "The tiger reserve has traditionally had a lot of incursions from neighbouring communities around Similipal," said Aditya Panda, a naturalist, wildlife conservationist, and the honorary wildlife warden of Satkosia Tiger Reserve in the same State. "People come in large numbers to engage in bushmeat poaching." Apart from TrailGuard cameras, the forest department uses regular camera traps in areas with no network, rendering it almost impossible for anyone to go into the forest without being caught on camera. (A camera trap is a camera rigged to capture an image every time it senses motion nearby. They are often used to photograph animals in the wild.) But one result of this surveillance is that many villagers have simply stopped going into the forest: they don't want their faces to be seen on camera, be mistaken for poachers, and arrested. Their ability to collect firewood and other non-timber forest products has concomitantly declined. "We are discussing with the [local] people and are facilitating safer ways to access the forest, because it shouldn't be that because of one poacher everyone is restricted," Gowda said. The department is also conducting regular awareness meetings about measures to prevent poaching with the tribal communities in the local language.

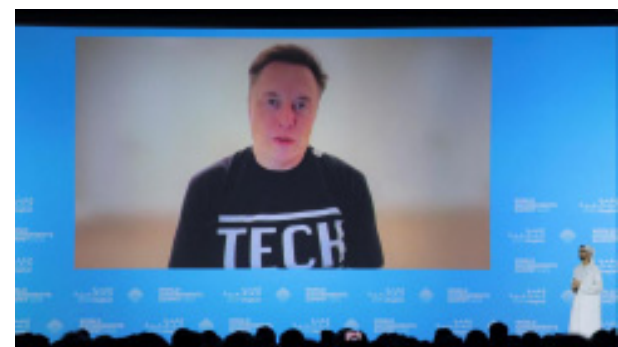
Elon Musk calls for U.S. government to 'delete entire agencies'

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Elon Musk called Thursday (February 13, 2025) to "delete entire agencies" from the United States' federal government as part of his push under President Donald Trump to radically cut spending and restructure its priorities. Mr. Musk offered a wide-ranging survey via a videocall to the World Governments Summit in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, of what he described as the priorities of the Trump administration interspersed with multiple references to "thermonuclear warfare" and the possible dangers of artificial intelligence. "We really have here rule of the bureaucracy as opposed to rule of the people — democracy," Mr. Musk said, wearing a black T-shirt that read: "Tech Support." He also joked that he was the "White House's tech support," borrowing from his profile on the social platform X, which he owns. AI is re-shaping our quality, economy and society: PM Modi

Artificial intelligence is developing at an unprecedented speed and scale, being deployed at even faster pace: PM Modi at global AI summit in Paris "I think we do need to delete entire agencies as opposed to leave a lot of them behind," Mr. Musk said. "If we don't remove the roots of the weed, then it's easy for the weed to grow back." While Mr. Musk has spoken to the summit in the past, his appearance Thursday (February 13, 2025) comes as he has consolidated control over large swaths of the government with Mr. Trump's blessing since assuming leadership of the Department of Government Efficiency. That's included sidelining career officials, gaining access to sensitive databases and inviting a constitutional clash over the limits of presidential authority. Mr. Musk's new role imbued his comments with more weight beyond being the world's wealthiest person through his investments in SpaceX and electric carmaker Tesla.

His remarks also offered a more-isolationist view of American power in the Middle East, where the U.S. has fought wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq since the Sept 11, 2001, terror attacks. "A lot of attention has been on USAID for example," Mr. Musk said, referring to Mr. Trump's dismantling of the US Agency for International Development. "There's like the National Endowment for Democracy. But I'm like, Okay, well, how much democracy have they achieved lately?" He added that the U.S. under Mr. Trump



Elon Musk offered a wide-ranging survey via a videocall to the World Governments Summit in Dubai, of what he described as the priorities of the Trump administration interspersed with multiple references to "thermonuclear warfare".

is "less interested in interfering with the affairs of other countries." There are "times the United States has been kind of pushy in international affairs, which may resonate with some members of the audience," Mr. Musk said, speaking to the crowd in the UAE, an autocratically ruled nation of seven sheikhdoms. He also noted the Trump administration's focus on eliminating diversity, equity and inclusion work, at one point linking it to AI. "If hypothetically, AI is designed for DEI, you know, diversity at all costs, it could decide that there's too many men in power and execute them," Mr. Musk said. On AI, Mr. Musk said he believed X's newly updated AI chatbot, Grok 3, would be ready in about two weeks, calling it at one point "kind of scary." He criticized Sam Altman's management of OpenAI, which Mr. Musk just led a \$97.4 billion takeover bid for, describing it as akin to a nonprofit aimed at saving the Amazon rainforest becoming a "lumber company that chops down the trees." Mr. Musk also announced plans for a "Dubai Loop" project in line with his work in the Boring Company — which is digging tunnels in Las Vegas to speed transit. However, he and the Emirati government official speaking with him offered no immediate details of the plan. "It's going to be like a wormhole," Mr. Musk promised. "You just wormhole from one part of the city — boom — and you're out in another part of the city."

Maruti Suzuki aims to reclaim 50% market share in India, eyes top spot in EVs



targets ahead of schedule by improving sales mix and quality, its sales volume target could not be met. "...the business environment has changed due to declining market share in India and intensified competition in electric vehicles. Need to rethink strategy," the company said in a presentation. Identifying India as its "most important market," Maruti Suzuki is aiming to create a manufacturing capacity of producing 4 million cars annually to meet demand in India and use the country as a global export hub.

The company noted that the "competitive environment is becoming increasingly severe, and the quality of product functions, equipment and services required by customers is increasing". It plans to expand its EV lineup starting with the e Vitara, and is aiming to launch four new EV models by FY30. Some of its rivals, especially Tata Motors, already have a varied EV portfolio in India, and Maruti Suzuki would be a late entrant. However, India's EV market is still nascent compared to some other countries, and Suzuki is hoping it can leverage its already large customer base and touch points. The company will also strengthen its product capabilities and lineup in the SUV and MPV segments, and look to "rapidly develop" and introduce entry segment products. Maruti Suzuki will partner with FinDreams, a subsidiary of China's BYD, to source batteries for EV cars. "In India, we will promote further localisation in line with the growth of the electric vehicle market," it said.

India's biggest carmaker Maruti Suzuki wants every other car sold in the country to be from its stables, as the company eyes reclaiming a 50% market share as part of a new mid-term management plan for FY25-FY30. The company is also aiming to be the biggest producer, exporter and seller of electric vehicles (EVs) in the country, despite a delayed pivot to the EV segment where it is yet to commence any sales. The company last commanded that level of market penetration in FY19, but has since ceded some ground to rivals like Tata, Hyundai and Kia. As of FY23, the company's market share in India stood at 41.6%.

While the company noted it achieved revenue and profit

Ranveer Allahbadia row: IT Ministry to brief House panel on legal changes to bring social media under legal scrutiny

Ranveer Allahbadia, Samay Raina, India's Got Latent, Maharashtra cyber police, Ranveer Allahbadia FIR, Ashish Chanchalani, indian express The internal communication prepared by the ministry noted the remarks made by the Supreme Court against Allahbadia, and 'drew attention' to Section 66A of the IT Act. Following the Ranveer Allahbadia 'obscene' speech row, the IT Ministry could respond to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology by next week on the current legal framework to regulate online speech on social media platforms and the need to make further changes to them to "bring such platforms under legal scrutiny so as to safeguard the societal values and protect the dignity of women and children," The Indian Express has learnt.

In an internal communication prepared by the ministry to formulate a response for the Committee, it has referenced the now revoked Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, which was deemed "unconstitutional" by the Supreme Court in 2015, this paper has learnt. This comes in reference to the row that erupted over allegedly 'obscene' remarks made by online influencer Ranveer Allahbadia in the popular comedy show 'India's Got Latent' hosted by Samay Raina. Multiple FIRs were filed against Allahbadia and others across states over a remark that he made on parents getting intimate. He then filed a case in the Supreme Court, requesting for clubbing all the FIRs against him. While the top court has granted him interim relief from arrest, it also came down heavily on him over his speech, noting that "no one has the license to speak whatever they want against the norms of society in the name of freedom of speech". Last week, the Standing Committee on IT also held a meeting on the issue, where they called for stringent measures to curb such speech on social media platforms. The IT Ministry is preparing a brief note to send to the Committee by February 25. The internal communication prepared by the ministry noted the remarks made by the Supreme Court against Allahbadia, and 'drew attention' to Section 66A



of the IT Act. "...attention of the Ministry is drawn to the Section 66A of IT (Amendment) Act, 2008 which was intended to provide protection against offensive or insulting message, speech or information made online by granting powers to the Government to make arrests in such cases of misuse of freedom of speech. The Section was however declared 'Unconstitutional' by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of Shreya Singhal Vs Union of India in 2015 citing the reasons that the said Section did not fall within the reasonable exceptions of freedom of speech and expression," the note is learnt to have said.

The ministry will inform the Committee of the efficacy of existing laws to deal with such cases and need to amend the existing laws/IT Act, 2000 "in order to bring such platforms under legal scrutiny so as to safeguard the societal values and protect the dignity of women and children," while adhering to the creative expression and freedom of speech guaranteed under Article 19 (1)(a) of the Constitution. Following the backlash against speech made by Allahbadia, which has also drawn sharp criticism from the Supreme Court, many digital rights activists remain concerned over the potential of a heavy handed regulatory response from the government, which could further curtail the freedom of expression.

Irdai forms 7-member committee to review insurance sector reforms



Former SBI chairman Dinesh Khara will lead the high-powered panel tasked with scrutinising various aspects of the Insurance Act, 1938, and suggest amendments. (Express Archive Photo by Sankhadeep Banerjee) Former SBI chairman Dinesh Khara will lead the high-powered panel tasked with scrutinising various aspects of the Insurance Act, 1938, and suggesting amendments. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) has formed a high-powered committee, led by Dinesh Khara, former chairman of State Bank of India, to scrutinise various aspects of the Insurance Act 1938 and suggest amendments. The Irdai move has come at a time when the Indian government is gearing up to introduce the Insurance Amendment Bill in Parliament, which proposes allowing 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector.

The committee has already held its first meeting, indicating a swift move towards implementing the proposed changes. The government's proposal to increase FDI limits in the insurance sector is expected to attract foreign investment, improve insurance penetration, and increase competition in the market. The seven-member panel includes NS Kannan, former MD and CEO of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance; Girish Radhakrishnan, former CMD of United India Insurance; Rakesh Joshi, former member of Irdai; Saurabh Sinha, former executive director of RBI; Alok Misra, MD and CEO of MFII and legal expert L Vishwanathan.

It may be recalled that the Insurance Act, 1938, was originally passed in British India to regulate the insurance sector. It provides the broad legal framework within which the industry operates. It also led to establishment of the regulatory authority, Irdai, which oversees the implementation of the act. The Insurance Act, 1938, outlines the various types of insurance policies that can be offered in India, such as life insurance, general insurance and health insurance and allows insurers to appoint insurance agents for soliciting and procuring insurance business. Earlier, while presenting the Budget for FY26 in the Lok Sabha, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced the proposal to raise the FDI limit in the Indian insurance sector from 74

per cent to 100 per cent.

Sitharaman further stated that the Centre is working on more reforms in the insurance sector. Guardrails are being put so that citizens' money towards premium payment for insurance is kept within the country, she said. M Nagaraju, secretary, financial services, Ministry of Finance, had said internal consultations have been completed for the same, and it includes allowing composite licences, details regarding investments and the repatriation of profits in case of foreign direct investment (FDI). "We have almost completed the internal governmental consultations. Then, we will take the next course of action by bringing the proposed amendment bill to Parliament. Once it is approved, those rules will also be notified so that all the reforms we intend to do in the insurance sector to improve penetration will be done through these measures," Nagaraju said on the proposed reforms.

The government's major reforms proposals include composite licence, differential capital, reduction in solvency norms, issuing captive licence, change in investment regulations, one-time registration for intermediaries and allowing insurers to distribute other financial products. The government had earlier planned to repeal the Insurance Act, 1938, as it has undergone many changes since its inception and has become cumbersome to understand for common people. The legislative move to amend the Act with new amendments is in line with the government's ongoing exercises involving review of all pre-Independence Acts from the point of view of their utility and relevance, said sources. The government now wants that the entire legal code of the country should remain purely Indian and existing laws made by a legislature of the Pre-Constitution era should be replaced with laws made by the legislature that is in place post-independence.

Trump plans to buy used planes to serve as Air Force One

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said Wednesday he is considering buying used Boeing aircraft — perhaps from an overseas seller — to use as Air Force One when he's aboard, as he fumes over the US plane-maker's delays in producing two specially modified ones for Presidential use.

Speaking to reporters aboard one of the two nearly 35-year-old Boeing 747-200 aircraft in current use, Trump said, "We're looking at alternatives, because it's taking Boeing too long. "We may go and buy a plane," Trump said, adding that he could then "convert it."

Pratik Gandhi says physique for shirtless scene in Dhoom Dhaam was 'achieved in very unhealthy ways': 'You get really bad cramps'

Pratik Gandhi had to challenge himself for his latest film, Dhoom Dhaam, which also stars Yami Gautam. The actor, who had to go shirtless for a scene in the movie, revealed that he had to restrict his water and salt intake to achieve a shredded physique. "This is the first time that I removed my shirt on screen. I had to eat a lot of carbs actually to gain more muscle. Then the shedding began," Gandhi told Netflix. The actor described how what is seen on screen is "achieved in very unhealthy ways. "You have to drink less water and have any salt. The last three days were such that I could gobble up a person whole. On the less water diet, you get really bad cramps as you are water-deprived. You are not drinking water or salt, so there is no water retention in the body. So, the muscles start to cramp instantly," said Gandhi. Yami hailed his efforts and said, "He looked very good, and obviously, the hard work is evident." Taking a cue, let's understand more about this diet and how it affects the body.

From a clinical perspective, such rapid dehydration tactics can indeed reduce subcutaneous water, temporarily enhancing muscle definition, said Kanikka Malhotra, consultant dietician and certified diabetes educator. However, this approach carries "significant risks." "Severely restricting water can lead to a drop in extracellular fluid, causing the skin to appear tighter, but prolonged dehydration can

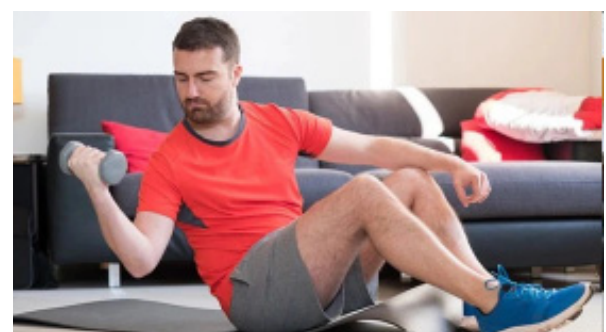


impair metabolic function and muscle performance. "In simple words, cellular dehydration affects metabolic processes and can disrupt electrolyte balance, leading to muscle cramps, weakness, dizziness, and potentially serious cardiac complications. "Reducing water intake might lead to temporary weight loss due to decreased water retention, but it does not promote fat loss. Dehydration can slow metabolism and impair fat oxidation, hindering long-term weight management," said Malhotra. A more sustainable and healthy approach involves maintaining proper hydration, a balanced diet, and consistent exercise.

Men, here's how often you must wash boxer shorts

GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Men, how often do you wear those boxer shorts without washing them? Days and weeks, is it? Well, if experts are to go by, it's not a hygienic practice. One should wash their boxers every other day. Gynaecologist Dr Shobha Gupta, medical director, Mother's Lap IVF Centre New Delhi and Vrindavan, agreed that wearing boxers for more than a day without washing is generally not recommended for hygiene and health reasons. "Our bodies produce sweat and oils and shed dead skin cells throughout the day, which can accumulate in our clothing. This creates a breeding ground for bacteria and fungi in unwashed boxers, potentially leading to unpleasant odours, rashes, and even infections," said Dr Gupta. Changing boxers daily helps maintain cleanliness, reduces irritation, and lowers the risk of conditions like jock itch or bacterial infections, Dr Gupta stressed. Additionally, Dr Gupta noted that a fresh pair of boxers contributes to a feeling of cleanliness and confidence, important for comfort, especially in warm or active environments where perspiration increases. "Regularly washing and changing boxers also extends their lifespan, as sweat and bacteria can break down fabric over time," said Dr



Gupta. Therefore, changing boxers daily is a simple but effective way to prioritise personal hygiene and well-being. Dr Gupta emphasised that habits like regularly changing clothes, washing them in good-quality detergents, and using soap and disinfectants while taking baths are essential practices that must be followed every day. "There is no reason as to why one must forgo personal hygiene. It is extremely important for their health as well as for the people around them, too," shared Dr Gupta.

Many gluten-free foods are high in calories and sugar, low on fiber and protein, and they cost more



US consumers often pay more for gluten-free products, yet these items typically provide less protein and more sugar and calories compared with gluten-containing alternatives. That is the key finding of my new study, published in the journal Plant Foods for Human Nutrition. This study compared gluten-free products with their gluten-containing counterparts, and the findings suggested that many perceived benefits of gluten-free products — such as weight control and diabetes management — are exaggerated.

Currently, many gluten-free products lack dietary fiber, protein and essential nutrients. Manufacturers often add supplements to compensate, but the incorporation of dietary fibres during processing can hinder protein digestion. In addition, gluten-free products generally contain higher sugar levels compared with other products containing gluten. Long-term adherence to a gluten-free diet has been associated with increased body mass index, or BMI, and nutritional deficiencies. Gluten-free products — defined in the US as those that contain less than or equal to 20 parts per million of gluten — largely lack wheat, rye, barley and sometimes oats, all rich sources of arabinoxylan, a crucial nonstarch polysaccharide. Arabinoxylan provides several health benefits, including promoting beneficial gut bacteria, enhancing digestion, regulating blood sugar levels and supporting a balanced gut microbiota. Our study also pointed out that it is difficult to find a gluten-free product that excels in all nutritional areas, such as high protein and fibre content with low carbohydrates and sugar. On the other hand, gluten-free seeded bread contains significantly more fibre — 38.24 grams per 100 grams — than its gluten-containing counterparts. This is likely due to efforts by manufacturers to address fiber deficiencies by using ingredients such as pseudo-cereals, such as amaranth and quinoa hydrocolloids — meaning water-soluble macromolecules used in gluten-free baked goods made with quinoa flour. These improvements, however, vary by manufacturer and region. For example, gluten-free products in Spain tend to have lower fibre content than their gluten-containing counterparts.

The term "gluten-free diet" has become a buzzword, much like "organic," and is now a part of everyday life for many people, often without a full understanding of its actual benefits. While a gluten-free diet is a medical necessity for people who are sensitive to gluten, a condition called celiac disease, or for those with wheat allergies, others adopt a gluten-free diet due to perceived health benefits or because it's a trend. In 2024, the global gluten-free product market

was valued at USD 7.28 billion and projected to reach USD 13.81 billion by 2032. The US market share is estimated to be USD 5.9 billion — a little less than half of the global figure. Approximately 25 per cent of the US population consumes gluten-free products. This figure is far higher than the roughly 6 per cent of people with non-celiac wheat sensitivity, 1 per cent of people with celiac disease and even lower percentages of people with wheat allergies. This suggests that many people adopt gluten-free diets for reasons other than medical necessity, which may not offer health or financial benefits.

Investment in research and development is essential to create more nutritionally balanced gluten-free products using locally available ingredients. This will require human feeding trials with different formulations of gluten-free products to ensure that these products meet nutritional needs without adverse effects. Collaborations between governments could help secure subsidies, which would reduce production costs and make these products more affordable. Although the initial costs of research and maintaining a gluten-free production line are high, using local ingredients and financial incentives can make these products more cost-competitive compared with their gluten-containing counterparts. Public education is also important to keep people informed about the pros and cons associated with a gluten-free diet.

'Bomb' remark lands passenger in trouble at Kochi Airport

Kochi: A passenger who jokingly responded that his luggage contained a 'bomb' when an airport security official questioned about its weight, has been booked, police said on Thursday. Kochi International Airport security officials handed over Rasheed, a native of Kozhikode, to Nedumbassery police following the incident that occurred around 11.30 pm on Wednesday. The security officer inquired about the weight of Rasheed's luggage after he completed boarding procedures for a flight from Kochi to Kuala Lumpur.

Unni Mukundan's reprehensible film ruins Malayalam cinema's reputation singlehandedly; Bollywood isn't the only industry learning all the wrong lessons



to insist that they are. This tactic is straight out of the Prashanth Neel playbook — a filmmaker who is simply incapable of letting his protagonists prove their worth through their actions; it's easier for him to deploy a supporting character to sing their praises instead.

But it takes Marco over an hour to get on the same page as the audience. And you can imagine how uninteresting that hour must be. It is only in the 'interval block' that he recognises that he was being played by the villains all along. Even Sandeep Reddy Vanga avoided this mistake in Animal — a rubbish movie that comes across as a masterpiece by comparison. Not only does Marco fail to realise — for an hour! — that the man literally sitting next to him was responsible for throwing his brother into a vat of acid, he pursues the wrong leads, allows the villains to gain further advantage, and most stunningly, gets his entire family, including the chorus of kids, killed in gruesome ways. The point, it seems, is purely to provoke. Which is fine; not every movie needs to examine the consequences of violence and the emptiness of revenge. Some films exist only to show off. But the trouble is that Marco fails by even these standards. It finds ways to disappoint even a non-discerning viewer, weaving around all the goodwill that the Malayalam industry has earned for itself. It is simply impossible to care for a character like Marco; a man who wastes time dressing up in a snazzy suit and spraying himself with cologne mere moments after his baby nephew has had his head bashed in. Like Ramu said, these filmmakers care only about scenes and moments, not narrative arcs and drama. The experience, fittingly, is best summed up by the villain. After successfully duping Marco, he gloats, "Good job! I appreciate your valour. But I am sorry about your brain. It doesn't function properly." Post Credits Scene is a column in which we dissect new releases every week, with particular focus on context, craft, and characters. Because there's always something to fixate about once the dust has settled.

Regardless of his recent missteps, filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma has earned himself a free pass for life with his early work. Audiences will instantly forgive the sleazy, sloppy, and nonsensical stuff that he's been churning out the second he delivers something that captures even half the verve of Satya. But in addition to being an eccentric who operates on his own terms, Ramu is also a keen cultural commentator. And something that he said recently hits home when you watch Marco, the most successful Malayalam-language film of the last couple of months. In an interview with Pinkvilla, Ramu said that directors in the South aren't concerned about intellectualising their films. "South directors only look at scenes, they don't care about story. A big actor once told me, 'I never listen to the story, my only question is, 'Mera entry kya hai?'" he said. You'd imagine that Ramu was talking about the unbearable string of copycats inspired by SS Rajamouli's films — films like Salaar: Part 1 – Ceasefire, Kalki 2898 AD, and even Kantara. Who knew that his derision was also directed at the otherwise acclaimed Malayalam industry? But Marco fits the bill; instead of following in the footsteps of Malayalam mavericks, it appears to have learnt all the wrong lessons from the more popular sort of South Indian filmmaking.

What's striking about Marco isn't its provocative violence — ideas are always more potent than empty visuals — but how dramatically inert it is. The most deplorable scene in the highly controversial A Serbian Film worked only because of its underlying political commentary. In Marco, the murder of a pregnant woman and the violence inflicted upon her baby is reprehensible, but that's about it. The movie has nothing to say, either about violence or our response to it. It's cruelty for cruelty's sake — blind carnage of the most careless kind. It would, however, be unfair to complain about this. Marco doesn't aim for depth, nor does it claim to be high art. But pointing out the glaring flaws in its storytelling is fair game. Perhaps the most ludicrous creative decision that writer-director Haneef Adeni makes in Marco is to keep the protagonist not one, but three steps behind the audience. It robs the film of all stakes. For instance, when an innocent blind man named Victor — he's Marco's brother — is killed for having 'witnessed' a murder, we are told immediately who the culprits are. And as if this weren't enough, we are also given explanations for why they killed Victor. So, when Marco vows to avenge his brother's death, he runs around in circles trying to identify individuals that we, the audience, are already familiar with. Things get even more harebrained when the villainous ringleader embeds one of his sons in Marco's team, seemingly to derail his investigation. And it works. Marco isn't very intelligent, no matter how sycophantically a chorus of random kids hype him up. "I'm a wrong, wrong man," he says repeatedly. And we all know that someone who is actually menacing doesn't have

American Murder – Gabby Petito review: A 22-year-old vlogger is murdered after posting her first video in new Netflix true crime doc



American Murder - Gabby Petito review: In 2021, a 22-year-old woman went missing while road-tripping across the country with her boyfriend. He returned, but she didn't.

Brian was a shady guy, and Gabby had often hinted at how controlling he was. A day before she went missing, she contacted an ex and told him that she was contemplating leaving Brian. CCTV footage of them entering and exiting a Whole Foods — Brian could be seen banging the door of their van — was the last time that she'd be captured on camera.

It's a tragic story, told in three fast-paced episodes. But despite the involvement of Gabby's family and friends, and the several law enforcement officers who participated in the investigation, something feels incomplete. It could be because the show jumps to conclusions about what happened without really trying to fill in the blanks. We are told that Brian confessed to killing Gabby, but we never understand why. We also don't understand why his parents began behaving so strangely after Gabby's disappearance, and most frustratingly, what his mother meant by writing him an incriminating letter and instructing him to 'burn (it) after reading'. Towards the end, the series tries to strike a hopeful chord, as it follows Gabby's family to the spot in the wilderness where her body was found. They smile and make merry, shielding their grief behind put-on optimism. They're giving a performance, for themselves; it's the only way they can cope with their loss, perhaps. But there is no excuse for why American Murder: Gabby Petito insists on giving a performance for us. Rohan Naahar is an assistant editor at Indian Express online. He covers pop-culture across formats and mediums. He is a 'Rotten Tomatoes-approved' critic and a member of the Film Critics Guild of India. He previously worked with the Hindustan Times, where he wrote hundreds of film and television reviews, produced videos, and interviewed the biggest names in Indian and international cinema. At the Express, he writes a column titled Post Credits Scene, and has hosted a podcast called Movie Police. You can find him on X at @RohanNaahar, and write to him at rohan.naahar@indianexpress.com. He is also on LinkedIn and Instagram.

Sanam Teri Kasam is a hit at the box office and it feels like the worst era of Hindi movies, the 1980s, are back

Indian cinema is over 100 years old and there has been a general consensus that over the many decades, the 1980s were categorically the worst time for Hindi movies. This was the decade when films like Tohfa, Nagina, Insaf Ki Pukar, Mard were actual hits at the box office and the audience was starting to feel like perhaps the best of movie days were behind them. Frustrated with what was being offered, the audience started looking elsewhere for options, and luckily for them, the new technology of VHS was just taking off. There was a lack of good movies in theatres, and the cheap alternative of home videos started a loop where the audience needed an event, something extraordinary to actually go to the cinemas. Moviemakers had to be jolted out of their inertia to start making good cinema once again. In many ways, the 2020s are starting to feel like a repeat of the 1980s and the recent success of Sanam Teri Kasam is a huge indicator that the worst times are upon us.

Two weeks ago, among the many re-releases in cinemas, Harshvardhan Rane and Mawra Hocane-starrer Sanam Teri Kasam re-released in theatres after its original release in 2016. Back in the day, Sanam Teri Kasam received mediocre reviews and was a flop at the box office but now, almost nine years later, people have suddenly woken up to this so-called 'gem'. The film is available on ZEE5 but despite that, there are people paying money, and watching it at a theatre. But why? Sanam Teri Kasam, as a film, feels like it is straight out of the 1980s and reminds you of films like Bewafa Sanam or Souten Ki Beti from those disappointing Zee Cinema afternoons.

Sanam Teri Kasam starts off with an Ugly Betty-like premise where the protagonist's only problems are her glasses and unkempt hair. There's an unforgiving Manish Chaudhary performance here that even he wouldn't revisit, and a terrible storyline which makes you wonder if this is one of those 'so bad it's good' movies. At one point, they recycle Hariharshirai Bachchan's poetry but in their own words, and fully pretend like they came up with it. And as you watch more and more of this, you realise that if this is a hit in 2025, the crisis of cinema is well on its way.

Like the VHS of those days, we now have streaming platforms that give us oodles of options in the comfort of our homes. The pandemic gave a boost to the streaming industry and even if they continue to make the likes of Dhoom Dhaam, or Wild Wild Punjab, it's still better than going out and spending money because here, you at least have the option of getting out whenever you want. And since the audience is already spending a significant amount of money on these streaming platforms, and unlike those VHS tapes, these are fully legal, movie makers need to do something extravagant if they want audience to come to the cinemas.

Many filmmakers have spoken about how the economics of movie-making for theatres actually depends on streaming platforms as no film gets made without an OTT deal. Movie making has always been a mix of art and com-



merce but it is well known that one can't function without the other. In the last few years, it has been advantage commerce as the discussion about quality of films has been drowned by box office numbers. This decade started on a dismal note for Hindi cinema as we were just entering the pandemic. The first two years didn't see many Hindi releases and of course, the industry was badly affected. In 2022, the conversation around Hindi films going through a bad patch gained steam but with films like Pathaan, Jawan, Gadar 2 and Animal in 2023, there was this sense that Bollywood is back because films were now doing Rs 1000 crore at the box office. But is good box office an indicator of good cinema? We all know the answer to that question. Even in 2024, when films like Stree 2 and Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3 were box office hits, there was a conscious sense that unlike hits of the previous years, which actually had some kind of pop culture impact, these films were out of the public memory in a few weeks. No matter how hard the PR machinery tries to turn something into a moment, if it isn't organic, the audience doesn't care.

Sanam Teri Kasam isn't the first 'surprise hit' that we have seen in the last few years but just a few minutes with that film are enough to put you off Hindi movies for a long long time. Sanam Teri Kasam isn't the first 'surprise hit' that we have seen in the last few years but just a few minutes with that film are enough to put you off Hindi movies for a long long time. Even the most mediocre of films are promoted as quality cinema because the PR machinery around them spends a bunch of time and money in making the audience believe that they must go against their own judgement, and give it a shot. And when they do, it is a reminder that Hindi cinema is dying a slow death and is in desperate need of a saviour. Such is the impact of social media that a good film like Jigra can get hate, and an excessively misogynistic film like Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya can be celebrated as a 'hit'. Sanam Teri Kasam isn't the first 'surprise hit' that we have seen in the last few years but just a few minutes with that film are enough to put you off Hindi movies for a long long time. It reminds you that Hindi cinema has lost its way and they need an 'avatar' to pull them out of their misery because if this keeps going on for longer, this decade will end up being more damaging than the 1980s.

Urvashi Rautela's 70 million Instagram following doesn't convert to ticket sales; even Salman Khan can't guarantee blockbuster opening: Jaaved Jaferi

In an era where stardom is often measured by an actor's social media following and the size of their entourage, a crucial question arises—do these outward markers of popularity actually translate into box office success? In a recent interaction, actor Jaaved Jaferi shared his perspective on the evolving definition of stardom, citing actress Urvashi Rautela as an example. Urvashi, who boasts 72 million followers on Instagram, became the focal point of his argument as he questioned whether such a massive online presence equates to a paying audience. He also referenced superstar Rajinikanth, who rarely promotes his films yet continues to dominate the box office.

Speaking to Humans of Bombay, Jaaved said, 'I don't agree that these things make a star. You can have an initial push visibly. But you can have 70-100 million followers but does that translate to ticket sales. It doesn't. Urvashi Rautela has 70 million followers, does her followers translate to ticket buying audience. Let's take 10 million of her followers which is 1 crore people, if those 1 crore people would have bought Rs 250 film ticket, the film would have made Rs 100 crore. It doesn't work like that.' Urvashi recently starred in Balakrishna Nandamuri's Telugu film Daaku Maharaj, which grossed Rs 125.8 crore worldwide. She was actively involved in promoting the film. However, before its OTT release, she was mysteriously removed from the film's posters, raising eyebrows among fans.

Jaaved further emphasized that promotions alone do not drive a film's success—the trailer does. "We also go to colleges and all to promote the film but that doesn't sell the film. The only thing that sells the film is the trailer. If I like the trailer I will watch the film, I don't care if he/she is coming to some TV show or dance show. You have to push your trailer," he said. Highlighting Rajinikanth as an example, he

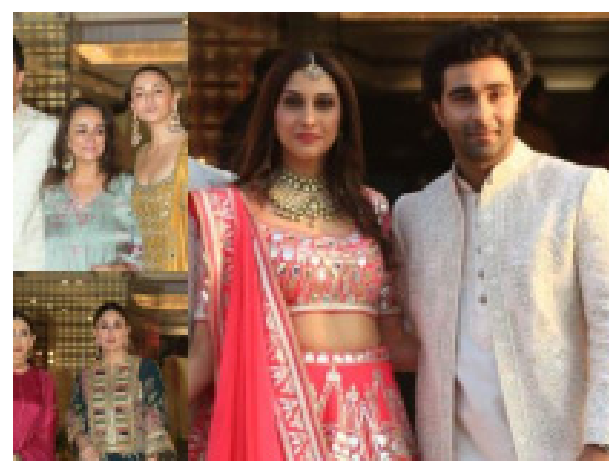


noted how the legendary actor doesn't engage in promotional activities yet remains one of the biggest superstars. "Rajinikanth sahab. He is the biggest star. Where does he promote his film? If it's a good film it will run. At the end of the day they might come for a star but sometimes some stars don't even get that kind of opening," he said. He also pointed out that even Salman Khan, one of Bollywood's biggest names, doesn't always guarantee a blockbuster opening. "A Salman Khan film can get a Rs 10-5 crore opening and can also get Rs 50 crore opening. It's what the people sense with the trailer. All Salman Khan films aren't getting Rs 50 crore opening. It's all about the trailer," he said.

Aadar Jain says he did 'time-pass for 20 years' but always loved Alekha Advani; Alia Bhatt, Kareena Kapoor, Neetu Singh bring Punjabi flavour to mehendi

Ranbir Kapoor and Kareena Kapoor's cousin, Aadar Jain, is getting married to his girlfriend Alekha Advani. Aadar Jain and Alekha Advani's wedding celebrations began with a Mehendi ceremony held on Wednesday in Mumbai, and members of the Kapoor clan were spotted at the celebrations. Jaya Bachchan and Tina Ambani also attended the function. While the festivities were star-studded, Aadar's speech for Alekha seems to have garnered the most attention. In his speech, Aadar appeared to disregard the last two decades of his love life. He began dating Alekha in 2023.

During the ceremony, Aadar said in his speech, "I have always loved her, and I have always wanted to be with her, but never got a chance to be with her. So, she sent me on this long journey of 20 years to do time-pass. But at the end of the day, it was worth the wait because I get to marry this beautiful, beautiful woman, who looks like a dream." He later turned towards Alekha and said, "I love you, and it was worth the wait. It's a secret, I have always loved her. I have done time-pass for 20 years of my life. But now I'm with you, baby." A few inside pictures from the Mehendi ceremony also are making rounds on social media. They show Kareena Kapoor Khan, Tina Ambani, Neetu Kapoor, and



others enjoying the celebrations. Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor were also seen at the function with Soni Razdan. Videos showed the family dancing to Punjabi numbers. In 2024, Aadar proposed to Alekha. The two have been close friends for many years.

Pakistan's bewildering naivety leads to morale-crushing defeat against New Zealand



GNS News Agency, Feb 22

Pakistan lose to New Zealand Champions Trophy New Zealand's Michael Bracewell, left, celebrates with teammate after taking the wicket of Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman during the ICC Champions Trophy cricket match between Pakistan and New Zealand, in Karachi, Pakistan. The thousands that thronged Karachi's National Stadium returned home heartbroken as New Zealand inflicted a crushing blow on the hosts in the Champions Trophy opener. It was not so about the margin of defeat (60 runs when hunting 320) as it was about the manner of the surrender. The lingering feeling would be that they lost not because they were the inferior side, but because New Zealand exuded a streak of clarity and purpose, as they always do, that the hosts couldn't fathom.

There was a bewildering naivety about the defeat, in their inability to seize the moments and deliver the knockout blows, in their shuddering strategies, in their lack of exigency plans, or in their sheer stage fright. The enormity of the occasion, big-ticket cricket returning to the country after nearly three decades, swamped them. The disconsolate fans could reflect on individual brilliance, the splendour of Khushdil Shah's shot-making, Salman Agha's audaciousness, the life-affirming serenity of Babar Azam, the bark and bite of Naseem Shah, the magic of Abrar Ahmed's finger-flickers. But Pakistan had only moments to cling on, a shard of optimism that they could bounce back and the balm of history that they channel their finest cricket when they start clutching at the straws. Their victorious adversaries had more concrete outcomes to nurse title dreams. There is a sense of serene decisiveness, as though they are wearing panic-proof jackets; there is no temptation to project false bravado, no lofty ideologies or ideologues. They go with the flow, but with the awareness of the tides and currents of the water. Will Young, the cussed Test opener, didn't panic when his placement deserted him. He would block a few balls, regather his wavering focus, and devise other methods to tick the run-rate along. The centurion, who laid the foundation for New Zealand, was not unfazed by Abrar's variations, the carrom ball flicked with the ring finger, or the wrong'un that spat off the surface more than the skiddier leg-break. As he does in Test cricket, he waited for the loose ball to wink by, whereupon he displayed a

ruthlessness that his still boyish face masks. A clip off the legs, a bunt through covers, a slap through point—he executed those same strokes that had bred a majority of his runs in international cricket. Even the pulled maximum of Haris Rauf was not a statement of an aggressive intention, but just the coincidence of the right ball to pull at the right time.

A throwback charm embodied his batting. He batted at a pace more in tune with those in the mid-2000s than in the post-pandemic milieu. The strokes pleased, rather than marvelled. Here was a batsman resistant to the improvised imagination and daring impulses of post-modern batsmen. He found an ideal partner in Tom Latham, a veteran of many battles. His game is limited but he finds answers to every riddle posed to him. En route to his eighth ODI century, Latham relied on harnessing the pace of both the seamers and spinners, picking the region behind the square for a lion's share of his 118. He blossomed with his sweeps, employing those to dishevel the lengths of the spinners, especially Salman Agha. Latham would retreat to his nudge and nudge mode, before in a sudden shift of mood, he would crunch a four or heave a six. Like Young, his strokes don't live in memory—the flicked six of Naseem perhaps would—but even before bowlers realise, he would be strolling into his 60s. By the time you comprehend how he accrued those runs, he is in the 90s, batting almost run-a-ball. Only after the pair built a sturdy house that they decided to quickly add a few more storeys. They could expend all their energy on setting the base, knowing fully well that they have Glenn Phillips, Michael Bracewell and Mitchell Santner down the order to flick on the afterburners. The roll of the dice fell on Phillips, who reeled out a pugnacious 61 off 39 balls, scoring the bulk of the 113 runs ransacked in the last 10 overs. So irresistibly simplistic were New Zealand's plans that Pakistan tried to copy them and failed magnificently. The priority was on preserving wickets and cashing in later, while batting steadily and eschewing risks. So conscious of conserving wickets that they eked out only 22 runs (trading two wickets) in the first 10 overs. From then on, Pakistan inevitably jostled to the heartbreak junction. But even to reach there, they took a circuitous and confused road. Nothing embodied it more than the curious case of Fakhar Zaman. The swashbuckler opener sustained a muscular sprain when aborting a four near the fence of the game's second ball, came later on in the innings and even grabbed a catch. But after the dozy start, worsened by the departure of Saud Shakeel and Mohammed Rizwan, he strode in with the purpose of lifting his team from the shambles. His will shone, but the body rebelled. He winced and grimaced, and wore an apologetic face every time he turned down a single or two. New Zealand's spinners exploited his immobility by bowling either on the leg side or outside the off-stump, reducing their pace, floating the ball and suffocating him. Some of his gamble paid off, but he lived a charmed life. The 47-run stand with Babar stabilised Pakistan, but the 65 balls they consumed made the equation steeper and effectively a futile cause. Salman, Babar and Khushdil infused fleeting hope, but the night would be one of heartbreak.

Fate of Rohit Sharma-Gautam Gambhir era on the line

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Rohit Sharma Gautam Gambhir era Champions Trophy 2025 India's captain Rohit Sharma, left, speaks to Hardik Pandya during a practice session ahead of their ICC Champions Trophy match against Bangladesh at Dubai International Cricket Stadium, United Arab Emirates. Not that India needs a reminder, but the tagline for the Champions Trophy 'All on the line' that is pasted all across the ground sums up what this tournament could be for India. When the Rohit Sharma-Gautam Gambhir era began this season, few would have foreseen that the Champions Trophy — coming just eight months after the T20 World Cup triumph — would turn into a tournament that could well define their way forward for many of their own.

After the turbulent Australia trip which laid bare the cracks in the team, the Champions Trophy could well be the face saving one or a tournament that pulls down the curtains for some. But as skipper Rohit Sharma reminded at the press conference, it is also worth mentioning to not mix the formats. Before becoming world beaters in T20s, it is in ODIs that India really showed significant signs of embracing a new aggressive brand of cricket. At the World Cup, the last 50-over ICC event, they were the team of the tournament, but only for Australia to come up better in the final. Of course, a lot could be riding on this tournament for the likes of Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and the support staff led by Gautam Gambhir. But even in the absence of their most valuable player Jasprit Bumrah the mood in the camp nowhere showed signs of a team carrying any baggage. If anything, they were in a relaxed mood — may be most of it had to do with the bug that is going around in the team — choosing to have a relaxed training session on the eve of the match. Having had two training sessions since their arrival here on Friday, India had an off-day on Tuesday, and on Wednesday had it light sans any net sessions. Instead, they indulged in a bit of foot volley before the batsmen had a few underarm throwdowns in the outfield. With the bowling unit, the scene was totally different. With Bumrah not around, India have chosen just three frontline seamers — Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana — for the tournament. Of the three, Arshdeep just played the lone match against England and unlike T20s, he is yet to ascertain himself in the format. Rana, having made his debut against England, has struggled when it comes to bowling with the new ball. Which leaves India depending a lot on Shami who has been struggling for rhythm since his comeback from a lengthy injury lay-off.

"Shami has played only two games and then obviously a couple of T20s as well. All we wanted with Shami was to get back wearing the Indian colours more than anything else. Whether he gets wickets or not, that was completely immaterial for us at that point. We wanted him to get back to playing for India and he has done that and whatever I have seen of him so far looks perfectly fine. When you talk about an older player like Shami who has done the job over the years so many times for us, for them it is just about getting back to their rhythm and hopefully we can find some result early on in this tournament and help the team," Rohit said. Those hopes on Shami from Rohit are not without reasons. If anything, as former India player and UAE coach Robin Singh who is well versed with the conditions here, told this daily the pitch in Dubai tends to assist pacers like Shami who hit the seam and generate movement. When that happens there are few fast bowlers who could exploit the condition as good as Shami does. The thin resources



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on the seam-bowling front where Hardik Pandya is expected to increase his load. In contrast, in the spin-bowling front, India have come here with the most rounded-attack. In Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarthy, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel and Washington Sundar they have a variety that few teams could dream off. But their decision to pick five for the trip when the pitches have traditionally assisted seamers has raised a lot of questions.

And when Rohit was asked about the rationale to pick five, his response gave enough glimpse of India's plans. "There are two spinners (Kuldeep Yadav and Varun), and the other three are all-rounders, so I am not looking at it as five spinners. Those three guys can bat and bowl," Rohit remarked. "We work on our strengths, and those three guys (Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel and Washington Sundar) give a different dimension to our combination and add depth. That is why we wanted to get players with two skills rather than one." Having depth in batting and bowling is what India believe is the way to take this team to the next level as they want to build on the highs of the 50-over World Cup. With the top four all right handers and Rishabh Pant only around as cover, India plan to make the most out of Jadeja and Axar, who are in line to start here alongside Kuldeep. It means, Varun and Washington have to warm the bench for the time being. With regards to Varun it is understood that India want to unleash him in the later half of the tournament. His inclusion will be based more on the opposition than the conditions as he has been allowed to work on his niggles that he sustained recently. Given how the other teams are packed and India having the advantage of playing all their matches in Dubai, they look every bit prepared to add another ICC title to their name. They have arrived here with a clear blueprint. How far it works will decide how far they go in this tournament.

With concerns around workload, Hardik returns to make significant impact in win vs Germany



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So crowded was India's defensive third, the peak-hour Mumbai suburban railway station rush would've paled in comparison. In a tiny area on the right flank, near the 23m line in India's half, nearly half a dozen German white shirts were hassling their opponents in blue, trying to snatch the ball from them and attack the goal. In such a tight space, the ball landed on the stick of Hardik Singh. In a millisecond, without even having to look up, Hardik launched an aerial ball that travelled more than 50m and landed straight on Lalit Upadhyay's stick inside the German defence. The breathtaking pass did not lead to a goal. But it was exactly the kind of inventiveness India lacked on Tuesday when they succumbed to a 1-4 defeat to Germany in the FIH Pro League. Less than 24 hours later, with Hardik back in the team — along with captain Harmanpreet Singh — India turned things around, keeping a clean sheet and beating the world champions 1-0.

The difference in the quality of India's play — the control, the energy, creativity — a night apart was evident. Spain coach Max Caldas, speaking minutes before Wednesday's push-back, was quick to point out the Indian captain and vice-captain's impact on the gameplay. "The last game against Germany; no Harmanpreet, no Hardik and you feel that," he had said. On Tuesday, Harmanpreet and Hardik were rested as a 'precautionary' measure; the former had a wrist injury while the latter complained of a stiff shoulder. Sumit too has been missing due to a hamstring issue. India chief coach Craig Fulton, in a cryptic comment after Tuesday's defeat, said that the 'Hockey India League had taken its toll' when asked about player absences. Fulton didn't elaborate. But it's a warning sign. The hockey season is getting tighter and tighter, peppered with the Pro League matches, the continental championships and occasional bilaterals. The additional dozen or so matches that the HIL brings further add to a player's workload and by the time the next season comes along, in January next year, the World Cup and the Asian Games will be just a few months

away. Hockey's problem isn't unique — badminton, football, and cricket all are battling a similar crisis. And Fulton with his sports science staff will have to find a solution to the increasing workload, for India can ill afford to lose its most influential outfield player. Because while Hardik has been central to India's fortunes on the field, he has also been injury-prone and forced to sit out for prolonged periods after almost all major competitions in the last two years. During the 2023 World Cup, he pulled his hamstring; after the Asian Games that year, he spent another 30-40 days working on it. Immediately after the Olympics last year, he was ruled out for months after a shoulder injury and there have been complaints of shoulder stiffness after the HIL.

"It's frustrating, really," Hardik tells "I am doing everything my body needs. If there are injuries even after that, it's not in my hands I guess." There's an additional toll on the attacking midfielder's body because of his style of play. As Caldas, formerly with the Netherlands, noted: "It doesn't look like it but he runs a lot during games." Like on Wednesday, he's always navigating through the traffic; seeing passes, making penetrative runs; joining the attack; bailing the defence and controlling the midfield. Fulton once said he makes the team 'tick'. And his importance to India isn't lost on the opponents. "He's a special, special player. Probably one of the best midfielders in the world," says Englishman Sam Ward, joking that Hardik made him look 'silly many many days in training (during HIL, both played for UP Rudras) with his dribbling skills'. Caldas calls him a game-changer. "As an opposition coach, you suffer him. But you love watching him play," he says. Fulton knows India 'can't rely on him all the time'. "He's a human after all," the coach had said in an earlier interview. But India will need a fit Hardik throughout the LA Olympics cycle. With the forward line likely to go through a transition in the coming few months and seniors like Manpreet Singh to assess their condition after next year's Asian Games, Hardik could be one of the few remaining links from the back-to-back Olympic medal-winning campaigns. Hardik takes the praise that comes his way lightly — 'it's a team game,' he insists — but is conscious of his increasing importance to the side. He stresses on getting the 'details' right — the post-match rehab. "After the game, I have a pool session, ice bath and stretching. Only if I focus on those details, I'll be able to give my 100 per cent on the field," he says. Lifestyle changes, too, have been introduced. "I try sleeping on time, have stopped eating fried and outside food, eat more seeds and nuts and been keeping myself hydrated all the time," he says. "These are the most boring things an athlete can do," the 26-year-old laughs. Not for a second, however, the thought of rationing the workload crosses his mind. "When I wear the India jersey, I don't care if I am playing 30-40 matches (in a year)," he says. "That's my life. Sach mein."

Priyank Panchal's commanding hundred puts Kerala under pressure

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A domestic semifinal, even if it were to involve the home side, would not be an enticing prospect for the otherwise cricket-loving Ahmedabad populace to make the testing march and climb inside the world's biggest cricket facility. Abhiraj, who recently returned to the city after a fair few years studying and plying his cricketing wares in North Middlesex in London, had his expectations firmly in check when he turned up to watch a "friend's friend" play for Gujarat on day three of the Ranji Trophy semifinal against Kerala.

"If Axar Patel were to play this game for Gujarat, perhaps the turnout would be better. Unlike the County Championship games in England where you'd have a decent turnout despite a nominal fee, in India you need the big international names to turn up for domestic games to grab attention. In England, it's part of the culture and the county games warrant serious interest," Abhiraj tells The Indian Express from a stand where he is seated alone, adjacent to another where the concurrent number pressed back and forth between 10 to 20 men but never beyond.

Local boy Priyank Panchal was not surprised by the lack of a crowd-infused glamour to his masterful 29th First-Class century that nearly reduced Kerala's stoicism and grit to pieces, even leaving the ever-lively dugout from the previous two days hushed and devoid of innovative expressions.

Between Panchal's unusually animated roar to celebrate a special 23rd Ranji Trophy century in his 100th First-Class appearance for Gujarat and the Kerala slumber, the langurs were up from a prolonged siesta. The far blocks of the 1.3 lakh capacity ground made for an odd viewing on Monday when a solitary spectator was seen amidst a sea of orange. Hooting and gathering in huge numbers in the arc opposite Panchal's attacking zones on the field, the aggressive langurs even split open a large suspended speaker on the top tier of the K Block stand. While the furry tribe's aggressive hoops and hoots reverberated through the stadium, Gujarat's highest century-maker was grateful for the 20-odd fans who had gathered past the fence when he walked back putting his team on 222/1 in 71 overs at stumps, reducing Kerala's cautiously built castle to within 235 runs. "On a lighter note, at least these people turned out. Yahaan log aise hi aate hai, (in Ahmedabad you can only expect such low turnouts for a domestic game)," Panchal says with a helpless chuckle that would resemble the sweat-smiled chat emoji. While a visibly well-fed ginger cat briefly appeared at the lunch break, Abhiraj had to make a gruelling walk out of the enormous Motera facility to grab a bite. Visibly jaded upon return, he wonders if a visit on the following days was worth it, even if it meant Gujarat had put on a contrasting riposte and nudged ahead of Kerala in the knockout race.

Kerala's single-minded approach was handed a firm response by the hosts, assuring that there are always more ways than one to solve the multi-day cricket puzzle. Gathering only 39 to their overnight total with centurion Mohammed Azharuddeen (177 not out) running out of partners and options to smash boundaries against a spread-out nine-manned boundary circle, Kerala's spin dreams were soon shunned by the devious pitch.

Despite using the heavy roller on day two in anticipation of a deterioration and crumbling of the roughs, the strip bound together as Panchal and his opening partner Aarya Desai (73) replenished the scoring rates above 3 rpo for the first time in the match. "Two days out on the field gave us a good understanding of the pitch. We employed a similar tactic to Kerala in playing time but for us scoring runs were also equally important. We understood that the turn was only emerging from the two rough patches and not the



pitch in general," Panchal observed. The left-right batting duo immediately got down to unsettling Kerala's spin lynchpins Jalaj Saxena and Aditya Sarvate's lengths, rarely allowing them to slip into a zone. Using the lush outfield in their stride during a 131-run association, Panchal and Desai employed nimble footwork and supple wrists to drive and drill the wobbly four-man Kerala attack. Though the scoring rates dipped after a crafty Desai was undone by a loosener that dragged back to the stumps off seamer Basil NP, the 34-year-old Panchal's seasoned shoulders carried the momentum.

Dropping out from the national radar and carrying a slate of inconsistency in recent seasons has not ruffled Panchal's big-game temperament. Vividly remembering his 149 from the semi-final the year Gujarat lifted their maiden title in 2016-17, Panchal said: "I know that I can counter any bowler and I have the experience. I was looking forward to a knockout game like this. It was important for me to contribute because some of the younger players could get carried away." Moments after local scribes raised doubts about the Ahmedabad accumulator raising the milestone with a boundary, Panchal lofted left-arm twaker Sarvate over wide long-on for a rasping maximum. It was not an entirely new feeling for the seasoned opener for a fact. "Getting a 100 with a six? I think it might be the first time, but I've done it twice when I reached 195 or 196 for double hundreds," he remarked. Save for two of the 200 deliveries that brought the wicketkeeper into play, Panchal is well in the zone to double his shares with another milestone-crossing six on Thursday. If only Amdavad's cricket lovers would come along to celebrate their long-serving gladiator reign at a desolate colosseum.

Hyderabad FC hold Mumbai City FC to goalless draw

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Hyderabad: Hyderabad FC held Mumbai City FC to a goalless draw in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 match at the GMC Balayogi Athletic Stadium, Hyderabad on Wednesday. The result extended the Islanders' unbeaten away streak to eight games, but they would have hoped to find the back of the net after holding 64.6% possession of the ball and hitting eight shots on target. Mumbai City FC have made a progression to the fifth spot as they now have 32 points from 21 games, whereas Hyderabad FC have not lost at home in their last three matches (W2 D1). Mumbai City FC started the game strong as Lallianzuala Chhangte blazed into the left side of the 18-yard box and was picked neatly by Jon Toral in the ninth minute of the game as the latter breached past the Hyderabad FC defensive third with ease. However, Chhangte's left footed effort lacked finesse and missed the target, hitting the woodwork on the left side by a bare margin.