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Poultry India urges Indians to prioritise protein intake on World Protein Day

Hyderabad: On the occasion of World Protein Day on February 27, Poultry India, the Indian Poultry Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA) are raising awareness about alarming protein deficiency and advocating for affordable, high-quality protein sources like chicken and eggs. Studies indicate that 73 per cent of Indians suffer from protein deficiency, and 17 per cent of the population struggles with underweight issues and this nutritional gap has serious health implications, including impaired growth, weakened immune function, and increased risk of chronic diseases, a press release said.

Five drown in Godavari river in Andhra Pradesh

Tadipudi: Five persons drowned in the Godavari river here in East Godavari district on Wednesday morning when they went for a bath, said a police official. Out of a group of 12 men, five drowned while seven managed to survive, they added. The tragedy occurred around 8.30 am at Tadipudi village in Tallapudi mandal, police said. "Five persons drowned in the Godavari river out of a group of 12 when they went to take bath," the official said, adding that the group was intending to go to a nearby temple after the bath for the Shivaratri festival.

Revanth Reddy meets PM Modi, discusses key State issues including SLBC tunnel collapse



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to approve and fund a series of crucial infrastructure projects, including the Hyderabad Metro Rail Phase-II, the southern part of the Regional Ring Road (RRR), and the Musi River Rejuvenation project, among others.

During an hour-long meeting with the Prime Minister at the latter's residence in New Delhi on Wednesday, Revanth Reddy sought the Centre's approval for five new Metro corridors covering 76.4 km at a cost of Rs 24,269 crore. He emphasised the need for expanding the Metro

Rail operations amid rapid city expansion. The Chief Minister pressed for the sanction of funds for the southern RRR, stating that around 90 per cent of land acquisition for the northern part is complete and informed that Telangana was bearing 50 per cent of the land acquisition cost. Additionally, he proposed a Regional Ring Rail project parallel to the RRR to enhance connectivity. He also sought a dry port near the RRR to boost exports and imports from landlocked Telangana.

Revanth Reddy also submitted representations seeking Rs 20,000 crore for revival of the Musi River as part of his Musi River Rejuvenation project, for setting up Sewerage Treatment Plants (STPs), retaining walls, and inter-linking with Godavari River. He also sought 29 additional IPS cadre posts to address rising cybercrime and law enforcement needs. He urged approval for launching the India Semiconductor Mission in Telangana, citing favourable conditions in the State for semiconductor manufacturing. Meanwhile, sources said the Chief Minister also briefed the Prime Minister about the SLBC tunnel mishap and also the ongoing rescue operations to save the eight workers who were trapped inside the tunnel. They also reportedly discussed on the BC reservations and SC categorisation in the State. IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu, Chief Secretary A Santhi Kumari, DGP Jitender and other officials accompanied the Chief Minister during the visit.

Hyderabad celebrates Shivaratri: Devotees flock to temples amid festive arrangements



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Hyderabad: Devotees thronged temples from the early hours of Wednesday to worship Lord Shiva and celebrate Shivaratri. From the break of the dawn, families, attired in their traditional best, started making preparations to visit their nearest temples, which were decked-up on the occasion. Major temples in Hyderabad and outskirts started receiving a large number of devotees.

Elaborate arrangements were made at the famed Ramalingeshwara temple atop Keesaragutta which draws devotees in large numbers. Vendors made a brisk business with fruits, bael leaves, flowers etc. Various residential welfare associations, colony welfare organisations and youth clubs planned religious sermons and cultural programs through the night during Jagaran.

Meanwhile, the police made elaborate arrangements for the festival at the places of worship and to streamline the vehicular movement on roads leading to major temples. Rachakonda Police Commissioner G Sudheer Babu supervised the arrangements for the Brahmotsavam being held on the occasion of Mahashivratri at the Keesara temple on Wednesday. A total of 2,500 officers and staff of the civil and traffic departments not only from Rachakonda Police Commissionerate but also from Hyderabad and Cyberabad Commissionerates were deployed for security duties. He also personally administered first-aid to a person who unexpectedly injured his leg at the temple premises. The devotee was immediately sent to the hospital in an ambulance for treatment.

KTR calls out Revanth Reddy's negligence over SLBC tunnel tragedy

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao called out Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for turning a blind eye to the plight of the workers trapped in the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel tragedy and also those who were working at the site without salaries for the last three months. He ridiculed the Chief Minister's election campaign and Delhi visit ignoring the rescue measures. "Even after going to Delhi 36 times, he did not bring three rupees for the State," he reminded.

On Wednesday, Rama Rao took to X, criticising Revanth Reddy for his frequent visits to Delhi. He stated that even as eight workers lay trapped inside the tunnel and the remaining workers struggling without salaries for three months, the Chief Minister had shown little concern. "Instead, he remained immersed in election campaigning and quiet Delhi visits," he said. He questioned the State government over the handling of the rescue operations with no major progress. He feared that the delay in efforts, broken conveyor belts, and lack of oxygen, might cost precious lives. The BRS working president also targeted intellectuals



and the media who previously criticised the then BRS government over the cracks in pillars of the Kaleshwaram project and the fire accident at Srisailem project. He questioned their silence on the SLBC tragedy. "Stop the Delhi visits and listen to the cries of the workers' families. What is trapped in that tunnel is not just lives but the nation's wealth (referring to lives of workers)," he said, demanding immediate government action.

KCR extends Maha Shivratri greetings to people of Telangana

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Hyderabad: BRS chief K Chandrashekhara Rao extended greetings to the people of Telangana on the occasion of Maha Shivratri on Wednesday. He highlighted the significance of the festival, noting that devotees across the country observe fasting and prayers in reverence to Lord Shiva throughout the night. He prayed for the blessings of Lord Shiva to bring peace and prosperity to the people of the State. BRS working president KT Rama Rao also extended his greetings, emphasising the spiritual importance of worship, fasting, and devotion during Maha Shivratri. He prayed that the grace of Lord Shiva is upon all. Former Minister T Harish Rao conveyed his Shivratri wishes to all, with the blessings of Lord Shiva. BRS MLC K Kavitha wished for happiness and prosperity for the people of Telangana, extending greetings to families across the State.



KTR expresses concern over delimitation of constituencies on population basis, supports Stalin



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao raised serious concerns over the impending injustice to Southern States in the proposed delimitation of constituencies. He warned that the Centre's decision to redraw constituencies based on population would turn into a curse for Telangana and other Southern States such as Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. He extended support to the apprehensions raised by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on social media regarding this issue, for fair, transparent and equitable approach in the delimitation process.

Questioning the Modi government's intentions, Rama Rao wondered whether the Centre was planning to penalise Southern States for successfully implementing family plan-

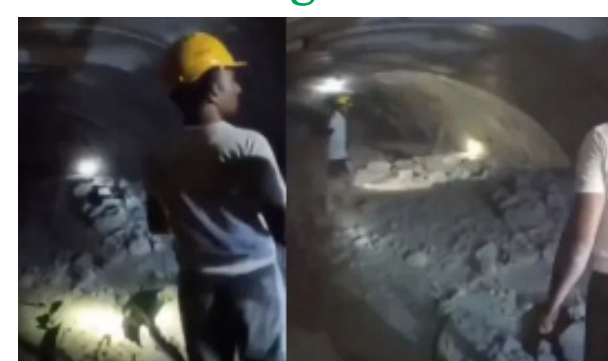
ning for the nation's welfare. He strongly criticised the move, stating that executing delimitation solely based on population, without considering the efforts of the Southern States in population control, was against the spirit of democracy and federalism. The BRS working president affirmed that the contributions of Southern States to nation-building could not be ignored. "In 1951, Southern States accounted for 26.2 per cent of India's population, which has declined to 19.8 per cent by 2022. Meanwhile, the population share of Northern States such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan has risen from 39.1 per cent to 43.2 per cent. If Lok Sabha seats are allocated based on the latest census, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar together will have 222 seats, while the five Southern States — Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala — will collectively get only 165 seats," he explained. Rama Rao said the Southern States had outperformed the Northern States in key sectors such as economic growth, human development indices and population control. "Penalising performing States and rewarding those who do not is not in the nation's best interest," he asserted. Proposing an alternative, he suggested that constituency delimitation should be based on fiscal contribution to the nation rather than population. "With only 2.8 per cent to India's population, Telangana contributes more than 5.2 per cent of the country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Similarly, other Southern States make immense contributions to the national economy. This factor must be considered in the delimitation process," he demanded.

Rathole miners reach critical end point of tunnel, but find no trace of missing workers

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Hyderabad: The rescue operation at the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel has reached the critical end point of the tunnel, but there is no trace of the missing workers. Expert rathole miners bravely ventured into the tunnel to save the eight trapped workers. They could access the zero point of the tunnel end but could find none of the eight missing workers and engineers. The entire stretch, whose passage is blocked by debris and water-logging, is filled with a foul smell, indicating an adverse and undesired outcome that is in the offing.

Experts involved in the rescue operation suspect that the workers might be trapped beneath the damaged tunnel boring machine (TBM). The rat miners, who succeeded where all other big names with expertise in such rescue missions failed, are barely 25 years old. The 14-member team of rat miners from Uttarakhand, led by Firoz Qureshi, displayed rare skill. Early Wednesday morning, they entered the SLBC tunnel, equipped with only ropes tied to their backs. Clad in simple t-shirts and pants, the team navigated through the critical environment and reached the site of the collapsed



1600-ton TBMTThe rat miners cleared the debris, creating a pathway for other rescue teams to follow. Using only small and simple tools, they removed the accumulated mud and water, pushing aside obstacles. They reached the last point of the tunnel and confirmed that the TBM was completely destroyed. They also identified the source of water flow from the tunnel lining and removed the TBM fragments, making the rescue operation more manageable.

Govt committed to making housing accessible for all: Piyush Goyal



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Mumbai: The government is committed to making housing accessible and sustainable for all, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, has said. At an event here, Goyal conveyed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message, stating that the government remains committed to providing pucca houses to the homeless and those currently living in kachha houses in the same locality.

Along with Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Goyal distributed keys for the 15 self-redeveloped housing societies in North Mumbai. Addressing the gathering, the Union Minister assured that the Central government would extend full support to the Maharashtra government's initiatives in urban redevelopment and infrastructure development. Speaking on the development in North Mumbai, Goyal mentioned that the region has been witnessing significant infrastructure advancements in recent times. He noted that the construction of a 1,000-bed hospital near the Magathane metro station is progressing swiftly, and another 1,000-bed hospital is planned for construction in West Kandivali, which will enhance healthcare access and services in the region.

The minister applauded Fadnavis for leading major infrastructural projects, including the extension of the Coastal Road (Worli-Bandra) to Versova and the proposed coastal road connecting the new airport via the Atal Sethu. He stated that these projects would play a pivotal role in reducing congestion and improving connectivity in Mumbai. Goyal also commended the state government's efforts in addressing critical civic issues.

Harish Rao donates Rs 1 lakh to Sri Venkateshwara Swamy temple in Siddipet



The BRS leader urges temple management to make grand arrangements as part of golden jubilee celebrations

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Siddipet: Former Minister T Harish Rao donated Rs 1 lakh towards golden jubilee celebrations of the Sri Venkateshwara Swamy temple in Siddipet on Wednesday.

Since the temple was constructed about 50 years ago, Harish Rao called up the temple management to plan for grand celebrations of the festivities this year. He said the people who made contributions for the temple's development must be honoured during the celebrations. Earlier, Rao offered silk vastrams to the presiding deity of Sri Uma Parnhiva Kotilingala temple. He also offered special prayers on the occasion. Rao also visited many temples across his constituency and offered prayers at Shaiivite temples and greeted the devotees.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Asphalt over art

The Punjab and Haryana High Court's directive to demolish a section of the Rock Garden's wall for road widening and parking expansion raises serious concerns about the balance between infrastructure and heritage conservation. The decision, executed by the UT Administration, not only erases a part of Nek Chand's artistic legacy but also sets a troubling precedent for how India treats its cultural and forest heritage in the name of 'development.' For decades, the Rock Garden has stood as a testament to human ingenuity, turning waste into wonder. However, in what can only be described as an ironic injustice, a part of this artistic and cherished landmark is being razed to make space for asphalt and use by polluting vehicles. The claim that the demolished wall was not part of Nek Chand's original structure does little to justify the destruction. A landmark's significance is not merely in its blueprint but in the cultural and emotional connection it holds for the people. The rationale for this demolition is flawed on multiple levels. First, traffic congestion around the high court is largely due to poor management, not the presence of the Rock Garden. Sustainable alternatives, such as better public transport and shuttle services, have been overlooked. Plus, a systematic restructuring of case lists by the HC can reduce daily footfall at the court, addressing traffic concerns. Second, the administration's promise of 'relocating' the wall and replanting trees does not compensate for the irreversible loss of an ecosystem. Chandigarh's famed tree-lined landscape is already under siege; removing century-old trees for road widening is another nail in the coffin of its ecological balance. The larger question remains: If courts, meant to be guardians of justice, do not defend public heritage and environmental integrity, who will? Chandigarh deserves sustainable urban planning, not thoughtless destruction disguised as progress.

Technique, timetable, training: How Punjab's farmers are earning millions from cabbage, cauliflower

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

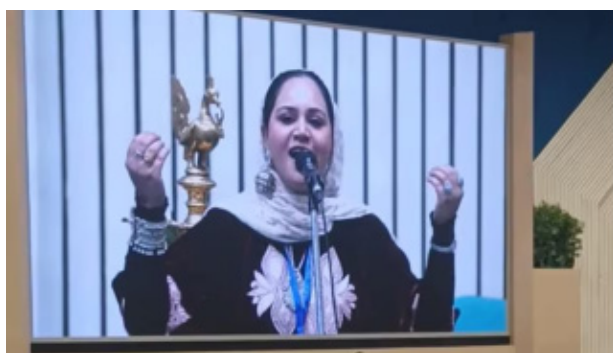
Seventy-two-year-old Nirmal Singh from Hayat Nagar village in Gurdaspur grows cabbage, cauliflower and brinjal on 2.5 acres and earns Rs 14 lakh to Rs 30 lakh depending on the market. Paramjit Singh, 44, a progressive farmer from Bukkan Singh Nagar village in Faridkot grows cabbage and cauliflower in 50 acres and earns up to Rs 3 crore depending on the season, demand and supply.

While their crop yield is like two ends of a spectrum, they both have come out of the wheat-paddy cycle and are doing good in their own way by growing cash crops that not just requires maximum support price (MSP) but also sells more than half of the year. While the majority of farmers in Punjab are growing traditional wheat and paddy, some progressive farmers have shifted to high-value vegetable farming. These farmers, both with large and small land holdings, are reaping significant profits. The return on investment from these crops often far exceeds what is earned from traditional crops.

With 8 acres devoted to cabbage and the remaining acres to cauliflower, Paramjit has perfected the art of crop rotation and timely sowing to maximize profits. He harvests between 85 to 140 quintals of cauliflower per acre, depending on the variety and sowing techniques. For cabbage, he manages to harvest about 200 quintals per acre. Despite fluctuating market conditions, Singh spends approximately Rs 25,000 per acre on input cost and cultivation. "I've made a timetable for my crops. I grow cauliflower twice a year, from September to December and again from January to March-April. The September-November crop yields higher prices, often sold at Rs 70 per kg from mid October to mid November, as the market supply is low. However, when the bulk of the crop enters the market by December, the prices can crash to Rs 1 or 2 per kg," Paramjit says, adding that by March his next crop matures and he then sells it for Rs 10 to Rs 12 per kg. Growing cash crops that not just requires maximum support price (MSP) but also sells more than half of the year for the farmers. (Express Photo) Growing cash crops that not just requires maximum support price (MSP) but also sells more than half of the year for the farmers. He sees variable prices for cabbage, earning between Rs 6 and Rs 20 per kg depending on the market. Last year, Paramjit earned Rs 14-15 lakh from 8 acres of cabbage, with cauliflower sales bringing in between Rs 1.5 and Rs 2 crore, depending on market fluctuations. His methodical approach has paid off and he was also recognised for his expertise, winning state-level awards from Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana, thrice. "Farming needs precision. It's all about being calculative and following a schedule to match demand and supply," Paramjit says, adding that he has been guiding several farmers in his area and has also provided jobs to several others. But it's not just big landowners making millions as small landholders are also seeing substantial profits. Nirmal Singh follows a carefully crafted seasonal approach. He begins his vegetable farming by preparing the nursery for cabbage, cauliflower, and brinjal in August. By September, the seedlings are planted in the field, and by November, they are ready to harvest. Nirmal plants cabbage again in January and harvests it by April. His brinjal crop continues until March, offering him a steady income.

Farmer Nirmal Singh for Nirmal, cabbage yields an impressive 350 to 400 quintals per acre, while cauliflower provides 300 quintals, and brinjal yields a similar amount. For Nirmal, cabbage yields an impressive 350 to 400 quintals per acre, while cauliflower provides 300 quintals, and brinjal yields a similar amount. In total, Nirmal harvests around 1600 quintals of crops from 2.5 acres. The cost of growing these vegetables is reasonable — Rs 25,000 per acre for cabbage and Rs 40,000 per acre each for cauliflower and brinjal. His yield is more because his sowing technique which is on both side of the beds or ridges made in the fields. "Last year, I sold my produce at an average Rs 2,000 per quintal, earning Rs 30 lakh from my 1,600 quintals after meeting expenses. Even though this year's prices for cabbage and cauliflower was good in the beginning but than it has crashed, I still managed to sell 650 quintals of cabbage and cauliflower, earning around Rs 4.5 to Rs 5 lakh from the sale of 650 quintals so far. My brinjal crop is fetching Rs 20 to Rs 22 per kg, allowing me to continue harvesting a steady income," says Nirmal. Even in a market downturn, his income from vegetables continues to far outstrip what he earns from wheat and paddy. Manjit Kaur, Agricultural Development Officer in Gurdaspur, says Nirmal Singh has proven the potential for farmers with even small land holdings to make substantial profits.

Kashmiri singer Shameema Akhtar floors crowd at Marathi Sahitya Sammelan: 'Sharad Pawar insisted she perform before PM Modi'



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

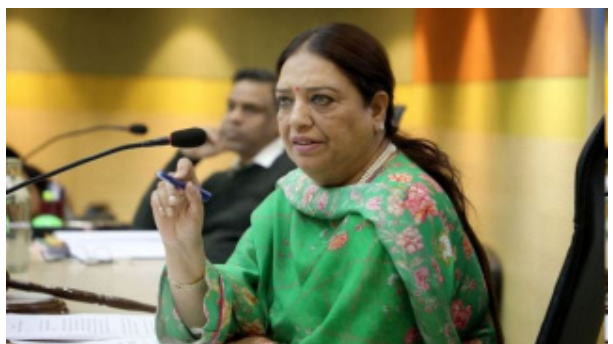
When Kashmiri singer Shameema Akhtar carolled Maharashtra Geet and recited Pasaydaan in front of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Friday, she received a standing ovation. It has emerged that NCP (S-P) chief Sharad Pawar insisted the 98th Marathi Sahitya Sammelan's inaugural event end with Shameema's resonant voice, even if it meant tweaking the PM's protocol. "Sharad Pawar had told us that the Sahitya Sammelan's inaugural event should end with Pasaydaan by Shameema... He had told Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to let there be a delay of five minutes in the PM's protocol, but the event should end with Shameema's Pasaydaan," Sanjay Nahar, who heads Sarhad, the main organiser of the Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, said. From the moment Shameema took stage to sing Maharashtra Geet, raising the tempo to the words jai jai Maharashtra majha, to her recital of Pasaydaan in chaste Marathi, the intellectual gathering at Vigyan Bhavan was captivated. She never let her guard down as she kept the crowd glued to their seats, ultimately receiving a standing ovation at the end of her two performances. The dignitaries, including the prime minister, the chief minister and Sharad Pawar, seemed impressed by her crooning skills, even though there was no mention of her in the leaders' speeches.

Speaking to The Indian Express on Sunday, Shameema said she was a little nervous as it was her first solo performance, and that too in front of the prime minister. "I was not scared but was overawed by the situation. When none other than the prime minister of the country is among the audience, it is but natural to feel a little tense and nervous," said Shameema, who mostly wears the pheran and kasaba—traditional Kashmiri outfits. Shameema did not

practice Maharashtra Geet and Pasaydaan on the day of the event. "Days before the event, I had practised hard to ensure that I got them right on the big occasion... There was a small slip of the tongue during the Maharashtra Geet, but I recovered quickly," she said. It was her first big performance outside Maharashtra. "I have performed in Pune and even in Kashmir, but this was my first performance in front of an intellectual gathering and the nation's bigwigs. I am glad I passed the test with flying colours," she said. Shameema, however, is not aware that she received a standing ovation from the Marathi mannos who had gathered in New Delhi, having come not just from Maharashtra but also from other states and even foreign countries. "I was so deeply engrossed in my performance... I had closed my eyes... I did not notice the huge applause that came my way," she said. Shameema did not seem to mind that the prime minister and chief minister did not mention her in their speeches. They did praise Tara Bhavalkar, president of the Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, though. "But they applauded me... The presence of the prime minister at the event was an overwhelming experience," said Shameema, who is popular for devotional songs in Kashmiri, Punjabi, Marathi, Sanskrit, Bengali, Dogri and Kannada. "I love the Marathi language. I picked it up quickly... I first write the songs or prayers in Urdu text and then lend my voice to it. I first record the dummy to understand the meaning of the words.

This helps me give expression to my emotions. I also get it cross-checked from experts and mentors just to ensure that I have got it right," she said. Hailing from Argam village in Bandipora district of Jammu and Kashmir, Shameema came to Pune in 2017 for a Kashmiri Festival organised by Sarhad. "I sort of fell in love with the culture and tradition of Maharashtra... Now I have become a Punekar," she said. She teaches music at the schools run by Sarhad in Pune. Shameema said she learnt the art of singing in Pune. "It was Sushma Nahar who urged me to try my voice for a Marathi song. And when I did it successfully, it increased my confidence, and from there, there has been no looking back," she said. Shameema studied music at Bhatkhande Music University, Lucknow. There, she met Mohammad Mazhar Siddique, a singer and a music composer whom she later married. "When Shameema performed the way she did in front of the august gathering, I felt a sense of pride... She put in a wonderful performance and got a big round of applause. It was an emotional moment for us," said Siddique.

Chandigarh MC plans to outsource roundabouts with 'an annual advertisement fee' to generate revenue



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Mayor Harpreet Kaur Babla and a few councillors recently mooted the plan to generate revenue through advertisement rights of roundabouts across the city. Mayor Harpreet Kaur Babla and a few councillors recently mooted the plan to generate revenue through advertisement rights of roundabouts across the city.

The Chandigarh Municipal Corporation (MC) has planned to generate revenue by outsourcing more than 30 roundabouts in the city with "an annual advertisement fee" to bolster its finances. The proposal will be submitted to UT Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria for approval. According to the current agreement with the MC, private firms maintain these roundabouts and display small advertisement boards with their names written on them. However, the civic body will now charge "an annual advertisement fee", expecting to generate Rs 4-5 crore annually. Mayor Harpreet Kaur Babla and a few councillors recently mooted the plan

to generate revenue through advertisement rights of roundabouts across the city. Senior Deputy Mayor Jasbir Singh Bunty said, "The MC has proposed outsourcing roundabouts in the city for a fixed amount and will allow the display of advertisements measuring 4x1' feet with a height of 1.5 feet from the ground in all four directions." Upon getting the UT Administrator's approval, we will take the proposal forward," he said. According to MC officials, after the proposal gets the Administrator's approval, the roundabouts will be auctioned again or current firms may continue by paying the new fee. Additionally, advertisement policies in other areas are being framed to boost revenue.

The civic body has been struggling to manage its finances, hitting several developmental projects, including a long-pending road carpeting project. The financial crisis has reached such a point that paying salaries to staff may soon become unaffordable, said an MC official, adding this move will ease the financial burden and help maintain the road infrastructure. According to officials, the MCC has undertaken various measures to enhance its financial condition, including providing temporary water connections in 22 villages outside Lal Dora/Phinni limits, which is estimated to generate Rs 25-30 crore, e-auctioning of advertisement rights at public utilities and connecting passages, which is estimated to generate Rs 25-30 crore, zoning and layout plan development in Manimajra, which is estimated to generate Rs 150-200 crore. According to Mayor Babla, the MC plans to increase annual ground rent for municipal land used by cable operators, will revise the rates for birth and death certificate issuance, and rental agreements for Verka-Vita booths.

Chandigarh Court declares US Superior Court's divorce order as 'null and void'

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

The woman's counsel sought the Chandigarh Court to declare the US Court's order null and void, arguing that "the foreign court's order is legally invalid, and also it has not decided the case on merits." A Chandigarh District Court has declared "null and void" an order of a California Superior Court in the US, allowing the divorce plea of a Haryana resident against his wife, a tricity resident. "The divorce decree granted by the Superior Court of California on September 13, 2021, is declared null and void in India on account of lack of jurisdiction of the foreign court, the non-recognition of irrevocable breakdown of marriage under the Indian law is the violation of natural justice and the contravention of the Indian public policy. The defendant (respondent-husband) remained ex parte and as such the contention of the plaintiff (applicant-wife) remained unchallenged and unattributed," Chandigarh Civil Judge (Junior Division) Kaushal Kumar Yadav observed. "...the suit is hereby decreed with costs in favour of the plaintiff (applicant-wife) and a decree for declaration is hereby passed declaring that foreign decree shall have no legal effect in India..." the Civil Court Judge said.

According to the woman, they got married on June 13, 2019, and started living at the residence of her husband in Haryana. On June 24, 2019, the husband and his family ousted the woman from her matrimonial home. The couple then went to the US, where the husband abandoned his wife, and never contacted her. On July 10, 2019, a U.S. court summoned the woman on a divorce petition filed by her husband. The woman objected to the petition on the grounds of jurisdiction as "a foreign court is not competent to decide their divorce". However, on September 13, 2021, the Superior Court of California passed the judgement of dissolution of their marriage. The woman's counsel sought the Chandigarh Court to declare the US Court's order null and void, arguing that "the foreign court's order is legally invalid, and also it has not decided the case on merits". On the notice of the Chandigarh Court, on the woman's plea, the hus-

Congress leader hacked to death in central Bengaluru, police suspect gang rivalry



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

A local Congress leader was hacked to death in central Bengaluru early Sunday morning, the police said. The deceased, identified as Hyder Ali, was known for his association with MLA N A Harris and was attacked near Garuda Mall in Ashokanagar while returning on a two-wheeler with a friend at around 1 am. According to the police, a gang followed and cornered Ali, fatally hacking him. Ali was quickly taken to Bowring Hospital but was declared dead on arrival. The proximity of the attack to the Ashokanagar police station prompted a swift response from authorities. As news of the murder spread, Ali's supporters reportedly gathered near the hospital, some brandishing machetes and swords, raising concerns about potential unrest and causing panic among people. Ali had previously faced multiple criminal charges, and the police are investigating the murder, with suspicions that it may be related to gang rivalry. A murder case has been registered, and authorities are pursuing leads to apprehend the attackers.

Delhi Police's 10-day manhunt ends with arrest of man for killing criminal who harassed his sister



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

The police, led by the Crime Branch AGS team, pieced together Sonu's movements through CCTV footage and an extensive analysis of phone records.

A man accused of killing a known criminal linked to the Vicky Takkar gang in Delhi was arrested after a 10-day manhunt, according to the Delhi Police. Sonu, 27, allegedly murdered Dhamar, also known as Firoz, by smashing his head with a concrete block in retaliation for harassing Sonu's sister. The crime, which occurred on February 10 in Uttam Nagar, left the local community in shock. Sonu reportedly fled Delhi and evaded capture by moving through various states before being apprehended in Etah, Uttar Pradesh.

The police, led by the Crime Branch AGS team, pieced together Sonu's movements through CCTV footage and an extensive analysis of phone records. Upon his arrest, Sonu confessed to the murder, explaining that he took matters into his own hands because he felt the local authorities wouldn't adequately address the harassment. Sonu, a dropout who worked as a driver, is said to have acted with the help of two friends who participated in beating Dhamar before the fatal blow. The incident began when Sonu, angered by the ongoing harassment of his sister, warned Dhamar multiple times, to no avail. That night, Sonu and his friends attacked Dhamar at his home, ultimately dragging him into the street where Sonu killed him. A local resident tried to intervene but was threatened and retreated, alerting the authorities instead. The police rushed Dhamar to the hospital, but he died from his injuries two days later.

Bihar BJP MLA, his associate get 3-month jail in assault case

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Lal Yadav, Bihar BJP MLA assault case, Bihar assault case, Lal Yadav assault case, Indian express news, current affairs. The police submitted a chargesheet on October 12, 2019. After the initial investigation, Dheeraj and Dharmendra's names were removed from the chargesheet, leaving only Mishri Lal and Suresh as the accused, their lawyer said. BJP's Alinagar MLA Mishri Lal Yadav and his associate have been sentenced to three-month imprisonment each for voluntarily causing hurt to one Umesh Mishra in January 2019. Special Judge cum Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Karuna Nidhi Prasad Arya of the special MP/MLA court in Darbhanga also imposed a fine of Rs 500 on Mishri Lal Yadav and Suresh Yadav each after finding them guilty under IPC Section 323 (voluntarily causing hurt). After the sentencing, both Mishri Lal and Suresh were ordered to be released on bond, their lawyer Kauser Imam Hashmi said, and added that "they would appeal the decision in a higher court". The court took cognizance of the case on April 17, 2020. During the trial, the prosecution presented testimonies from eight witnesses. In the FIR lodged with the Raikam police station, complainant Umesh Mishra, a resident of Samaila village, had alleged that on January 30, 2019 he was confronted by Mishri Lal, Suresh, and several armed individuals near Kadam Chowk in the Gosai Tola area. According to his statement to the police, when Umesh protested against the verbal abuse, "Mishri Lal attacked him with a sickle, causing severe injury to his head." The FIR also mentioned that Dheeraj Yadav, Mishri Lal's son, "struck Mishra with the butt of a rifle, leading to his fall, following which, Suresh and another individual, Dharmendra, assaulted him with sticks and rods, resulting in multiple injuries." As per the FIR, "Dheeraj stole his watch, and Suresh took 2,300 from his pocket." "When a few acquaintances of Mishra attempted to intervene, they were also threatened and assaulted by Mishri Lal and his associates," the complaint stated, adding that the assaulters also "threatened him with his life to not file a case with the police." The police submitted a chargesheet on October 12, 2019. After the initial investigation, Dheeraj and Dharmendra's names were removed from the chargesheet, leaving only Mishri Lal and Suresh as the accused, their lawyer said.



band failed to appear before the Court and he proceeded as ex parte vide order on January 31, 2022.

Upon hearing the matter, the Civil Court Judge said, "In the present case, the defendant-initiated divorce proceedings in the US and obtained a decree based on 'irretrievable breakdown of marriage', which is not a valid ground for divorce under Section 13 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. As such, a foreign court that applies laws inconsistent with the Indian matrimonial law cannot have jurisdiction over the matter." "Section 13 of the Civil Procedure Code, 1908, stipulates a foreign judgment shall not be conclusive if it violates principles of natural justice. The principle of natural justice requires both parties to be given a fair and reasonable opportunity to present their case. The plaintiff has asserted that she did not voluntarily submit to the jurisdiction of the US Court and had specifically objected to the competence of the court. Despite this, the US Court proceeded with the divorce without considering the plaintiff's objections in light of Indian matrimonial law," the Civil Court Judge said.

In addition, the Court said, "...it is well-settled law that a foreign judgment must not be contrary to the public policy in India... In the present case, the divorce decree violates the Indian public policy because it undermines the sanctity of marriage, which is protected under the Indian law."

How Kasturinagar residents brought Banaswadi-Channasandra Lake back to life



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Bengaluru, often called the city of lakes, has witnessed a steady decline in its water bodies due to urbanisation, encroachments, and neglect. But in a remarkable display of community effort, the Kasturinagar Residents' Welfare Association (RWA) along with NGO Hands On and Canada-based company CGI has revived Banaswadi-Channasandra Lake — once a degraded expanse of debris — into a thriving ecosystem.

The initiative took shape in mid-2023 when Bengaluru was battling a groundwater crisis. Abhijit M S, member of Kasturinagar RWA, speaking to The Indian Express said, "As residents we discovered through the Dishank application that a lake — listed as Banaswadi-Channasandra Lake — once existed in their neighbourhood. However, what remained was an unrecognisable landfill, choked with construction waste and garbage. A core group of four to five residents got together to reclaim the lost water body, and took it upon ourselves to spearhead its restoration."

The first challenge was bureaucratic ambiguity. The BBMP's Lakes Department initially claimed the lake was under the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA). When approached, the BDA asserted that it had handed the lake over to BBMP in 2019. However, official records, specifically the RTC (Record of Rights, Tenancy, and Crops), still listed the land under the Forest Department. Caught in this bureaucratic tangle, the residents reached out to meet Ravindra, deputy conservator of forest, BBMP, for a 'No Objection Certificate' (NOC) to rejuvenate the lake. Ravindra later facilitated an NOC, allowing the residents to proceed with the revival process. With the necessary approvals in place, the community launched a Vanamahotsava tree plantation drive on July 6, 2024. It was the first time in nearly 25 years that people had actively engaged with the lake area. Determined to take ownership of the project, residents formed a volunteer WhatsApp group and pledged to contribute Rs 1,000 per month per household. These funds were used to clear the debris, hire JCBs, and remove years' worth of accumulated waste.

While local efforts made progress, the need for larger financial support became evident. "We reached out to Hands On seeking CSR funds to revive the lake. Seeing the community's commitment, the NGO approached the multinational IT company CGI for funding. CGI was impressed with the grassroots movement and agreed to fund key elements of the restoration, including desilting the lake, strengthening the bunds, constructing a walking track, and installing inlet and outlet channels to ensure water flow," said Abhijit. CGI, a Canada-based IT company, committed to fund Rs 20 lakh in the first phase of the rejuvenation process.

CGI also committed to maintaining the lake for the next three years. The second phase of the project includes planting more native tree species, setting up irrigation pipelines, and installing solar-powered streetlights along the walking track. Hands On has worked on nearly 27 lake restoration projects and brings with it technical knowledge to navigate through the rejuvenation process. Gurunandan Rao, co-founder and director of Hands On, said the restoration process took just five weeks. Despite ongoing monsoon rains in October, the NGO initiated the lake revival process, ensuring the work was completed in time to capture the December rains.

Explaining the key phases of the restoration process, Rao said, "First we dewatered the lake. The existing polluted water was removed, directing it to a downstream lake. Following this we did desilting and desludging. Using three excavators with a capacity of one cubic metre per bucket, the team removed accumulated sludge and debris. Later the lake's bunds were reconstructed and compacted to ensure stability and prevent erosion. Finally, we reconditioned the inlet and the outlet." Initially, the lake had only one inlet in poor condition and no proper outlet. The NGO opened up additional inlets and constructed a functional outlet to ensure clean water inflow and outflow. The NGO also preserved native tree species while removing invasive plants. Small islands of native trees were created within the lake to enhance biodiversity. A walking track was developed around the lake, encouraging community engagement and recreational activities. A new lease of life for an urban ecosystem

The results of the restoration have been transformative. Banaswadi-Channasandra Lake now has the capacity to hold up to 28 crore litre of rainwater, a crucial boost for the groundwater table in a city increasingly struggling with depleting resources. Since the rejuvenation began, over 32 small islands have formed within the lake, attracting migratory birds and even monkeys — species that had long disappeared from the area. "Additionally the residents co-funded a 1,000-foot fencing project alongside CGI's contribution of another 1,000 feet. This collective ownership ensured that the lake remained a community-driven endeavour," said Abhijit. For future phases, the Kasturinagar RWA, NGO, and other stakeholders aim to establish a mini forest in the lake's catchment area by planting 2,000-3,000 native trees, shrubs, and butterfly host plants. They also aim to install solar-powered streetlights for sustainability and safety; enhance community infrastructure with benches, walking paths, and signage, with a second phase of funding from CGI. Impact of the restoration and future plans

The timely execution allowed the lake to benefit from December rains, leading to natural water replenishment. The discovery of a shallow aquifer (jheri) further enhances groundwater recharge. To prevent the lake from falling into neglect again, residents have petitioned Karnataka Forest Minister Ishwar Khandre to bring the land officially under the Forest Department's control rather than leaving it with BBMP or BDA. Beyond the lake's revival, the community is already planning further environmental initiatives. The Kasturinagar Environment Ecology Restoration Establishment Trust is being set up to undertake sustainability projects, including rainwater harvesting in local parks in partnership with United Way. Additionally, they plan to introduce leaf shredder machines to convert dry leaves into compost, reducing BBMP's waste management burden.

'Black spots' in Chandigarh down to 3 from 5, SSP aims to make it zero in coming years

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

The number of "black spots" in Chandigarh has come down to three from five in 2021-2023, thanks to the cameras of Intelligent Traffic Management Systems (ITMS) and the tightening of noose around habitual traffic violators. "The number of black spots in the city was 15 in 2016-2019, which was reduced to five in 2021-2023. Now the number has been brought down to three," said SSP (Traffic Police) Sumer Pratap Singh. A road stretch of 500-metre length is considered a black spot if in a span of three successive calendar years, either five fatal road accidents/five grievous injuries or 10 deaths have occurred in road accidents.

As per the Chandigarh Traffic Police, in the block year (2021-23), five "black spots" existed: Airport Light Point, Poultry Farm Chowk, Kala Gram Light Point, Transport Light Point, and Shastri Nagar Light Point. The SSP said that with the joint efforts of all units of traffic police, "we have successfully reduced these from five to three in block year (2022-24)". They are Airport Light Point, Poultry Farm Chowk, and Kala Gram Light Point.

A senior Traffic Police officer said that awareness, enforcement, liaising with engineering department, increased presence and more deployment of policemen on black spots, and installation of ITMS cameras, have con-



tributed in bringing down the number of fatalities and accidents at the black spots, which further reduced the number of black spots to three. "Our continued endeavour will be to make it zero in coming years and make Chandigarh roads safest for road commuters in India," said the SSP. The police officer said that driving licence of traffic violators for speeding, red light jumping, use of mobile phone while driving, drunken driving, is confiscated from time to time, which has led to bringing down the number of accidents. Recently, the Traffic Police had identified a man violating traffic rules for 269 times in the city, and was later fined Rs 53,800 by the court. The violator was also awarded 15 days' community service at any traffic signal in the city.

Modi set to sound Bihar election bugle with Bhagalpur tour

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Bihar elections, PM Kisan Yojana, Narendra Modi, Bihar Assembly elections, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, Indian express news, current affairs BJP women workers, adorning 'Namo mehndi', will visit homes to extend invitations to the rally, says party. Prime Minister Narendra Modi appears all set to signal the start of the Bharatiya Janata Party's election campaign for the upcoming Bihar Assembly polls with a visit to Bhagalpur Monday. The PM will release the 19th instalment of the PM Kisan Yojana and announce around Rs 2,000 crore-worth of infrastructure projects during his tour.

About five lakh farmers from Bhagalpur and neighbouring districts of Banka, Munger, and Lakhisarai are likely to attend the PM's rally. The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi — or PM-KISAN — is an initiative by the Modi government to give farmers an annual income support of up to Rs 6,000 in three installments. Bihar elections, PM Kisan Yojana, Narendra Modi, Bihar Assembly elections, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, Indian express news, current affairs BJP women workers, adorning 'Namo mehndi', will visit homes to extend invitations to the rally, says party.

According to party sources, Bhagalpur was chosen for release of PM-KISAN instalment because of the presence of agriculture university at Sabour. The visit comes months ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections.

The prime focus of PM's Bhagalpur visit, which is stated to be part of rotational tour to various Bihar regions, is to create a "caste-neutral" constituency of farmers, party



sources said. Even though Bhagalpur, Banka, Munger and Lakhisarai have been traditional NDA strongholds, the coalition is looking to further consolidate its constituency. It was only during 2014 Lok Sabha and 2015 Assembly polls — when JD (U) was not part of the NDA — that the BJP had lost Bhagalpur and Banka Lok Sabha seats to the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). The party also lost all nine Assembly seats to the then Nitish Kumar-led Mahagathbandhan in 2015 Assembly polls. BJP spokesperson Manoj Sharma told that the PM was coming to Bhagalpur to "send message to all farmers of Bihar about the Centre being on its side not just with the Kisan Samman Nidhi but also with several agrobased measures".

As man-animal conflict rises, Wayanad MP Priyanka writes to CM Pinarayi seeking 'more funds for mitigation measures'



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Pinarayi Vijayan, Wayanad, cpi m, Communist Party of India (Marxist), funds for mitigation measures, Indian express news, current affairs Priyanka also wants the state to constitute special protection teams in consultation with the Union Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change. Congress Member of Parliament Priyanka Gandhi has urged Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to increase funds for mitigating the man-animal conflict in her constituency Wayanad, where wild attacks claimed seven lives within the last two months. In a letter to Vijayan, the Wayanad MP said funds are required for adequate measures to be taken for protec-

tion of human habitats that lie in and around forest areas that are not available for the local administration.

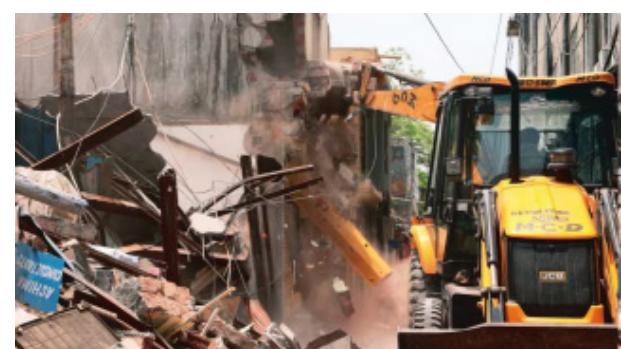
The development comes as the district, as well as the state, grapples with growing wildlife, including elephant attacks. The attacks have led both the ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Congress to seek changes in The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. Priyanka also wants the state to constitute special protection teams in consultation with the Union Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change. The teams should be dispatched to the affected areas to expedite urgent measures for the protection of human lives, the letter said. "While a significant part of the responsibility lies with the MoEF, the central government is required to match at the state allocation, thus when the state allocation is not received due to delay or other reasons, the central government desists from sending their share of funds. This leaves the local administration in a dire situation where they are under immense pressure from the panic and pain caused by the frequency of animal attacks and yet unable to take mitigating measures," the letter from Priyanka, written days after touring the affected areas and families of the victims in her constituency, said. She said the local district administration has sought more funds allocation for mitigation measures and strengthening surveillance networks in the high-risk areas.

After allegations of sexual assault and forced conversions in Rajasthan town, demolition notices issued to suspects

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Rajasthan forced conversions, forced conversions, sexual assault, rajasthan sexual assault all, egations, Indian express news, current affairs On February 21, the Beawar Municipality sent notices to 10 of 13 suspects in the case. Days after seven men were arrested over allegations of sexual assault, blackmail, and forced religious conversions of a group of schoolgirls in Bijaynagar town of Rajasthan's Beawar district, the local municipality has sent notices to the families of the suspects for alleged encroachments, it is learnt. The notices for alleged encroachments come at a time when the allegations, which surfaced on February 18, have led to communal tensions, with right-wing outfits holding protests for strict action against the arrested suspects. According to Sajjan Singh, deputy superintendent of police of Masuda, five minors were allegedly sexually exploited and forced to convert. Three FIRs have been filed in the case so far. "Parents of one of the victims saw her talking to someone overnight and found a phone with her. Then they realised that a crime had been committed and filed an FIR at the police station. Until now, five girls have come forward complaining against the accused. About 13 people have been named in the FIR, and 10 arrested. We have taken the accused on remand and further investigation is ongoing," Singh said. Among those named in the FIR is the owner of a local café, where the sexual assault allegedly took place.

Notice has also been issued to the local mosque, the Jama Masjid. It states: "You are informed through notice that in the context of administrative investigation, Jama



Masjid is established at Kekri Road Rajnagar Chauraha in Nagarpalika Bijaynagar area, on which you are carrying out religious activities. If you have any ownership document or any other document related to ownership in respect of the said place/land, then present it before the undersigned within 03 days of receipt of the notice. Otherwise, after the expiry of the period, action will be taken under Rajasthan Nagarpalika Act 2009, for which you yourself will be responsible". Similarly, a notice sent to the café where the alleged sexual assault took place asks its owners to "remove the encroachments outside the café in the next 24 hours". The other eight notices — all issued to those named in the police FIR — are also similarly worded. When contacted, Beawar Municipality Executive Officer Pratap Singh confirmed the development but denied these were "demolition notices", telling "Action will be taken as per the Rajasthan Municipality rules".

West Bengal Assembly polls: Eye on growth, regaining foothold; CPI(M)'s 4-day conference begins

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

A FOUR-DAY state conference of the CPI(M) commenced on Saturday at Dankuni in Hooghly district to chalk out the party's strategy for the West Bengal Assembly elections to be held next year as it aims at regaining its footing in the state. The conference, which was inaugurated by CPI(M) central committee coordinator Prakash Karat is being attended by CPI(M) politburo members Manik Sarkar, Brinda Karat, Surjyakanta Mishra, M A Baby, Tapan Sen, Ashok Dhawale, Nilotpal Basu and Ramchandra Dome. The party leadership is also worried about the communal polarisation in Bengal which never happened earlier in the state.

"We were zero from the 2019 Lok Sabha election and till date we are continuing that way. Our footings and ground level organisation almost vanished in more than ten districts of the state. Naturally, we got less than five per cent of total votes. In some constituencies, even the security deposit of our candidates had been forfeited. In the organisational report. It is mentioned that we have a serious lack of ground level organisation. Not only that, our workers also have limitations to make or grow ground level organisations," a senior CPI(M) leader said.

"Our party is now almost full of representatives from the middle class of the society. There is a serious lack of growth movement in frontal organisations like farmers' groups and trade union fronts," he further added. "We failed to fight against communal and identity politics and also failed to break the binary of the society. Naturally, election after election we became irrelevant to the voters," said a student front leader of CPI(M). According to CPI(M) sources, the internal report of the party shows a significant number of FIRs have been filed against the party's youth and student leaders and this surge in FIRs indicates robust participation from farmers and trade union fronts in the movements, suggesting a strong grassroot presence of youths and students. The report also says that representation from farmers and workers specially from unorganised sectors are very low in the CPI(M), said sources. There is a trend that many workers are coming closer to the party but not taking party membership and that there is a disconnect between the local leadership and workers, said sources. The local leaders are also more focused on climbing the party hierarchy, aiming for area or district-level positions, rather than engaging with workers at the grassroots level, the sources said. A CPI(M) state secretariat member said, "In recent times, the movement has begun with huge strength. But in the end it was diluted in a short time. In the elections, the middle class mindset of the leaders and activists is creating obstacles. If you think in the long run, the poor people must be brought. That part cannot be excluded. We should not be just the middle class party, we must be a poor people's party." A public meeting will be held at Dankuni on February 25, the concluding day of the state conference, a CPI(M) leader said. The CPI(M)-led Left Front failed to win any seats in



the 2021 assembly elections and in the 2019 and 2024 parliamentary polls, where it contested all 42 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state.

Canada police touch base with ED on suspect

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Canada gold heist suspect, \$20 million gold theft, Pearson Airport gold heist, Simran Preet Panesar news, Air Canada heist suspect, Chandigarh gold heist accused, Canada's biggest gold robbery, Peel Regional Police gold theft, Project 24Karat investigation, Brampton gold heist mastermind, India connection in gold heist, Toronto airport gold robbery ED officials raid the suspect's home in Mohali on Friday. A day after the Enforcement Directorate raided the Mohali residence of 32-year-old Simran Preet Panesar, one of the nine suspects allegedly involved in Canada's biggest gold heist worth \$22.5 million, the agency has found that both he and his wife are Canadian nationals, it is learnt.

The ED action came days after The Indian Express tracked down Panesar following a month-long investigation in collaboration with CBC News: The Fifth Estate, Canada. The Indian Express has also learnt that the Peel Regional Police from Canada has established contact with the ED on the matter. Highly placed sources said both husband and wife have been living in India for over one year.

Panesar was an acting supervisor in operations control with Air Canada at the time of the gold heist, which occurred in April 2023. According to investigators, 6,600 gold bars weighing 400 kg of pure gold and about \$2.5 million worth of various foreign currencies were stolen from Pearson International Airport's cargo compound shortly after arriving on a flight from Zurich. He allegedly left Canada approximately three months after the heist.

When contacted by The Indian Express earlier, Panesar had refused to comment on his alleged involvement in the gold heist, citing his "family's safety" and "legal reasons".

A quest for harmony with nature

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

A recent survey confirmed the disturbing trend of diminishing bird species and numbers in Kerala. I have noticed this phenomenon in Thiruvananthapuram, where I grew up in the 1960s. The ancestral house was in a compound with many trees and I had seen paradise flycatchers with trailing tails and golden yellow orioles. Once a purple sunbird had built its pendulous nest at the front entrance, unaffected by our frequent movements. Over the past five decades, the compound changed to accommodate more houses with less greenery. A white-breasted kingfisher and a magpie robin became occasional visitors at dusk. During the COVID pandemic, I spent a lot of time looking at birds from the balcony of my fourth-floor apartment in Jamshedpur. A jamun tree at eye level was a favourite with many starlings, coppersmith barbets, bank mynahs and yellow-footed green pigeons along with the familiar purple sunbirds, golden orioles and magpie robins. The most exciting discovery was a pair of barn owls that would come out from their hideout beneath my balcony. Once it was holding a recently caught rat and another time it perched a few feet away from me. Winter spotting in winter, I spotted small migratory birds, greenish warbler the size of a jamun leaf and a Taiga flycatcher. Last year, I sensed trouble as some men walked around inspecting the old building under the jamun tree. They bought the land, demolished the building and pruned the trees. Over the next few months, a hotel

was built and all that I could see from my balcony was an expansive bright blue metal roof and a few branches of the jamun tree. The hotel exterior was lit up in the evenings and flashed bright colours. The modification led to the disappearance of birds without any protest except a pair of rose-ringed parakeets. Inept and sad, I missed the barn owls the most. I sought birds in the peripheries of the city and included birdwatching in all my travels. Though I spotted many species, the serene comfort of bird watching from the balcony was lost. Recently I got an opportunity to visit Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on a medical mission and looked forward to seeing some African birds. Citing safety concerns, the hosts forbade us from venturing anywhere beyond the hospital and the hotel. The hotel downtown was amid many high-rise buildings and we were surprised to find weaver birds among the creepers at the entrance and long-tailed speckled mouse birds on a tree nearby. As I reached my room, a Marabou stork flew past the window and I could see a bulky Hadada ibis on a field across the road, its wings glistening in sunlight. The next day, we went to the hospital. Established in 1922, most of the buildings in the sprawling complex were old, single-storeyed with stone or bare brick exterior and sloping roofs in earthy colours. The abundance of native trees and the typical tall African cacti gave the feeling of a resort. Almost every tree had nests of weaver birds. In between the built structures, there were large patches of mixed indigenous plants.

Water quality at Maha Kumbh found unfit for dips on many days: Graphics

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has released data on the assessment of water quality at five different locations in and around the confluence (Sangam) in Prayagraj, and two further away from Prayagraj on Ganga. High levels of faecal coliform (microbes from human and animal excreta) were found in river water in which people took holy dip during the Maha Kumbh, according to a report submitted to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) by the CPCB. Over 55 crore people have visited the Maha Kumbh.

In the 24 days between January 12 and February 4, data was released for 13 of those days, as shown in the graphics below. The major bathing dates that fall in this period are January 13 (Paush Purnima), January 14 (Makar Sankranti), January 29 (Mauni Amavasya) and February 3 (Basant Panchami). Data shows that the water was unfit for outdoor bathing on and around them in some of the areas where measurements were taken. However, a large number of devotees took the holy dip almost every day. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has dismissed these findings as 'baseless allegations' stating that, "When we make baseless allegations or spread fake videos against Sanatan Dharma, Maa Ganga, India, or the Maha Kumbh, it is like playing with the faith of these 56 crore people". Measurements shown in the subsequent graphics are that of the faecal coliform levels - measured in most portable number per 100 millilitres (MPN/100 mL) - and that of the biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), measured in milligrams per liter (mg/L). Another CPCB report titled 'Water Quality Assessment of Water Bodies' mentions that for outdoor bathing, the maximum permissible limit of faecal coliform should be 2500 MPN/100mL and BOD should be 3 mg/L. Other measurements that are taken into consideration while assessing water quality are pH levels and Dissolved Oxygen (DO) levels in water. Data from CPCB's assessment shows that on each of the 13 days of measurement, the pH and DO levels were within the desirable limits, which are between 6.5 and 8.5 for pH levels, and over 5 (mg/L) for DO levels.

Data released by the CPCB shows that on January 13, on the occasion of Paush Purnima, the BOD levels exceeded the maximum permissible limits and on Makar



Sankranti (January 14), the faecal coliform levels were over 4 times (11,000 MPN/100mL) the permissible limits. On January 20, the measurement was 49,000 MPN/100mL, over 19 times the permissible limit. Faecal coliform levels near Nagvasuki Mandir on the Ganga were unfit for bathing on 5 of the 13 days when measurements were taken. On January 15 and January 30, these levels were found to be 13,000 (over 5 times the permissible limit) and on February 4 the measurements revealed faecal coliform levels of 11,000 which is over 4 times the permissible limit. On Lord Curzon bridge, which is further upstream on the Ganga, approximately 11 kilometers from the Sangam ghat, measurements reveal that 4 out of the 13 days were unfit for bathing. On January 30, a day after Mauni Amavasya, the BOD levels were 4.2, which is 33% more than the permissible limit of 3, as shown below. Water quality was unfit for bathing on 9 of the 13 days taken into account due to high faecal coliform levels, BOD, or both. On January 14 (Makar Sankranti), faecal coliform levels were 33,000 (13 times over the permissible limit). Measurements taken around Old Naini bridge on the Yamuna show a similar pattern where the river water was unfit for bathing on 9 of the 13 days taken into account, as shown below. After the Sangam, which is, further downstream on the Ganga, measurements around Deeha Ghat show that the water quality was deteriorated and unsuitable on 10 of 13 days, where either the faecal coliform levels, the BOD, or both, were above the permissible limits. The Maha Kumbh Mela, which started on January 13, 2025, will conclude on February 26, on the occasion of Maha Shivratri.

What is the significance of Kotak Mahindra Bank's improved ratings?

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

The story so far: Ratings agency S&P on Friday upgraded Kotak Mahindra Bank (KMB)'s ratings to 'BBB' from 'BBB-' after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) lifted restrictions that barred the private lender from onboarding new customers and issuing fresh credit cards. Elaborating on the rationale, it held that the private lender was "well positioned" for growth in the next two years and "likely" to maintain "strong capitalisation". "This, together with the banks' good risk management and strengthened technology infrastructure, will support growth, particularly in new credit card issuances and digital onboarding," it held.

What exactly had happened?

In April last year, the apex banking regulator placed restrictions on KMB after having observed "serious deficiencies and non-compliances" about its IT inventory and user access management, data leak and prevention strategy, business continuity and disaster recovery rigour and drill, among other things. This was based on the regulator's examination of the private bank's systems for two years, that is, 2022 and 2023. The bank was also deemed non-compliant with RBI's subsequent recommendations or 'Corrective Action Plans' (CAPs). Back then, S&P had held apprehensions about the restriction to be a potential setback to their credit growth and profitability. It had observed that credit cards were KMB's "higher-yielding target growth segment". For perspective, the portfolio grew 52% YoY as on December 31, 2023, compared with a total loan growth of 19%. However, it refrained from altering their 'BBB-' rating. According to the agency, credit cards made up only a "small" 4% of their total loans as of December-end 2023.

What are ratings agencies and why are they important?

Ratings agencies assess the credit worthiness and financial health of corporations, sovereigns, equities and bonds. Their reports are used by potential investors and lenders in making an informed decision about the assessed entity's ability to meet payment obligations. In other words, they rank a corporation, equity or debt's financial stability and/or its potential for high or low risk of default. Rating agencies periodically re-evaluate a rating in tandem with larger socio-economic and/or company-specific developments. These could entail a slowing lending economy, higher interest rate regime or in KMB's case a regulatory action. According to the United Nations' Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the underlying logic of credit rating agencies is to avert the information asymmetry between borrowers and lenders about the latter's creditworthiness. It further explains that issuers with lower credit ratings pay higher interest rates - reflective of the greater associated risk with lending to them, than the higher rated issuers. What grading pattern do they follow?

The three prominent ratings agencies, viz., Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch subscribe to largely similar grading patterns. Standard & Poor's accord their highest grade, that is, AAA, to countries, companies or bonds with the exceedingly high capacity to meet their financial commitments. Its lowest grade is 'D', accorded to entities with high probability of payment default or breach of an imputed promise. This is particularly accorded in case the concerned entity has filed for bankruptcy. Its grading slab includes letters A, B and C with an additional single or double letter denoting a higher grade. Moody's separates ratings into short and long-term definitions. The former involves obligations maturing in thirteen months or less whereas the latter involves obligations maturing in eleven months or more. Its longer-term grading ranges from 'Aaa' to 'C', with 'Aaa' being the highest. The succession pattern is similar to S&P. The short-term ratings scale ranges from P-1 to NP, with P-1 being the highest. Fitch, too, rates from AAA to D, with D being the lowest. It follows the same succession pattern as Moody's and Fitch.

Are their examples of how rating agencies have impacted banks and NBFCs in India?

Rating agencies draw their observations based on publicly available data, disclosures to exchanges and knowledge about a corporation or a sovereign. Downgrades could potentially invite further closed regulatory monitoring to ensure companies are closer to minimum operating requirements and avert a collapse. In October 2011, Moody's downgraded the State Bank of India (SBI) citing modest capital and declining asset quality, putting pressure on the government to inject money into the bank. Reuters reported. The downgrade led to the state lender's scrip declining to a two-year low on BSE. The grim impact reverberated on the markets particularly on financial stocks. Thereafter, in March a year later, the state lender received a ₹7,900 crore capital infusion by the government. Conversely, on downgrades from regulatory actions, non-banking financial company Mannapuram Finance's shares slumped 16%, an over four-year low, following downgrades apprehending a potential hit to earnings, Reuters reported. This was after RBI had barred Asirvad Micro Finance (the microfinance arm of Mannapuram Finance) alongside Arohan Financial Services, Mitsubishi UFG-backed DMI Finance Private, and Navi Finserv from disbursing and sanctioning of loans. Were rating agencies accused of a role in the 2008 global financial crisis? U.S.' Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission (FCIC) in a 2011 report held rating agencies Moody's, S&P and Fitch as "key enablers of the financial meltdown". It held that the mortgage-related securities - which were at the centre of the crisis, "could not have been marketed and sold without their approval". According to the report, "Their ratings helped the market soar and their downgrades through 2007 and 2008 wreaked havoc across markets and firms".

The Collegium and changes — it may still be early days



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Two interesting nuggets of information have emanated in recent days about the functioning of the Supreme Court of India's Collegium. As is often the case with the body's processes, reports in the media attribute the news of these decisions to unnamed sources. The collegium, the accounts say, will now conduct interviews of candidates who have been recommended for elevation as judges to the High Courts. The panel will also, to the extent possible, exclude from selection those whose close relatives have served or continue to serve as judges of the High Courts or the Supreme Court. By themselves, neither of these resolutions might seem especially remarkable. One would think that appointments to important positions in the State — in this case, to the higher judiciary — would require careful consideration, including a meeting by the decision-makers with the nominated candidates.

One would also think that some amount of pruning of nominees is inevitable in any process of selection. Here, the collegium is conscious that a few deserving candidates might miss out in a move to exclude those with kin on the Bench, but it believes, on a balance, that this will help create a more diverse judiciary. There is still a concern it is too early to judge the merits of these choices. In time, they may well come to be seen as harbingers of change and reform, but, for now, a familiar concern looms large, threatening to militate against that prospect. Any reform of the collegium system — much needed as it is — will only go so far, if the government is permitted to stonewall proposals, on arbitrary, whimsical and often undisclosed grounds. At its foundation, the collegium is a product of judge-made law. Thus, it seems to forever stand at a crossroad. It has no formal rules to bind it; it is answerable to nobody; and its functioning — whether it is in the publication of its decisions or in the opacity and the mystique of its methods — is suffused in a certain ad hocism. Replacing this with a clear set of binding rules is essential to the maintenance of the system's integrity. For example, we are told that there exists a "memorandum of procedure". But does a breach of that manual carry with it any consequences? Will the interviewing of candidates be written into those set of rules? Who is to say how the collegium under future Chief Justices of India (CJ) will function?

In recent weeks, as we have marked the 75th anniversary of the Constitution's adoption, we have seen many a paean sung to the document's text and vision. Its survival has enlivened our commitment to equality and social justice. But that we have been unable to determine quite how best to appoint our judges is an enduring blemish. The Constitution's framers debated the question over many days. They were mindful of the foundational ideas underlying the republic: that the legislature, the executive and the judiciary must remain separate. But striking a balance and ensuring that the sovereign function of making judicial appointments would not come in the way of ensuring the autonomy of the courts was always going to be a sticky issue. The 'middle course' it was.

All manners of suggestions were made in the Constituent Assembly. But the drafters, in the Assembly's chairperson Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's words, chose to go down a "middle course". To that end, the Constitution provides that judges to the Supreme Court are to be appointed by the President of India in consultation with the CJI and such other judges that he or she deems fit. Judges to the High Courts

are to be appointed by the President in consultation with the CJI, the Governor of the State and the Chief Justice of that court. In the case of transfers, the President may move a judge from one High Court to another, but only after consulting the CJI.

These stipulations are by themselves clear. But in failing to define what manner of consultation ought to be made, in failing to explicate how transparent this process needs to be, the provisions opened themselves up for judicial consideration. In 1993, in what is popularly known as the Second Judges Case, the Court held that "consultation" must mean "concurrence". And concurrence not only from the CJI, but from a "collegium" of judges. In the process, the Court fashioned a whole new procedure that it believed would maintain both a fidelity to the bare text of the Constitution's words and the chief objective of ensuring an independent and autonomous judiciary. The process has a number of nuts and bolts to it. But, in short, it postulates the following: the recommendation to appoint a new judge to a High Court or to the Supreme Court, to transfer a judge from one High Court to another, and to elect a new Chief Justice to a High Court, would come from the collegium — a body comprising the CJI and his senior colleagues, in some cases, two members, and in others four. The collegium will make this recommendation after taking the views of "consultee" judges. Once this recommendation is made, the Union government can either choose to accept the proposal or return the proposal for reconsideration. Upon reconsideration, if the proposal is submitted anew, the government has no choice but to sanction the resolution. While this seems simple enough, seeing as the law was laid down by the Court sans any attendant and binding rules, the government has a variety of means available to it to block recommendations it deems inconvenient. It can either keep the proposal pending at its end or, on a re-recommendation, stop short of issuing a presidential warrant authorising the appointment or transfer. This has led to a curious paradox: in theory, the collegium retains primacy over judicial appointments. But the government's capacity to forestall any recommendation made means that the question of primacy remains moot, despite the Court having previously spelled out — in the Fourth Judges Case (2015) — that it is the judiciary alone that must retain pre-eminence and that any tinkering with that position would impinge on the Constitution's basic structure. The Judges' cases and rule of law.

Whatever our position on the collegium's constitutional suitability may be, today, the system represents the rule of law. The government is legally obliged to follow the procedure laid down in the Judges' cases. It enjoys no discretion in the matter. When it sits over recommendations endlessly, and when it resists proposals by simply failing to act, it is effectively stymieing the legal process. There is no doubt that until such time we manage to find a process that can marry the requirements of accountability with independence, embracing meaningful reforms within the extant process remains critical. The law as it stands must be followed. The collegium's newest proposals address some of the long-standing concerns over its processes. But at some stage, we must also take seriously the question of implementation. Until now, while the Court has, on occasion, asked questions of the government when it has failed to follow through on a resolution, it has stopped short of issuing express directions for compliance. Perhaps the Court has felt that orders of this kind might be seen as unnecessarily confrontational. Ultimately, in matters such as these, one would want different wings of the state working together collaboratively to ensure that the procedure stands fulfilled. But for the collegium system to retain salience, and for it to achieve its purported objective — the maintenance of our judiciary's independence — the rulings in the Judges' cases must be accorded due respect. The Court's ability to function as a counter-majoritarian institution depends as much on its ability to declare the law as it does on its ability to ensure that the law is followed. For, as Chief Justice Coke put it, way back in 1611, summing up the essence of the rule of law, "The king hath no prerogative but what the law of the land allows him."

The end of global climate policy

The climate conference in Baku in 2024 turned the climate treaty on its head by scrapping the defining feature of the post-colonial world divided between 'donors' and 'recipients' and suggesting the need for an alternate global sustainability forum. The shift requires that developing countries take charge of their own destiny. The purpose of the climate treaty in 1992 was to collectively deal with a common concern. In an unequal world, this was defined by the G7 reducing future emissions of carbon dioxide despite the treaty acknowledging cumulative emissions alone matter. Developing countries agreed to take on a problem they did not create in exchange for technology transfer and funds, not realising that the imbalance in research capacity had set the stage for shifting the burden.

The backbone of the current arrangement is the disconnect between academic treatment and rules and practice, providing continuing advantage to the G7. The way global concerns have been selected, agenda defined, and rules implemented — all the time dealing with the symptoms rather than the causes of problems — provides continuing advantages to the G7. The pressure to provide incentives for private finance and dealing with trade restrictions at the same time was never part of the 'grand bargain'. The G7 have now absolved themselves of any responsibility for climate change with, in India's words, the "optical illusion" of providing financial support by 2035.

The former colonial powers morphed into the G7 in 1973. Climate change with its reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide is only for the G7 who have overused their fair share of the common atmospheric resource. For the others, the greatest challenge is sustainable development, that is, modifying pathways, lifestyles and energy transition. The way the agenda was set masks the injustice within the climate crisis and the extent it is underestimated. The impact of the Global South, representing four-fifths of the global population and half the GDP, no longer following the lead of the G7 has been felt most significantly in climate change with growing calls for climate justice. The Nationally Determined Contributions of 72 countries explicitly include the concept of a "just transition", reflecting recognition of the social dimensions of climate action.

Climate justice is not about perceptions of fairness of specific policies. It questions the framing of existing distinctions between global and local levels and between mitigation and adaptation. It is not just the disproportionate continuing levels of emissions but also solutions such as carbon pricing and trade restrictions that widen the income gap and increase inequality. Current global rules do not reflect the interests of the Global South. These views reflect conflicting visions of how society is organised and what constitutes progress. Distinguishing between total emissions of



countries and trends, drivers, and patterns of natural resource use as causes of climate change masks the impact of the most stable global trend of urbanisation covering three-quarters of global emissions and natural resource use. A middle class and more equal world is adopting opinions, pathways, and actions distinct from those who developed earlier. The foundational fact is that patterns of urban natural resource use of the G7 are not being followed by the Global South. The G7 with one-fifth the population was consuming three-quarters of global resources in 1950, with the U.S. alone consuming 40%. By the 1970s, three-quarters of the population of the G7 had shifted to cities and their lifestyles based on commodity prices kept low by the former colonial powers directly led to climate change. The real price of the most traded commodity, oil, was not allowed to increase over a century, leading to its wasteful use. In 2050, the G7 will account for 25% of global emissions with a 10% share of the global population, while Asia is expected to account for 55% of the world's emissions equal to its share of the global population. The time is ripe for new foundational principles of sustainability with justice at its centre. India would have to match the strategic thinking of the U.S. in setting up interlinked voluntary arrangements of the 'rules-based order', with the rules determined by the G7, for a new order for 'shared prosperity' seeking comparable levels of well-being within ecological limits. Global governance with global cooperation itself in danger, three initiatives are suggested. First, BRICS and partner countries should take the strategic leap for an alternate sustainability forum to support each other in the urban energy transition. This would not be an anti-G7 forum, but focused on units located in member countries in different continents researching sustainability science, urbanisation, monitoring G7 climate policy and supporting exchange of experiences. Second, the UN Climate negotiations should be limited to reviewing emissions reductions in the G7 and grants in the \$300 billion to the most vulnerable — Small Island States and Least Developed Countries.

Israel's Netanyahu signals he's moving ahead with Trump's idea to forcibly displace Palestinians from Gaza



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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday (February 18, 2025) signalled that he was moving ahead with U.S. President Donald Trump's proposal to forcibly displace the Palestinian population out of Gaza, calling it "the only viable plan to enable a different future" for the region. Netanyahu discussed the plan with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who kicked off a Middle East visit by endorsing Israel's war aims in Gaza, saying Hamas "must be eradicated." That created further doubt around the shaky ceasefire as talks on its second phase are yet to begin.

Rubio, in his upcoming stops in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, is likely to face more pushback from Arab leaders over Trump's proposal, which includes redeveloping Gaza under U.S. ownership. Netanyahu has said all emigration from Gaza should be "voluntary," but rights groups and other critics say that the plan amounts to coercion given the territory's vast destruction. Netanyahu said he and Trump have a "common strategy" for Gaza. Echoing Trump, he said "the gates of hell would be open" if Hamas doesn't release dozens of remaining hostages abducted in the militant group's attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, that triggered the 16-month war.

The ceasefire's first phase ends in two weeks. Negotiations were meant to begin two weeks ago on the second phase, in which Hamas would release dozens of remaining hostages in exchange for more Palestinian prisoners, a lasting truce and the withdrawal of Israeli forces. Trump's special Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, told Fox News that "phase two is absolutely going to begin" and he had "very productive" calls Sunday with Netanyahu and officials from Egypt and Qatar, which serve as mediators, about continuing talks this week. He also said hostages to be released include 19 Israeli soldiers and "we believe all of them are alive." Netanyahu's office said Israel's security Cabinet would meet Monday to discuss the second phase. Trump later told journalists it is "up to Israel what the next step is, in consultation with me."

In another sign of closing ranks, Israel's Defense Ministry said it received a shipment of 2,000-pound (900-kilogram) MK-84 munitions from the United States. The Biden administration paused a shipment of such bombs last year over concerns about civilian casualties in Gaza. This week marks 500 days of the war. Netanyahu has signaled readiness to resume the fighting after the ceasefire's current phase, though it could be a death sentence for remaining hostages. Rubio said peace becomes impossible as long as Hamas "stands as a force that can govern or as a force

that can administer or as a force that can threaten by use of violence," adding, "It must be eradicated." Hamas reasserted control over Gaza when the ceasefire began last month, despite suffering heavy losses. Netanyahu has offered Hamas a chance to surrender and send top leaders into exile. Hamas has rejected that scenario and insists on Palestinian rule. Spokesman Abdul Latif al-Qanou told The Associated Press the group accepts a Palestinian unity government or a technocratic committee to run Gaza. Netanyahu instructed negotiators to leave for Cairo on Monday to discuss further implementation of the ceasefire's first phase, as issues over delivery of shelter materials continue.

The Israeli military, meanwhile, said it carried out an airstrike on people who approached forces in southern Gaza. The Hamas-run Interior Ministry said it killed three of its police officers while they secured the entry of aid trucks near Rafah on the Egyptian border. In an interview last week, Rubio indicated that Trump's Gaza proposal was in part aimed at pressuring Arab states to make their own postwar plan that would be acceptable to Israel. Rubio also appeared to suggest that Arab countries send troops to combat Hamas. "If the Arab countries have a better plan, then that's great," Rubio said Thursday on the "Clay and Buck Show." "But 'Hamas has guns,'" he added. "Someone has to confront those guys. It's not going to be American soldiers. And if the countries in the region can't figure that piece out, then Israel is going to have to do it." Rubio wasn't scheduled to meet with Palestinians on his trip. For Arab leaders, facilitating the mass expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza or battling Palestinian militants on behalf of Israel are nightmare scenarios that would bring fierce domestic criticism and potentially destabilize an already volatile region.

Egypt hosts an Arab summit on Feb. 27 and is working with other countries on a counterproposal that would allow for Gaza's rebuilding without removing its population. Human rights groups say the expulsion of Palestinians would likely violate international law. Egypt has warned that any mass influx of Palestinians from Gaza would undermine its nearly half-century peace treaty with Israel, a cornerstone of U.S. influence in the region.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia also have rejected any mass displacement of Palestinians. The UAE was the driving force behind the 2020 Abraham Accords in which four Arab states — Bahrain, the UAE, Morocco and Sudan — normalized relations with Israel during Trump's previous term. Trump hopes to expand the accords to include Saudi Arabia, potentially offering closer U.S. defense ties, but the kingdom has said it won't normalize relations with Israel without a pathway to a Palestinian state. Rubio won't be visiting Egypt or Jordan, close U.S. allies at peace with Israel that have refused to accept any influx of Palestinian refugees. Trump has suggested he might slash U.S. aid if they don't comply, which could be devastating for their economies. Arab and Muslim countries have conditioned any support for postwar Gaza on a return to Palestinian governance with a pathway to statehood in Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem, territories that Israel seized in the 1967 Mideast war. Israel has ruled out a Palestinian state and any role in Gaza for the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, whose forces were driven out when Hamas seized power there in 2007.

Rubio says Hamas must be eradicated, casting further doubt on shaky ceasefire in Gaza



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Sunday (February 16, 2025) fully endorsed Israel's war aims in the Gaza Strip, saying Hamas "must be eradicated" and throwing the future of the shaky ceasefire into further doubt. Mr. Rubio met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem at the start of a regional tour, where he is likely to face pushback from Arab leaders over President Donald Trump's proposal to transfer the Palestinian population out of the Gaza Strip and redevelop it under U.S. ownership.

Mr. Netanyahu has welcomed the plan, and said he and Mr. Trump have a "common strategy" for Gaza's future. Echoing Mr. Trump, he said "the gates of hell would be open" if Hamas does not release dozens of remaining hostages abducted in its Oct 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war. Their remarks came just two weeks before the first phase of the ceasefire is set to end. The second phase, in which Hamas is to release dozens of remaining hostages in exchange for more Palestinian prisoners, a lasting truce and the withdrawal of Israeli forces, has yet to be negotiated.

Mr. Rubio said Hamas "cannot continue as a military or government force." "As long as it stands as a force that can govern or as a force that can administer or as a force that can threaten by use of violence, peace becomes impossible," Mr. Rubio said. "It must be eradicated." Such language could complicate efforts to continue talks with Hamas, which, despite suffering heavy losses in the war, remains intact and in control of Gaza.

The Israeli military meanwhile said it carried out an airstrike early Sunday (February 16, 2025) on people who approached its forces in southern Gaza. The Hamas-run Interior Ministry said the strike killed three of its policemen while they were securing the entry of aid trucks near Rafah, on the Egyptian border. Hamas said that attack was a "serious violation" of the ceasefire and accused Mr. Netanyahu of trying to sabotage the deal. Resuming the war could doom the remaining hostages. Resuming the war could be a death sentence for the remaining hostages and may not succeed in annihilating Hamas, which survived a 15-month Israeli onslaught and quickly reasserted control over Gaza when the ceasefire took hold last month. Mr. Netanyahu has signalled readiness to resume the war after the current stage and has offered Hamas a chance to surrender and send its top leaders into exile. Hamas has rejected such a scenario. Mr. Netanyahu also has yet to approve the entry of mobile homes and heavy machinery into the Gaza Strip, as required by the ceasefire agreement. Hamas had threatened to hold up the release of hostages last week over the issue, raising fears the ceasefire could unravel, before proceeding with the release of three captives based on what it

said were assurances from Arab mediators.

An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said the issue would be discussed in the coming days and that Israel was coordinating with the United States. In another sign of the two allies closing ranks, Israel's Defense Ministry said it received a shipment of 2,000-pound (900-kg) MK-84 munitions from the United States. The Biden administration had paused a shipment of such bombs last year over concerns about civilian casualties in Gaza. "If someone has a better plan... that's great!" In a radio interview last week, Mr. Rubio indicated that Mr. Trump's proposal was in part aimed at pressuring Arab states to come up with their own postwar plan that would be acceptable to Israel, which says Hamas can have no role in Gaza. He also appeared to suggest that Arab countries send in troops to combat Hamas. "If someone has a better plan, and we hope they do," Mr. Rubio said Thursday on the "Clay and Buck Show." "But 'Hamas has guns,'" he added. "Someone has to confront those guys. It's not going to be American soldiers. And if the countries in the region can't figure that piece out, then Israel is going to have to do it and then we're back to where we've been." Mr. Rubio was not scheduled to meet with any Palestinians on his trip. Arabs have limited options as Israel has rejected past plans

For Arab leaders, facilitating the mass expulsion of Palestinians or battling Palestinian militants on behalf of Israel are both nightmare scenarios. Either would open them up to fierce domestic criticism and potentially destabilize an already volatile region. Egypt says it will host an Arab summit on Feb 27 and is working with other countries on a counterproposal that would allow for Gaza to be rebuilt without removing its population. Human rights groups say the expulsion of Palestinians would likely violate international law. Egypt has warned that any mass influx of Palestinians from Gaza would undermine its nearly half-century-old peace treaty with Israel, a cornerstone of American influence in the region. Arab and Muslim countries have until now conditioned any support for postwar Gaza on a return to Palestinian governance with a pathway to statehood in Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem, territories Israel seized in the 1967 Mideast war. The Biden administration spent months rallying regional powers behind such plans, but they fizzled as Israel ruled out not only a Palestinian state but also any role in Gaza for the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, whose forces were driven out when Hamas seized power there in 2007. Hamas has said it is willing to relinquish power in Gaza but insists on Palestinian rule. Rubio to visit regional heavyweights. Mr. Rubio is also set to visit the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, regional heavyweights that have rejected any mass displacement of Palestinians and would be key to any regional response. The United Arab Emirates was the driving force behind the 2020 Abraham Accords in which four Arab states normalised relations with Israel during Mr. Trump's previous term. Mr. Trump hopes to expand the accords to include Saudi Arabia, potentially offering closer U.S. defence ties, but the kingdom has said it will not normalise relations with Israel without a pathway to a Palestinian state. Mr. Rubio will not be visiting Egypt or Jordan, close U.S. allies at peace with Israel that have refused to accept any influx of Palestinian refugees. Mr. Trump has at times suggested he might slash U.S. aid to the two countries, which could be devastating for their economies, if they don't comply.

AI-generated deepfakes targeting women politicians around the world



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From the United States to Italy, Britain, and Pakistan, female politicians are increasingly becoming victims of AI-generated deepfake pornography or sexualised images, in a troubling trend that researchers say threatens women's participation in public life. An online boom in non-consensual deepfakes is outpacing efforts to regulate the technology globally, experts say, with a proliferation of cheap artificial intelligence tools including photo apps digitally undressing women. The intimate imagery is often weaponised to tarnish the reputation of women in the public sphere, jeopardising their careers, undermining public trust, and threatening national security by creating conditions for blackmail or harassment, researchers say.

In the United States, the American Sunlight Project, a disinformation research group, identified more than 35,000 instances of deepfake content depicting 26 members of Congress — 25 of them women — across pornographic sites. A study published by the group last month showed that nearly one in six women in Congress have been victims of such AI-generated imagery. Alarming rate "Female lawmakers are being targeted by AI-generated deepfake pornography at an alarming rate," said Nina Jankowicz, chief executive of the ASP. "This is not just a tech problem — it is a direct assault on women in leadership and democracy itself." ASP did not release the names of the female lawmakers depicted in the imagery to avoid public searches, but it said it privately notified their offices. In the United Kingdom, Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner was among more than 30 British female politicians found to be targeted by a deepfake porn website, according to a Channel 4 investigation published last year. The high-traction site, which was unnamed, appeared to use AI technology to "nudify" about a dozen of those politicians, turning their photos into naked images without their consent, it said. The tech ad-

vancements have given rise to what researchers call an expanding 'cottage industry' around AI-enhanced porn, where users can turn to widely available AI tools and apps to digitally strip off clothing from pictures or generate deepfakes using sexualised text-to-image prompts. 'Form of violence'

In Italy, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni is seeking 1,00,000 euros in damages from two men accused of creating deepfake porn videos featuring her and posting them to American porn websites. "This is a form of violence against women," Ms. Meloni told a court last year, according to the Italian news agency ANSA. "With the advent of artificial intelligence, if we allow the face of some woman to be superimposed on the body of another woman, our daughters will find themselves in these situations, which is exactly why I consider it legitimate to wage this war." In Pakistan, AFP's fact-checkers debunked a deepfake video that showed lawmaker Meena Majeed publicly hugging an unrelated male Minister, an act culturally deemed immoral in a conservative Muslim-majority nation. In a separate episode, Azma Bukhari, the Information Minister of the Pakistani province of Punjab, said she felt "shattered" after discovering a deepfake video online that superimposed her face on the sexualised body of an Indian actor. "The chilling effect of AI-generated images and videos used to harass women in politics is a growing phenomenon," the nonprofit Tech Policy Press said last year, warning that the trend will have a "silencing effect on the political ambitions" of women. The proliferation of deepfakes has outstripped regulation around the world. Pakistan lacks legislation to combat sexualised deepfakes. UK laws criminalise sharing deepfake porn and the government has pledged to ban its creation this year, but so far no firm timetable has been laid out. A handful of U.S. States including California and Florida have passed laws making sexually explicit deepfakes a punishable offense and campaigners are calling on Congress to urgently pass a host of Bills to regulate their creation and dissemination.

Disparity of privilege "While high-profile politicians and celebrities, including singer Taylor Swift, have been victims of deepfake porn, experts say women not in the public eye are equally vulnerable. After ASP notified the targeted U.S. Congresswomen, the fake AI-generated imagery was almost entirely scraped from the websites, reflecting what it called a "disparity of privilege." "Women who lack the resources afforded to members of Congress would be unlikely to achieve such a rapid response from deepfake pornography sites if they initiated a takedown request themselves," ASP said.

In Madurai, mining for tungsten and trouble

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

On the hot afternoon of December 29, more than 300 women at Kesampatti village in Melur taluk in Madurai district, stand in a circle. Most of them are daily wage labourers or farm workers and are of different ages. Clad in colourful sarees, the women clap their hands, sing, and dance in a synchronised fashion. This is kummi, a folk dance that is performed in parts of Tamil Nadu. However, this is not a festival or religious event, when kummi is generally performed; it is a protest site at the entrance of the village. Through performance, the women are agitating against the Union government's proposed extraction of tungsten, a rare element found in this region, which is critical for automobile and defence industries and green energy technologies. "Enga mala sami kavalkarana irunthu makkalayum nilathayum kappan (Our hill god being a protector will protect both our people and land)," goes their kummi song.

A. Kalpana, who has never participated in a protest, says, "Our art, religion, food, culture, and tradition are interlinked with this landscape. Without our land, we will become nothing." The kummi protest is part of the weekly agitations that have been organised by activists and the residents of panchayats in Melur taluk since November 7, 2024. The Ministry of Mines announced that it had granted tungsten mining rights in eight blocks, spanning 5,000 acres, through an auction, to Hindustan Zinc Limited, a subsidiary of Vedanta Limited, a listed company. The Melur region, proposed for mining, includes the villages of Arittapatti and Nayakkarpatti, which are rich in schellite, a key source of tungsten, and are also home to several heritage sites.

On November 23, more than 20 panchayats of four panchayat unions in Madurai passed resolutions against the project. A few days later, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin urged the Modi government to cancel the award of tungsten mining rights in Madurai district and said that he would not allow it as the people were opposed to it. The Ministry, in turn, issued a statement saying "inputs were taken from the Government of Tamil Nadu before the block was put up for auction." C. Jeeva, a resident of Kesampatti and an organiser of the protest, says, "Though we have organised similar protests and rallies against granite quarrying in the Melur region in the past, we know that the struggle this time is against the Union Ministry and one of the biggest conglomerates in the world. It is going to be a tiring and prolonged battle, but we will persist." Anger in Arittapatti K. Selvaraj, 44, an environmental activist based in Kambur village near Melur taluk, is critical of the Ministry's decision of naming the project after a hamlet of about 20 houses. "By naming it after Nayakkarpatti, they made sure that it did not get immediate attention from the public. If it had been named Melur or Madurai tungsten block, the opposition to this would have been instant and more intense," he says. Selvaraj has been part of protests earlier. Last year, hundreds of residents from over 15 villages in Melur taluk staged a sit-in protest at Sekkipatti village condemning the district administration for inviting tenders for the operation of granite quarries in the taluk. This time, he was among the first few to oppose the project through petitions and Gram Sabha resolutions. "I went around telling people about the problems that the project will cause, and organised meetings to discuss protests and legal remedies," he says. Selvaraj says no panchayat president opposed the resolutions. "Since, this is a government project, some of the presidents were hesitant to record our resolutions, but eventually they agreed," he says. The protests and resolutions, Selvaraj says, were necessary, since Nayakkarpatti block comprises 11 villages, including Arittapatti, a biodiversity heritage site. A. Durka Devi, 26, the only postgraduate degree holder from Nayakkarpatti village, says the seven rocky granite hills that include areas of the Koolampatti, Arittapatti, Nayakkarpatti, and Meenakshipuram villages have historical significance. "These hills contain evidence dating back to the 16th century Pandya kingdom. They also feature several megalithic structures, rock-cut temples, Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, and Jain beds. If not for these historical records, this place would have been turned into stone,



dust, and sand long ago," she says. Noting the importance of the Melur region, a group of archaeologists, including C. Santhalingam, released a statement supporting the people's protest against the mining project. In it, they wrote that two Brahmi stone inscriptions dating back 2,300 years could be found in the Kazhinja malai, one of the seven hills. They also said that the Laguleesar sculpture in a 7th-8th century rock cut temple in the area was rare and should never be disturbed. Devi says Arittapatti was notified as Tamil Nadu's first biodiversity heritage site in 2022. The site covers the Arittapatti and Meenakshipuram villages in Madurai district. "It houses around 250 species of birds, including three raptors — the Laggar falcon, the Shaheen falcon, and Bonelli's eagle; 200 natural spring ponds; and three check dams," she says, the information at her fingertips. The region is also home to wildlife, including the Indian pangolin and slender loris. The rocky hills stand tall and are surrounded by green patches of farmland. The farms, which are mostly fed by the Mullaperiyar dam, use the ponds as their water source, say residents. Given the massive opposition to the project, especially in Arittapatti, on December 24 the government asked the Geological Survey of India to redefine the boundaries of the Nayakkarpatti block by excluding the biodiversity heritage site from it. It also asked the Tamil Nadu government to keep the process of issuing the Letter of Intent to the preferred bidder, Hindustan Zinc, on hold for the time being. But the resurvey order caused more fear. The residents say they had thought the project was coming to a halt altogether as the Tamil Nadu government had passed a resolution in the State Assembly on December 9 saying it would not allow the mining project. Selvaraj sits on one of the hillsides near Arittapatti along with villagers to discuss the next steps. They decide that they will embark on a 25-kilometre-long protest march from Narasingampatti in Melur taluk to Tallakulam in Madurai city on January 7. Turning away from the villagers, Selvaraj says the entire population of Melur taluk depends on land for their livelihood, as their primary income is through farming and livestock management. But more importantly, the people consider the hills sacred, he says. "Humans who did some sort of sacrifice for the village or to the people became gods. And they now reside in these hills, so we celebrate them and worship them," says K. Revathi, 25, an agricultural worker from Nayakkarpatti. Devi says she does not understand the Union government's plan. "What is the point of saying they will leave out Arittapatti alone when they want to destroy the rest?" she asks. The State government's say There is also suspicion about the State government's position and motives. I. Selvam, 42, a farmer in Arittapatti, says while the State government had initially said it was against the mining project, Ministers have been trying to prevent villagers from passing resolutions at Gram Sabha meetings. "Knowing that the Gram Sabha decisions will have an effect on the implementation of the project, Commercial Taxes and Registration Minister P. Moorthy (representing Madurai East) influenced the villagers and told them not to pass resolutions during meetings," Selvam alleges. "The people know that the State government had no say in projects like these. But our hope is that the government will at least stand by our side." In an order dated October 21, 2024, the Ministry of Mines had said that it had been empowered to auction blocks for the grant of an exploration license under Section 20A of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.

Good if we get Russian crude, but no major concern if we don't: BPCL Director (Refineries) Sanjay Khanna



Also, everybody would be a bit sceptical, especially in view of the planned joint venture refinery in Ratnagiri (which has failed to take off). So, now everybody would like to have a certain level of clarity about this new project. If the project is really good and can stand on its own feet, then there can be many takers.

Where is BPCL in its carbon neutrality and decarbonisation journey?

We can't shed our responsibility of cleaning the environment. We have decided that we will achieve net-zero status (Scope 1 and 2) by 2040. Two years back, we undertook a study and our net-zero pathway was charted out. We saw that 97 per cent of our Scope 1 and 2 emissions were from the refineries only, which means that refineries will see major action in our decarbonisation journey, and we have paved the way for what needs to be done. We have been working on specific areas like (refinery) reliability improvement and efficiency improvement, we have gone for biofuels in a big way. Then we have expanded our renewable portfolio, which used to be just 20-30 megawatt (MW) and by next year, we are aiming for 600 MW...On green hydrogen, a 5 MW electrolyser is expected to be commissioned in the next quarter at our Bina refinery (in Madhya Pradesh).

With energy transition bound to pick up pace, how is BPCL looking to evolve and reinvent itself?

A key focus area is of course petchem (petrochemicals), 30-40 per cent of which are imported despite our per capita consumption being quite low. Even without a new refinery, our petchem portfolio will go up to 8 per cent from 2.3 per cent, which will be a significant jump. We also realise that energy transition is inevitable. So, we are working to convert what we call petrol pumps into energy stations where customers can go and get the fuel they need — be it conventional petrol and diesel, biofuels, CNG (compressed natural gas), liquefied natural gas (LNG) — and also go there for charging their EVs (electric vehicles). We are also looking at scaling up BeCafé (BPCL's food and beverage cafes at fuel stations) by opening them at numerous locations. Also, BPCL has always been a market leader (in fuel retail) on highways and we are working to scale up wayside amenities at highway fuel stations in a big way. These are the few areas where we are strong and are aiming to get stronger by providing more facilities to customers.

There is a lot of talk around the potential of green hydrogen for mobility. Given that refineries use a lot of hydrogen and your familiarity with the gas, do you foresee its wider adoption as a fuel for regular consumers?

If there is a big breakthrough in technology, it can happen. On green hydrogen for mobility, challenges are plenty. Even with EVs, the traction is not great, even though people are familiar with batteries and how they work. Because we use hydrogen in refineries, we very well know the challenges with hydrogen. It has an extremely large combustion range, which makes it highly vulnerable. Secondly, if it burns, you can't see the flame. Then it's a very light gas, so it is extremely difficult to add additives to the gas. There are other significant challenges also in wider adoption of hydrogen as a fuel for regular consumers. But you never know when a major breakthrough can make that possible.



Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday said the changing trade policy under US President Donald Trump will create more business opportunities for domestic businesses than trade friction with India, as items produced in the US and India do not compete with each other but rather share complementarities.

all companies worldwide that are looking to invest in or manufacture in India."

Several Indian industries with high US dependency have expressed concern over uncertainties due to Trump's tariff threats. Pharma sector stocks, in particular, slid last week after Trump said he would impose tariffs on cars and pharmaceutical products. Meanwhile, there are concerns over dumping after Trump imposed a 25 per cent import duty on steel and aluminium products earlier this month. The US President has also said that the US would impose reciprocal tariffs in April, which could particularly impact India.

'Don't listen to rich boys': Rujuta Diwekar slams Nikhil Kamath for promoting eating out daily; how frequently should you do it?

Celebrity nutritionist Rujuta Diwekar recently weighed in on the ongoing debate over home-cooked meals versus eating out, offering a firm stance against the promotion of daily restaurant dining. The conversation began after Zerodha co-founder Nikhil Kamath commented on food habits in Singapore, where he observed that most people don't cook at home. In response, Diwekar advised her followers to avoid being influenced by "rich boys" and emphasised the importance of home-cooked meals for both health and community well-being.

Diwekar, who has worked with Bollywood celebrities like Kareena Kapoor Khan, took to social media to stress the health benefits of home-cooked food. She stated, "Do not listen to rich boys, eating at home is a healthy practice. One that can prevent many diseases, lead to sharing between communities, and deepen bonds of love and security."

Do not listen to rich boys, eating at home is a healthy practice. One that can prevent many diseases, lead to sharing between communities, and deepen bond of love and security. Learn to cook. Practice it often. Irrespective of gender, age or income. She further encouraged people to learn to cook and practice it regularly, regardless of gender, age, or income. Her comments came in direct contrast to Kamath's observations about Singapore's restaurant-dominated food culture. Kamath noted that cooking at home is nearly nonexistent in the city-state, suggesting that if India adopted a similar trend, it would create massive investment opportunities in the restaurant industry. His remarks ignited a heated discussion on social media, with many users debating the feasibility of such a shift in India, given differences in food affordability, hygiene concerns, and cultural eating habits.

I was in Singapore this week; most I met said they never cook at home, and others don't have a kitchen. If India were to follow this trend, investing/opening restaurants would be a massive opportunity, but we don't have restaurant brands that have close to the scale Southeast Asia. The idea of eliminating home cooking might seem appealing for convenience, research and expert insights warn of the potential long-term health risks associated with frequent restaurant meals. Consultant dietician and diabetes educator



Kanikka Malhotra explained the following problems that arise when you eat out daily: Higher Caloric Intake: Restaurant meals often contain excessive calories, unhealthy fats, sugars, and sodium, which can lead to weight gain and poor dietary habits. Increased Risk of Chronic Diseases: Regular consumption of processed and high-fat foods has been linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and hypertension. Studies show that individuals who eat out frequently tend to consume more unhealthy ingredients than those who prepare meals at home. Food Hygiene Concerns: Unlike home kitchens, where hygiene standards are controlled, restaurant food poses potential safety risks, including foodborne illnesses due to improper storage or handling. Metabolic Health Issues: Eating out frequently, particularly fast food and processed meals, is associated with metabolic syndrome, a cluster of conditions that heighten the risk of heart disease and diabetes.

How often should you eat out?

While occasional dining out is enjoyable, moderation is key when maintaining a healthy diet. Experts, including Malhotra, suggest the following: Limit restaurant meals to once or twice a week, prioritising home-cooked meals for better nutritional control. Opt for healthier restaurant choices, such as meals rich in vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains, while avoiding fried foods and excessive sauces. Be mindful of portion sizes, as restaurant servings are often larger than necessary, leading to overeating. While eating out has its place in modern lifestyles, making informed food choices is essential for long-term health and well-being.

Are you proud of being extremely self-reliant? It might be a trauma response

How can you distinguish between healthy self reliance and unhealthy hyper independence? How can you distinguish between healthy self reliance and unhealthy hyper independence? Hyper-independence can cause a tendency to overwork demonstrate self-reliance. Being independent and self-reliant as an adult are definitely valuable traits, but it could possibly be one of the worst things for your mental well-being if taken to the extreme. Hyper-independence is an extreme form of self-reliance where the person actively avoids relying on others for help.

But how can you distinguish between healthy self reliance and unhealthy hyper independence?

Healthy independence means being self-sufficient and capable of relying on oneself, while also understanding the value of interdependence and seeking assistance when necessary. Mehezbabin Dordi, Clinical Psychologist at Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital, said, "It's characterised by balanced relationships and a willingness to ask for and accept support." Hyper-independence, on the other hand, involves an aversion to asking for help, even when it's necessary. "[It is] often driven by an underlying fear of vulnerability or a need to avoid dependence due to past traumas," stated Dordi.

Signs of hyper independence, according to the expert

-Reluctance or refusal to ask for help, even when it's evidently required. — A strong preference for working alone and making decisions independently. — Challenges in trusting others and delegating responsibilities. — Emotional detachment or avoidance of close relationships. — Tendency to overwork or overcommit to demonstrate self-reliance. — Feelings of guilt or inadequacy when depending on others. independence Hyper independence can cause a tendency to overwork demonstrate self-reliance. Causes of hyper independence Dordi mentioned, "Hyper-independence often develops as a trauma response, particularly in individuals who have experienced situations where dependence



on others led to harm or betrayal. This could include childhood neglect, abuse, or any significant betrayal of trust." As a coping mechanism, the individual becomes self-reliant to escape the pain and vulnerability that come with depending on others. This self-sufficiency acts as a protective measure to maintain safety and control in an unpredictable environment. Is hyper independence linked to other mental health issues as well?

Yes, hyper-independence is often associated with other mental health issues. It can be a symptom or consequence of conditions such as: — Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): An individual may isolate themselves to avoid triggers or reminders of past trauma. — Anxiety Disorders: Anxiety may be the driving force behind self-reliance where the fear of being judged or failing others are dominant. — Depression: Feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness might make it difficult to seek or accept help. — Personality Disorders: Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) or Avoidant Personality Disorder involving patterns of unstable relationships or fear of rejection can reinforce hyper-independent behaviours.

'I've never had this kind of definition': Jennifer Aniston spills the beans on her workout routine and go-to morning drink at 55

When you think of the most beautiful actors in 90s television sitcoms, Jennifer Aniston's character Rachel Green in the show FRIENDS is bound to come to mind. After the series' success, the actor delivered wonderful performances one after the other, driving home her popularity. In an exclusive interview with People Magazine, Aniston spilled the beans on her diet and fitness secrets which have helped her stay in shape at the age of 55.

The Murder Mystery actor shared details on the go-to drink she indulges in, right before her workout: "I drink colostrum first thing in the morning, with room temperature water and a whole lemon squeezed into it." In case you don't know, colostrum is the nutrient-rich milk produced by your breasts during pregnancy. In the colder months, she prefers adding some extra ingredients to spice up the concoction. "I'll steep a little teaspoon of ginger, which is good for your digestion and your immune system, and then I'll put a little drop of Manuka honey. It's so delicious served hot," Aniston said.

According to her, taking care of herself, whether through monitoring what she eats and drinks or by making sure her mind and body are in tip-top shape — is of the utmost importance. Over the course of years, the actor revealed that she loves to come across new ways to maintain her health and also spread that knowledge. "I love to share anything, any health tips, food tips, sleep tips. I actually love to hear those, but I also love to share information that I learn." A hot take she learnt on her wellness journey? No one should accept the popular fitness mentality of "no pain, no gain." "Revealing her ongoing partnership with a low-impact fitness program, Aniston shared that it is possible to



actually enjoy your workout, and not break your body to have an incredible transformation. The program goes on for six weeks and includes four workouts each week, assisted by personal trainers. "In all the workouts I've tried over the years, this one has transformed my body more than any of the others, and it's a really enjoyable workout that I don't feel intimidated by, that I don't dread," she continues. "I get excited, because I also know that if I'm not feeling 100%, if I only have 20 minutes in me, that's all I do. ... It meets you where you're at, and I love that about it," said the actor. She revealed that as a result of following this new workout regime, she has been noticing several welcome changes throughout her body.

Sonia Kapoor calls out husband Himesh Reshammiya for spending 4 hours in front of the mirror, singer says 'You're using my name for TRP'



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Himesh Reshammiya recently kicked off his wife Sonia Kapoor's brand-new podcast, The Sonia Kapoor Show, with a candid and entertaining chat. While discussing his Bollywood journey and his latest film Badass Ravikumar, the conversation took a hilarious turn when Sonia playfully exposed one of Himesh's quirks—his obsession with himself! She revealed that he spends hours to get ready because he takes time to admire himself in the

mirror. During a segment of the podcast, Sonia complimented Himesh for aging backwards and asked him about his one favorite thing about himself. She said, "What is your favorite thing about yourself? Apart from the fact that you like looking at yourself for four hours in the bathroom." Puzzled and surprised by Sonia's comment, Himesh asked, "What are you saying? Tumhe apne show ki TRP leni hai toh tum mere naam pe le rahi ho (You want TRP for your show, so you are taking it in my name)." Sonia defended herself and said, "I am talking facts. You are like this. If you want to take a 9 am flight, you get up at 3 am to get ready. Who does that?"

Himesh defended himself, saying that he doesn't want the pressure of getting ready and prefers to do it at his own pace. Sonia quipped, "Yeah, so that you can look at yourself in the mirror for two hours." A visibly uncomfortable Himesh asked Sonia, "What are you talking about?" Sonia then added, "I am sorry, main pol khol rahi hoon tumhari (I am sorry, I am exposing you)." Himesh Reshammiya and Sonia Kapoor have been married since 2018. The singer was earlier married to Komal, and they ended their 22-year-long marriage in 2017. They are parents to their son, Swayam. On the professional front, Himesh was last seen in Badass Ravikumar. The film, which was released on February 7, has collected Rs 8.38 crore within two weeks of its release.

Zoya Akhtar says she felt 'guilty' The Archies actors Suhana Khan, Agastya Nanda, Khushi Kapoor and others 'almost got bullied': 'Audience is harsh with certain newcomers'

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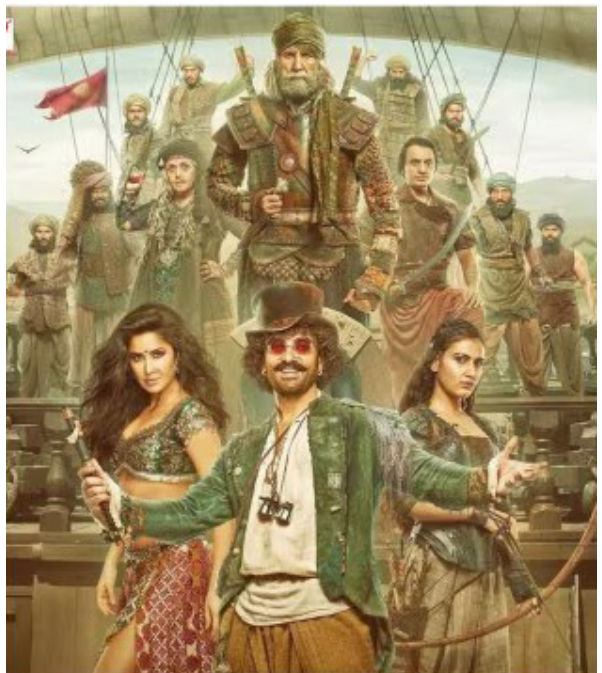
Filmmaker and writer Zoya Akhtar recently appeared on Komal Nahta's podcast Game Changers. During the conversation, she opened up about the failure of The Archies and expressed her guilt over seeing newcomers Suhana Khan, Yuvraj Menda, Mihir Ahuja, Khushi Kapoor, Dot, Vedang Raina, and Agastya Nanda being trolled for the film. Talking about The Archies' failure, Zoya said, "Where did The Archies get any praise? It wasn't like anybody was kind to me because the film was released on OTT. If it had been a theatrical release, the film would have been slightly different. At that time you feel terrible and responsible, but then I did my best."

When asked if she felt guilty about newcomers, Suhana Khan, Yuvraj Menda, Mihir Ahuja, Khushi Kapoor, Dot, Vedang Raina, and Agastya Nanda, bearing the brunt of the film's failure, Zoya Akhtar said yes and shared, "They all are very talented and I would love to work with them again. What I felt terrible about was that they were newcomers. I auditioned them. We gave them the roles. A very professional crew dressed them. There were all the best names in the business involved. I workshoped with them. I okayed the take, so it was me. They just did what I asked them to do. I didn't like the fact that they were being almost



bullied. It wasn't nice, it was all my responsibility, so I did feel guilty, but then they asked me not to." Zoya further spoke about the actors getting trolled and said, "The audience is harsh with certain newcomers, not with all of them. I felt bad when this happened. If the audience didn't like it, it was on me and not them. They all are very talented and people will see that with time." Zoya Akhtar is currently gearing for the release of her production venture Superboys Of Malegaon, which hits screens on February 28.

Aamir Khan wasn't impressed by Thugs of Hindostan, but Laal Singh Chaddha's failure left him shattered; cried for 2-3 weeks: 'Junaid, Ira started visiting often'



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Mentioning that whenever a film of his fails, he sinks into depression, Aamir Khan admitted that the debacle of Laal Singh Chaddha, however, hit him the hardest. Aamir Khan recently opened up about how the failures of Thugs of Hindostan and Laal Singh Chaddha affected him. Although more than eight years have passed since the release of Dangal, the biographical sports drama remains the highest-grossing Indian film of all time, cementing Aamir Khan as a powerhouse at the box office. However, the past few years have been challenging for him, with both of his last movies receiving widespread negative responses and eventually bombing at the box office. Known for taking on only one project every few years and dedicating himself fully to it, Aamir recently opened up about how the failures of Thugs of Hindostan (2018) and Laal Singh Chaddha (2022) affected him.

Mentioning that whenever a film of his fails, he sinks into depression, Aamir admitted that the debacle of Laal Singh Chaddha, however, hit him the hardest. He further credited his family's support for helping him cope during that difficult time. "I was very sad. I am a very emotional person," he shared during a conversation with ABP Majha. "Thugs of Hindostan might have been a weak film. I believe we weren't able to achieve what we had set out to do. Film-making is a difficult medium; so, sometimes, we might end up not being able to make what we want to," he shared.

Reflecting on his performance in Laal Singh Chaddha,

a remake of the American comedy-drama Forrest Gump (1994), Aamir admitted: "I think my performance was a pitch too high. That film relied completely on the lead actor's performance. Remember how great a job Tom Hanks did in the original film? He just took you on a ride. I wasn't able to do that." He continued, "When one of my films doesn't perform well, I go into depression and cry for two to three weeks. It's important to mourn. Once that phase is over, I call over the entire team to analyse what went wrong so that we don't repeat the same mistakes. I really value my failures and go deep into them, trying to understand what all went wrong." He also noted that setbacks not only serve as learning experiences but also reignite his determination to prove himself again. ICYMI | Vineeta Singh accuses Shradha Kapoor's jewellery brand of scamming customers on Shark Tank India: 'Unhe thugga gaya hai... Aamir Khan also recalled how his family stood by him during those tough times. "In the case of Thugs of Hindostan, my family knew beforehand that I wasn't fully impressed by it. But with Laal Singh Chaddha, they knew how deeply involved and emotionally invested I was. So, when it flopped, they checked in on me frequently. Junaid would sometimes drop by in the evening to see how I was doing, and at other times, it would be Ira. Even Reena, Kiran and my mother started reaching out to me more often. In fact, at one point, I (jokingly) thought that if I got this much attention every time a film flopped, maybe I should have had a few more failures."

Helmed by Tashan and Dhoom 3 director Vijay Krishna Acharya, Thugs of Hindostan also featured Amitabh Bachchan, Katrina Kaif and Fatima Sana Shaikh in key roles. The film was bankrolled by Aditya Chopra under the banner of Yash Raj Films. Laal Singh Chaddha, meanwhile, was helmed by Secret Superstar director Advait Chandan and also starred Kareena Kapoor Khan, Naga Chaitanya, Mona Singh and Manav Vij. It was jointly produced by Paramount Pictures, Aamir Khan Productions and Viacom18 Studios.

Teja Sajja's 'Mirai' gets new release date

Hyderabad: The fantasy action-adventure film Mirai, starring Teja Sajja, is now set to release on August 1, 2025, instead of its previously announced date of April 18.

Directed by cinematographer-turned-filmmaker Karthik Gattamaneni, the movie will be released in multiple languages, much like Teja's previous blockbuster, HanuMan. Manchu Manoj plays the antagonist, while Ritika Nayak takes on the female lead. The film is produced by TG Vishwa Prasad under People Media Factory, with music composed by HanuMan fame Gowra Hari.

Honey Singh Mumbai concert: Honey Singh mentions Diljit Dosanjh's 'Punjabi aa gaya oye' line, takes dig at Badshah



GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Honey Singh Mumbai concert Honey Singh mentions Diljit Dosanjh Badshah Honey Singh's Millionaire India tour kicks off with a bang in Mumbai. Honey Singh's much-anticipated Millionaire India Tour kick-started on February 22, with the first concert taking place in Mumbai. The rapper delivered electrifying performances, and several videos from the concert are now making waves online. In one viral clip from the concert, Honey Singh shared his take on Diljit Dosanjh's iconic line "Punjabi aa gaya oye." In another video,

he stirred controversy by taking a dig at fellow rapper Badshah. Talking about Diljit's "Punjabi aa gaya oye" line, Honey said, "We are all family; we are one. So, I won't just say Punjabi aa gaya oye. I'll say Punjabi aa gaya oye, Marathi aa gaya oye, Gujarati aa gaya oye, Bihari aa gaya oye, Bengali aa gaya oye, Mallu aa gaya oye... We are one." He also made it clear that his comments weren't a dig at Diljit, adding, "Respect to Diljit paaji, he is my brother." The two artists share a good relationship and have collaborated frequently in the past. However, another video from the concert that has gone viral shows Honey Singh taking a dig at Badshah. In the clip, without mentioning Badshah's name, Honey Singh is heard saying, "Woh kehta hai ki mera comeback nahi ho raha. Aur phir kehta hai ki woh mere gaane likhte the. Aur phir kehta hai woh meri taqdeer likh denge. Main us pe ek shair sunau, video banana aur usko tag karna—Pichle saal meri taqdeer ne, kaiyon ke garoor tod diye. Ab tujhe comeback karna padega..."

He then removed the mic, letting the audience complete the final line, which included an abusive slur aimed at Badshah. The crowd responded enthusiastically, chanting the insult back at Singh's cue. For the unversed, Honey Singh and Badshah's rivalry dates back over a decade. Both artists were once part of Mafia Mundeer, which disbanded in 2012. Since then, they've frequently taken jabs at each other, with Badshah even accusing Honey Singh of copying his lyrics. As part of the Millionaire India Tour, Honey Singh will be performing in 10 cities across India. After Mumbai, here's where he's headed next:

Vicky Kaushal's film sees 87% jump on Saturday, earns over Rs 338 crore

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

Chhaava Box Office Collection Day 9: Vicky Kaushal and Rashmika Mandanna's historical drama Chhaava has emerged as Bollywood's first blockbuster of 2025. Moreover, the film has become Vicky Kaushal's highest-grossing film to date, surpassing hits like Uri: The Surgical Strike and Raazi. Chhaava's box office run has remained strong in its second week as well. On its second Saturday, the film witnessed a spike of 87.23 percent in earnings. According to trade tracker Sacnilk, Chhaava collected Rs 44 crore on Saturday, taking its total net collection in India to Rs 286.75 crore.

On its second Saturday, Chhaava recorded an impressive overall occupancy of 56.09 percent, with a total of 6,530 shows running across India. The film's highest occupancy was in Pune at 85.75 percent across 774 shows. Chennai followed closely with an occupancy of 81.50 percent over 55 shows. In Mumbai, the film saw a 74 percent occupancy across 1,458 shows, while in Delhi-NCR, it recorded 46 percent occupancy with 1,241 shows. Worldwide, Vicky and Rashmika's period drama has earned Rs 338.75 crore in just eight days. Chhaava was released in theaters on Feb-



ruary 14. The film is directed by Laxman Utekar and produced by Dinesh Vijan's Maddock Films. The film also stars Ashutosh Rana, Divya Dutta, and Akshaye Khanna in important roles.

Ajith Kumar survives brutal racing crash in Spain, car flips multiple times.

Tamil superstar Ajith Kumar has been involved in a brutal crash during the high-speed racing event, Porsche Sprint Challenge, in Valencia, Spain. A video shared by his manager, Suresh Chandra, captures the intense moment when Ajith's car rear-ended another racer and flipped multiple times before coming to a halt. Fortunately, he walked away unharmed.

Sharing details of the crash, Suresh wrote, "In Valencia Spain where the races were happening the Round 5 was good for Ajith Kumar. He ended 14th place, winning appreciation from everyone. Round 6 was unfortunate. Crashed 2 times due to other cars. The annexes video clearly shows that he was not at fault. First time despite of crash he got back into pit and was doing well. When second time again crash happened and he toppled twice. His perseverance is stronger and he comes out unscathed again to continue the race. Thanks for the all the prayers of concern and wishes. AK is all right." In Valencia Spain where the races were happening the Round 5 was good for Ajith kumar. He ended 14th place winning appreciations from every one. While Suresh's video provides an inside view of Ajith's handling of the crash from within the car, other viral clips show the vehicle flipping multiple times. Earlier this month, Ajith Kumar was involved in an accident while preparing for



a racing event in Estoril, Portugal. Thankfully, he emerged unscathed from the incident. The crash took place during a high-speed practice run, causing considerable damage to his vehicle. Reflecting on the experience, he shared, "Of course, this morning, it was disastrous in practice when I crashed. I had a bad crash. Thanks to my team, they put the car together and had to go straight for the qualifying. A nerve-wracking moment for me, you know."

Saba Azad on becoming 'thick-skinned' after constant trolling for being Hrithik Roshan's girlfriend: 'I don't care about faceless people'

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Actor-singer Saba Azad often faces social media trolling simply for being actor Hrithik Roshan's girlfriend. However, she confronts the negativity head-on, never hesitating to clap back at trolls. In an interview with SCREEN, Saba, who is currently seen in ZEE5's Crime Beat, shared that she has developed a "thick skin" over time and remains unfazed by online trolling.

Saba, who is often a soft target for social media trolls, shared that she doesn't let it affect her mentally. The actor-singer said, "I am quite terrible with social media. I post for three days in a row and then I disappear for a month. In a way, for performing artists, it has become sort of a portfolio. It's a 'Can't live with, can't live without' kind of relationship. It is a means to earn a living with brands and ads. Outside of that, as the dissatisfaction of the population rises, so does this kind of behaviour online. If you are a happy person, you won't make fake accounts and troll people. Why would I care about someone from back and beyond, who is faceless, nameless, and frustrated with their lives?" She continued, "Instead of being angry about it, another way of looking at it is, 'I am sad that you have to do this.' In the beginning, it was like if I am minding my own business, why do you care? But then, as I wrap my head around it, this is just sad and it's not worth losing sleep over. Now, I have developed a thick skin for it. I may have turned the other cheek for a long time, but once in a while, I feel that I still

have some bite. You can't keep coming at me and expect me to stay mum. I don't care what such people say now."

Saba Azad's last few projects, including Feels Like Ishq, Rocket Boys, Who's Your Gynac?, among others, have released on OTT platforms. When asked about the reason behind choosing OTT projects, she said, "That's not true, I have two films coming up as well. It so happened that they haven't released yet. One will release mid-summer and then one at the end of the year. It has been a mix, I have been doing films, OTT as well as theatre," adding, "Whatever medium comes my way, I take it. It's just that the scriptwriting world has exploded because of OTT. It has given avenues to directors, writers, and actors who were out of work or unsung in some way. The middle rung of character actors is absolutely brilliant but big commercial cinema wasn't accepting them." Saba further said that it's not always up to the actor and they have to take what they get. "It has given a second lease on life to a lot of actors and I have reaped the benefits of it. No actor would say that I have chosen OTT and not films, it's also about what you get. At the end of the day, I am at the mercy of someone else's imagination to get a part. You take what you get, it's not like I have been spoilt for choice." The investigative thriller Crime Beat premiered on Zee5 on February 21. Talking about what made her give the nod to the series, Saba Azad said, "It was definitely the role that attracted me. I try to do something different each time."

In the passing away of coach Viswanatham, the father of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, badminton lost a gentle giant



GNS News Agency, Feb 26



himself would tie a sturdy thread between two coconut trees and learn to practice outdoors. Konaseema is often likened to Kerala, with its pretty coastal landscape, and gentle ways. Plus love for the local cuisine, and a general calm disposition of its residents, who don't get too flustered or rushed by massive materialistic dreams or social status symbols. The PE teacher would start under coach Puniah Choudhary, one of the first from India to graduate from NIS, and take a liking for badminton in 1980. Amalapuram had no indoor courts, but his interest in the sport knew no bounds. "He would be playing till 2 a.m., 3 a.m. repeating drills sincerely because school work consumed his days. Satwik wasn't the only one to emerge from those outdoor cement courts, a fair few others did too after he took to coaching," Puniah Choudhary recalls. Early financial help came from his wife's sister's husband, a district judge. And a local doctor, Metla Suryanarayana, as he built an aura of positivity around pursuing the sport. Shot tricks were enjoyed, smashes were unleashed unfettered, good healthy home food was set on the table with both parents chipping in and teaching both sons to cook, and they were taught to fall in love with the sport rather than attaching any vocational ambitions to it. It has made Satwik a composed attacking player, who rarely gets frazzled.

Cordial and calm always, the family was a tight unit, and Satwik very close to his father and older brother. Viswanatham would go onto pick umpire certifications, after winning a few local tournaments and coach anyone who showed interest.

Satwik-Chirag at 2024 Paris Olympics India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty compete in the men's doubles group stage badminton match against France's Corvee Lucas and Labar Ronan, at the Summer Olympics 2024, in Paris. Satwik was given a choice though – he played basketball, volleyball, did athletics, besides pace bowling in cricket. The PE teacher found time to love every sport and ensured his sons would too. But it was in Hyderabad during the 2009 World Championships that Kasi Viswanatham truly passed on important lessons to his son. After finishing his officiating duties, he went and sat with a bunch of Chinese fans, and when Fu Haifeng won the title and threw his racquet into the stands, Viswanatham would leap the highest to catch the Li Ning Turbo Charge N9 wonder wand to hand it over to his son. "My father believed you don't need lots of money to play badminton. But you need a racquet." It would make Satwik, who would train on the cement court till 11.30 p.m. himself, respectful towards his equipment, for life. The father had been ecstatic every time Satwik won a title with Chirag Shetty and reached World No 1. He would patiently drop in to Hyderabad, every time an injury felled his son, and sent him to pieces while he rehabbed. When success came knocking, the father, also the first coach, would quietly step back. But there was no day sweeter than when Satwik-Chirag helped India win the Thomas Cup, the World Cup of badminton. The Indian jersey gleamed that day, and the coastal postcard town of Konaseema had seemed extra pretty and glorious. Kasi Viswanatham's love for the sport will never be gone – it will be in every gentle sway of the tall, upright, sturdy trees in whose shade he learnt to love the sport, and taught his son to play too.

Tall, quiet, sturdy and cheerful. Just like the coconut trees that made the coastal district of Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema, one of the most pleasant places in Andhra. R Kasi Viswanatham, father of India's brightest doubles star, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, was the coolest 'badminton dad' in India, a towering figure who gave the country one of its finest athletes, while he remained gently and graciously in the background. His passing on Thursday, after a cardiac arrest, en route Delhi to watch his son get feted with the Khel Ratna, at age 65, cast a pall of gloom on the Indian badminton fraternity. The gentle giant was no more.

Kasi Viswanatham will forever stay imprinted in memory for one of the most endearing things uttered, that shaped the sport in India. Like his towering father, a teen-aged Satwik had a massive leap – just like fellow giants from this coastal Andhra district with its volleyball-loving spikers, a talent base that might be the best-kept secret of Indian sport. With that lethal jump smash (he eventually set a Guinness record for the fastest smash), Satwik could've easily chosen singles, and found considerable glory. But when he went to the Hyderabad academy in 2013, the father would simply tell the coach, "...kaisa bhi utilise karo, bas India ka banaan pehenna hai." Deploy him as you wish in either event – singles or doubles – we just would like to see him wear the India jersey.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty Asian Games Gold Medallist Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty won against Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik of Malaysia in the semifinals at Yonex-Sunrise India Open 2024 at IG Stadium, New Delhi on Saturday. No individualistic ambition, no clamour for monopolised attention, no impatience of deadlines for success, not even a reassurance that his career will be specially looked after. Just a very warm, non-cloying wish that his son might one day wear India colours. And enough badminton wisdom, to leave the big decisions to the coach, though the father had been his first shuttle teacher.

Pullela Gopichand had been pleasantly surprised that this respected coach from Amalapuram, who knew the sport far more than most parents, wasn't dictating a wish-list of timelines and making that familiar nudge – to make him a singles champion, back then the popular and perhaps only dream of parents. It was a remarkable thing for any parent to say in 2013 – just one year after Saina Nehwal's first Olympic medal for Indians. But Kasi Viswanatham was different from other parents. He nursed a deep love for the sport, laced with humility about his own limitations as an elite coach. A high jumper himself, Viswanatham trained to be a Physical Education teacher at Rajahmundry, and later went on to become Principal. He actually stumbled into badminton rather late in life at 21. But his dedication was unparalleled.

Once smitten, he went all the way passing on his love to his two sons. The younger one showed immense promise. Paris Olympics Badminton Doubles draw satwik chirag India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty play against Indonesia's Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Rian Ardianto during their men's doubles badminton group stage match at the 2024 Summer Olympics, Tuesday, July 30, 2024, in Paris, France. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung) Viswanatham

'Conditions changed': England captain Jos Buttler, Ben Duckett blame Lahore dew after Australia's record-breaking Champions Trophy chase



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Australia's record-breaking run-chase to kick-start their Champions Trophy campaign at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore has somewhat flattened England as they suffered a fourth successive ODI defeat on Saturday since the recent India tour earlier this month. Motoring on wicket-keeper Josh Inglis' blistering century, Australia romped past a 352-run target to record the highest chase in Champions Trophy history, despite entering the tournament with a depleted squad. Inglis' maiden ODI hundred had him finish on 120 not out off 86 balls with Australia cleaning up the chase with 15 balls to spare. With captain Steve Smith opting to field first, England put on a comprehensive batting display led by opener Ben Duckett's 143-ball 165, the highest individual score in the tournament. However, both Duckett and England skipper Jos Buttler rued the dewy conditions that hampered their defense. "A fantastic game, both sides played well, credit to Australia," Buttler said. "It was a fantastic innings from Inglis. 350 is a pretty good score, but it was wet and the dew was a worry." "I probably would have batted first. It's 50/50 whether the dew comes in or not, we'll look to make good use of the surface," he said after the toss. "We're not trying to hide anything, we're confident in the set-up. The guys seem in a good place and anytime

you play Australia it's a big event." "First of all, when a side chases down 350 you've got to give them credit. I think they played really well in those middle overs," Duckett told Sky Sports. To be honest it felt like we were one, two wickets away from potentially winning pretty easily. I couldn't always, while we were fielding, see the lines we were bowling, but it felt like we cut a little bit too much on that wicket. "The one thing I spoke about was keeping the stumps in play. You only have to walk across here to see it. It did get easier. The back end of our innings it felt impossible to stand there and try and hit sixes. When Jos and Livvy (Liam Livingstone) and those guys came in. The conditions obviously changed," Duckett added.

'Pakistan should beat India, maza aayega': Former IND pacer's wish to light up Champions Trophy 2025

As Pakistan find themselves already under the knock-out heat ahead of the highly-anticipated face-off against India in their second Champions Trophy match in Dubai on Sunday, Muhammad Rizwan's team has found support from an unlikely corner in India. Eight years after they beat India in the 2017 Champions Trophy final, Pakistan's campaign at home suffered a huge dent when they lost to New Zealand by 60 runs in the opener. Meanwhile, India thumped Bangladesh in Dubai to get a head-start in the four-team group, two of whom will qualify for the semi-finals. However, with an Indian win over Pakistan on Sunday likely to diffuse any further excitement over results in the group, former India seamer Atul Wassan has backed the neighbours to spring a surprise and light up the Champions Trophy.

Arsenal's title hopes Falter, United fight back, Villa beats Chelsea

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London: Arsenal's Premier League title hopes suffered a major setback following a 1-0 home loss to West Ham United. Aaron Bowen's diving header in the 44th minute from Jarrod Wan-Bissaka's cross gave Graham Potter just his second league win as West Ham coach. Potter should be pleased with his side's solid defensive performance against an Arsenal team that was well below its best, especially after Myles Lewis-Skelly was sent off in the 73rd minute. The defeat leaves Arsenal eight points behind Liverpool, who visits Manchester City on Sunday. In a match filled with tension and late controversy, Manchester United staged a comeback after being 2-0 down away to Everton, who was denied a late penalty by VAR. Beto opened the scoring for Everton in the 19th minute, and Abdoulaye Doucoure doubled their lead in the 33rd minute with a close-range header following a blocked shot from Jack Harrison, reports Xinhua. Everton looked comfortable until Bruno Fernandes curled in a free kick in the 77th minute and Manuel Ugarte leveled three minutes later with a powerful shot. The home side thought they should have had a penalty deep in injury time when Ashley Young went down under a challenge from Harry Maguire and Matthijs de Ligt, with Young's shirt clearly pulled, but after initially awarding the penalty, referee Andrew Madley changed his decision after consulting with the VAR. New Aston Villa signing Marcus Rashford provided two assists to another newcomer Marco Asensio in the 57th minute and then in



the last minute to give Unai Emery's side a 2-1 win at home to Chelsea, who had taken an early lead when Enzo Fernandez had an easy finish from Pedro Neto's assist. Matheus Cunha maintained his impressive form, scoring the only goal of the game to help Wolverhampton Wanderers secure a 1-0 away win over 10-man Bournemouth, dealing a blow to the home side's European ambitions. Elsewhere, Ipswich Town suffered a heavy 4-1 defeat at home to Tottenham. Crystal Palace continued its impressive season with a 2-0 win away to Fulham in the south-London derby. Bottom-of-the-table Southampton was thrashed 4-0 at home by Brighton. On Friday night, Brentford won 4-0 away to Leicester City, further deepening the problems for the home side, who has now lost 10 of their last 11 Premier League games and haven't scored at home in over two months.

'Pakistan should beat India, maza aayega': Former IND pacer's wish to light up Champions Trophy 2025

GNS News Agency, Feb 26

India and Pakistan will square off in the Champions Trophy 2025 in Dubai on Sunday. (Reuters) India and Pakistan will square off in the Champions Trophy 2025 in Dubai As Pakistan find themselves already under the knock-out heat ahead of the highly-anticipated face-off against India in their second Champions Trophy match in Dubai on Sunday, Muhammad Rizwan's team has found support from an unlikely corner in India. Eight years after they beat India in the 2017 Champions Trophy final, Pakistan's campaign at home suffered a huge dent when they lost to New Zealand by 60 runs in the opener. Meanwhile, India thumped Bangladesh in Dubai to get a head-start in the four-team group, two of whom will qualify for the semi-finals.



However, with an Indian win over Pakistan on Sunday likely to diffuse any further excitement over results in the group, former India seamer Atul Wassan has backed the neighbours to spring a surprise and light up the Champions Trophy. "I want Pakistan to win. Maza aayega (it will be fun, tournament-wise). If you don't let Pakistan win, then what will you do? If Pakistan wins, then it becomes a contest.

There should be an equal fight," Wassan, who played nine ODIs and four Tests, while Pakistan defeated India in a T20 during the 2021 World Cup at Dubai International Cricket Stadium, they have not secured an ODI win across six meetings since the 2017 Champions Trophy final. Rohit Sharma's team blew away Pakistan in their league-stage match at the 2023 ODI World Cup in Ahmedabad, shortly after beating them twice in the Asia Cup that year.

Tickets as gifts, to screenings in cinemas, to big match excitement: Dubai braces for India versus Pakistan humdinger



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Security guards outside the ICC Academy in Dubai struggled to control hundreds of eager fans jostling to catch a glimpse of the Indian team's practice session on the eve of the much-anticipated game against Pakistan. Anyone with a lanyard and an access ID is being asked for passes for the big ICC Champions Trophy match. Tears stream down a child's face after missing out on a Babar Azam selfie outside the Dubai International Stadium. There is a downside though – the cheapest ticket for a seat in the 30,000-seater Dubai International Stadium costs Rs 12,000 or 500 dirhams. For the lucky few, an Indian businessman is a saviour. Anis Sajjan, the vice-chairman of the Danube Group, used a lucky draw to distribute 100 match tickets as a Ramadan gift to his blue-collar workforce, majority of them from India and Pakistan. He has also organised a special screening for those who missed out on the free tickets. Team India defeats Pakistan by six runs in the ongoing T20 World Cup 2024 (Image source: Express file photo) Team India defeats Pakistan by six runs in the ongoing T20 World Cup 2024 (Image source: Express file photo) "Cricket is more than just a sport. It is an emotion that unites people across borders. Many of our blue-collar workers are devoted cricket fans, but the high ticket prices and overwhelming demand make attending a live match a distant dream. Watching their cricketing idols live in action will be an unforgettable experience for them," Sajjan said. With nearly 3.7 million Indians and 1.7 million Pakistanis in the UAE, demand for tickets has gone through the roof. Sajjan is not the only business tycoon giving tickets as gifts to cricket-obsessed employees. "We always get gifts from our owners during Ramadan. This time, since we got to know in advance that the match is happening here, our bosses have gifted match tickets for the game. If not, there was no way we would have been able to buy tickets," Rakesh, who works in the hospitality industry in Dubai, said. A cinema chain is screening the game 'live' and malls are reportedly facing a staff crunch on Sunday as leave applications have piled up. For 'hosts' Pakistan, the game in Dubai is a do-or-die one after their loss in the opener

against New Zealand. After waiting for nearly three decades to host an ICC event, Mohammad Rizwan's team is staring at an early exit. None less than the Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reminded the players of the high stakes involved. "...the real task now is to not only win the Champions Trophy but also defeat our arch rival," he weighed in earlier this month. What's guaranteed is a full house at the Dubai International Stadium with all roads leading to the Sports City – roads are set to be closed for security reasons from 9 am for a 1 pm start. Sharjah, 46 minutes away by road, was the spiritual home away from home for India-Pakistan cricket in the 1980s and 90s, but those in Dubai will hope for a modern classic despite the evident gulf in class between the sides in the 50-over game. In ODIs in Dubai, India, 2023 World Cup finalists, have won both the previous games against Pakistan, while in T20Is, the latter has won two out of three meetings. The players didn't meet each other on match eve. India trained at the ICC Academy while Pakistan at the Dubai Stadium. To avoid any possible tension between fan groups, the local Indian and Pakistani communities have decided to hold separate screenings. On the eve of the game, in-form batsman Shubman Gill was asked if games between the two sides were over-hyped. "India-Pakistan has a long history. It's an exciting contest when both these teams play. Everyone enjoys watching it. If so many people are happy to watch the match, who are we to say that it is under-hyped or over-hyped? We go there to play cricket," he said. "I think it is a big match, but I think the biggest match would obviously be the final that the team plays," he said. Pakistan coach Aaqib Javed acknowledged the importance of the match if Pakistan are to stay alive in the tournament. "There is no game which you play without pressure. We lost to New Zealand, which has a good balance. We still have a chance to qualify. Against India, it doesn't matter if it is a chance-win or not. All of our players are waiting to raise the bar," Javed said. India, despite being without strike bowler Jasprit Bumrah, and with an out-of-form Virat Kohli, will have the edge going into the match. Whichever way the result goes, fans will be hoping for a modern classic in Dubai.