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Hyderabad's Osmania University students protest for exams postponement

Hyderabad: Demanding postponement of the semester examinations that are scheduled to commence on February 18, a large number of students of the Osmania University (OU) staged a dharna on the campus on Friday.

According to protesters, the university examination branch scheduled the third semester examinations for second year students even before the completion of the syllabus. As per students, some departments, including in the Science College, still have 40 per cent syllabus to be covered. They demanded the administration to reschedule the exams to the first week of March.

Supreme Court asks if TN Governor could simply sit over Bills passed by Assembly

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday asked the Attorney General, the top-most law officer of the Centre, if the Tamil Nadu Governor could simply sit over the Bills passed by the Assembly under the impression that they were repugnant to the Constitution, and not communicating his opinion to the legislature. A bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan said that if needed, the apex court could go into the factual question of repugnancy of the Bills after the President declined to give assent to them, saying that the Bills were repugnant to the Constitution.

The Justice Pardiwala-led Bench questioned if it was not incumbent upon the Governor to return the Bills to the Assembly as soon as he noticed the repugnance. "If the Governor is prima facie of the view that Bill suffers from repugnancy, should it not bring it to the notice of the state government? How is the government expected to know what is in the mind of the Governor? If repugnancy is something that troubled the Governor, the Governor should have immediately brought it to the notice of the government and the Assembly could have reconsidered the Bills," the apex court said.

In its writ petition filed under Article 32 of the Constitution before the top court, the Tamil Nadu government has claimed that the Governor has positioned himself as a "political rival" to the legitimately elected state government. The Governor had returned 10 out of 12 Bills pending with him for his assent after a notice was issued by the Supreme Court on the Tamil Nadu government's plea. According to



Article 200 of the Constitution, if a Bill is passed again, with or without amendments, and is presented to the Governor for assent, he has to accord his approval. As the Tamil Nadu Assembly in a special session re-adopted 10 Bills, which were sent back by the Governor for reconsideration, the Governor referred them to the President. In November last year, the top court raised questions over the delay by Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi in giving assent to the Bills passed by the state legislature. After it was told that the Governor returned 10 out of 12 Bills pending with him for his assent, the SC asked: "These Bills have been pending since January 2020. It means that the Governor took the decision after the court issued notice. What was he doing for three years? Why should the Governor wait for the parties to approach the Supreme Court?"

TB Mukht Bharat campaign screens 5.63 cr people, notifies 1.59 lakh new TB patients: Nadda

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

New Delhi: The health ministry's 100-day intensified campaign on tuberculosis Mukht Bharat has screened 5.63 crore vulnerable people and notified 1.59 lakh new TB patients from 347 districts, said Union Health Minister JP Nadda in Parliament on Friday. The 100-day campaign which started on December 7, 2024, and will continue till March 24, aims to end TB this year -- five years ahead of the global target. The campaign aims to target selected 347 high-priority districts across 33 States/UTs. "From the launch of the 100 days intensified TB elimination campaign in 347 districts, 4.94 lakh Ni-kshay shivirs ((screening camps) have been held, 5.63 crore vulnerable individuals have been screened and 1.59 lakh new TB patients have been notified," Nadda said in a written response in Lok Sabha. He informed that 86,748 new Ni-kshay Mitras have been registered and 1.12 lakh food baskets have been disbursed to TB patients and their family members. Nikshay-Mitras can be individuals, NGOs, cooperative societies, faith-based organisations, corporates, political parties, and others. A Mitra can adopt a minimum of one consented TB patient on treatment for a minimum period of six months for any kind of support they want to give to the patient. Further, the Union Health Minister said that 38 of the total campaign districts are tribal, while 27 are mining and 46 are aspirational districts. "The campaign follows a renewed approach to find missing TB cases, reduce TB deaths, and prevent new cases," he said. Nadda added that the government has also organised special outreach camps to screen vulnerable populations and offer X-ray and Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT) tests, either through mobile medical vans or by mobilising them to the nearest health facility equipped with X-rays. All services related to TB have been decentralised to the level of Ayushman Arogya Mandir to ensure equitable access, Nadda said. Campaign-specific information, education, and communication materials have been developed and disseminated to educate the public and raise awareness about symptoms, prevention, and the importance of timely treatment for TB in the campaign states and UTs, including Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh. Jan Bhaghidari activities are implemented with the involvement of schools, Panchayati raj institutions, self-help groups, Anganwadi, local non-government organisations (NGOs), and civil society organisations, the minister said, adding 22-line departments have been sensitised to actively support the implementation of campaign activities. In addition, the ministry has sensitised MPs, CMs, and state health ministers on the campaign, Nadda stated. "The 100 Days TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan in priority districts, is fully aligned to the long-term TB elimination strategies of prevention, early detection, prompt treatment, and reduction of TB-related mortality," Nadda said. The long-term strategies for TB elimination include mapping vulnerable populations, screening with high-sensitive tools like chest X-rays, upfront NAAT tests for all presumptive TB cases, and differentiated TB care for managing high-risk TB cases.



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MLC Teenmar Mallanna Reacts to Show-Cause Notices

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Hyderabad: MLC Teenmar Mallanna has strongly reacted to the show-cause notices issued to him, questioning whether speaking for the Backward Classes (BCs) warrants such action. In an interview with TV9, he criticized the move, stating that some leaders were trying to suppress BC voices and distance them from the party. Mallanna also commented on Congress's stance, saying, "The party is clear, but the government is not." He expressed skepticism about the credibility of the report on caste census and insisted that show-cause notices should be served to those involved in the enumeration process. He further alleged that a few leaders were working against the interests of BCs and attempting to silence them.



Maha Kumbh mela Fire accident: Fire breaks out at camp in Mahakumbh Nagar

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

A fire broke out at a camp in Mahakumbh Nagar on Friday (February 7, 2025), fire officials said. No casualties have been reported. Inspector Yogesh Chaturvedi of Khak Chowk police station said, "A fire broke out at a camp near Tulsi Chauraha on Old GT Road. However, firefighters have managed to bring the blaze largely under control." He said fire department officials have arrived at the scene to over-

see the operation. Multiple fire tenders are at the scene, working to extinguish the flames. This incident comes on the heels of another fire that occurred last week, where 15 tents in an open area in Prayagraj caught fire. The incident happened in the Chatnag Ghat Police Station area. Previous incidents at the Maha Kumbh include a fire caused by an explosion of cooking gas cylinders, as well as a tragic stampede that resulted in 30 deaths.

Telangana likely to experience severe start to summer 2025

Hyderabad: The initial part of the upcoming summer season, till the first half of April, is likely to be severe, with people in Hyderabad and across Telangana State likely to experience heat waves. The first three months including February, March and first half of April, are expected to be severe in terms of temperatures, according to a preliminary forecast of Summer-2025, released by city-based weather forecaster T Balaji on Friday said.

The weather enthusiast, known for his accurate forecasts, on Friday said that the summer of 2025 will likely be similar to the summer of 2017.

India flags 'mistreatment' of nationals deported from US

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

In a special briefing by Ministry of External Affairs on Friday (February 7, 2025), Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said that India has registered its concerns with the U.S. on deportation issue. As questions on deportations raised, Mr. Misri said, "The real cancer is the misleading of innocents to undertake illegal immigration, and the people who do this must be prosecuted". Mr. Misri added that the MEA has flagged the issues of "mistreatment of illegal migrants deported to India", and said they "will continue to do". He said that more U.S. deportation flights could follow and India has heard from U.S. that there are "487 Indian citizens who are 'ready for removal' from the U.S." The information about 298 has already been shared. The MEA also announced that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will pay a two-day working visit to the U.S. from February 12 during which he will meet President Donald Trump. Mr. Misri said PM Modi's visit will give further impetus and direction to India-U.S. bilateral relationship.



Prior to his U.S. visit, PM Modi will be in France from February 10-12 to co-chair the AI Action Summit with French President Emmanuel Macron. "He will also visit Cadarache, the site of International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor of which India is a partner," Mr. Misri said.

KTR blames Congress government for farmer suicides in Telangana

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao blamed the Congress government's incompetence leading to worsening agrarian crisis in Telangana. He charged Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy with failing to fulfill poll promises, leading to the tragic suicides of 420 farmers in just 420 days of governance. "The sin of 420 false promises has resulted in 420 farmer deaths. The Congress government has pushed farmers to take this extreme step," he said, criticising the government's failure to support both land-owning and tenant farmers.

Lashing out at the administration, the BRS working president said Telangana, which flourished in the last decade, is now suffering due to incomplete crop loan waivers, halted Rythu Bharosa investment assistance, and policy paralysis. "An indecisive Chief Minister and an irresponsible government have crippled the rural economy," he said. He criticised the Congress government for betraying



farmers with unkept promises and pushing Telangana's once-thriving agricultural sector in distress. "If you have any concern for farmers, address the issues and stop this farmers' suicides immediately," he demanded.

India achieves 100 GW solar energy capacity, says Pralhad Joshi



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

India has achieved the milestone of 100GW solar

energy capacity, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Friday (February 7, 2025), underscoring the country's target of having 500 GW renewable energy capacity by 2030. "Under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi ji, India has achieved the historic milestone of 100 GW solar capacity. This achievement is powered by our relentless commitment to a cleaner, greener future," the New & Renewables Energy Minister said in a post on X. Earlier, India had planned to have 175 GW of renewable energy capacity, including 100 GW solar by 2022. But it could not be achieved due to staggering impact of the pandemic which forced imposition of lockdown restrictions. As per the post on X, India added 2.82 GW of solar capacity during 2004-14 under the UPA regime. This is compared with 100 GW during 2014-2025.

Rahul Gandhi questions Election Commission on why more voters added in 5 months than in 5 years in Maharashtra



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday (February 7, 2025) raised concerns over the surge in new voters, particularly between the 2024 Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections in Maharashtra, highlighting that 39 lakh new voters were added in just five months after the Lok Sabha polls. In a joint press conference with the leaders of the INDIA bloc including Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut and NCP-SCP MP Supriya Sule, Mr. Gandhi said that Congress, Shiv Sena-UBT, NCP-SS demand from the Election Commission voters' list of Maharashtra. "We have been telling EC about anomalies in Maharashtra polls, we need voters' lists of Lok Sabha polls, Assembly elections," he said. He further added that the Election Commission should bring transparency and it has the responsibility to share the voters' list. "We are now heading towards complete destruction of Constitution. But, we are in the business of protecting the Constitution," Mr. Gandhi added. He said the next step would be to knock at the doors of the judiciary. "It is sur-

prising to me that the EC is not ready to give us voter lists and the only reason possible is that there is something wrong and they know it," Gandhi claimed. "If EC is alive, it should answer questions posed by Rahul Gandhi," Mr. Raut said and added that, "it will be construed EC is a slave to government."

AP Assembly Budget Session to commence from February 24

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

The Andhra Pradesh Assembly is set to commence its Budget Session on the 24th of this month, with the Governor addressing both houses on the opening day. The session is expected to last approximately three weeks, with reports indicating that it may span over 20 days, inclusive of holidays. A crucial meeting of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) will take place on the first day to finalize the number of days for the assembly's sessions. The government is preparing to present the budget for the financial year 2025-26 on Friday, the 28th of this month. In preparation for the assembly sessions, orientation classes for MLAs will be held on the 22nd and 23rd. This two-day workshop aims to educate new members on the house rules, their roles within the assembly, expected conduct, and decorum. Notably, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla is anticipated to participate in the awareness classes on the first day, although it remains uncertain whether he will attend in person in Amaravati or connect virtually.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Off the field

The Supreme Court's censure on Tuesday of the politicisation of sports administration in the country strikes at the heart of a festering problem. By directing the Centre to ensure the participation of the women's kabaddi team at the Senior Asian Championship in Iran, the court laid bare the tangled web of political and bureaucratic interference strangling Indian sports bodies. The Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India's disaffiliation from the International Kabaddi Federation is emblematic of this rot, leaving athletes in limbo despite their potential to bring home glory.

This isn't an isolated incident. The Wrestling Federation of India's (WFI) quiet return to the residence of former president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh — facing sexual harassment charges — exposes how entrenched political figures maintain a vice-like grip over sports federations. Singh's protégés continue to helm the WFI, underscoring how elections are mere formalities and serve to reinforce political influence rather than foster genuine leadership. Even the Supreme Court's intervention in the grave matter isn't new. In 2016, it had advised the BCCI to keep politicians at bay, yet the board remains tightly bound to political heavyweights like Jay Shah, son of Home Minister Amit Shah. The sad irony is that while politicians tout their contributions to sports through initiatives like Khelo India, their presence often hampers the democratic functioning of sports bodies and the autonomy of athletes.

Athletes deserve administrators who understand the demands of the field, not bureaucrats and politicians exploiting sports for clout. It's time for meaningful reform, ensuring that sports bodies are led by those with a genuine passion for athletics. The apex court's intervention must serve as a clarion call: let sports be for the sportspersons, not a political playground.

'When deportees are from whole country, why was Amritsar chosen?': In Punjab, questions raised over US flight landing in state

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Hours after a United States military aircraft with 104 deported Indians landed in Punjab on Wednesday, state Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) president Aman Arora questioned why it landed in Amritsar and not any other airport in the country. "When the deportees are from the whole country, why was Amritsar chosen as a location for landing the aircraft? This question is playing on everyone's mind," Arora told the media in Bathinda on Wednesday afternoon.

"The Centre has always given Punjab step-motherly treatment. People (deportees) from other states are more than those from Punjab. By leaving the national capital and choosing Amritsar for landing this aircraft, it raises a question mark," Arora added.

The aircraft carried 104 Indians from Haryana, Gujarat, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Chandigarh. Sources said the highest number of deportees — 33 each — were from Gujarat and Haryana, followed by 30 from Punjab. Two deportees each are from Uttar Pradesh and Chandigarh, while three are from Maharashtra. Nitin Chawla, director of Ludhiana-based Kapri Immigration Consultants, echoed Arora's concerns. "Why was Amritsar chosen? I fail to understand. They could have landed at Delhi or any other international airport. Why is a narrative being set up against our state?" Chawla asked. Ajaypal Singh Brar, the president of Ferozepur-based NGO Misl Satluj, condemned the deportation, saying that using a military aircraft like the C-17 — much more expensive than a civilian flight — was a deliberate attempt to humiliate India before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US. Brar also criticised the decision to land the flight in Amritsar, calling it a "face-saving move". "Had the flight landed in the national capital, it would have been a major embarrassment for a government that claims to have strong ties with the US administration," he said. "I feel that it is an effort to tarnish the image of Punjab by falsely portraying them as the primary group involved in illegal immigration. Deported individuals belonged to various states across India, but the government and media are selectively pushing a narrative that unfairly targets Punjab," he added. Brar urged the youth in Punjab to avoid illegal immigration routes and instead focus on creating opportunities for themselves within the state through business and employment. He also criticised both the present and past governments for failing to provide meaningful jobs and a conducive environment for economic growth in Punjab, saying this has forced many youngsters to seek risky alternatives abroad.

Trafficked and tortured in Myanmar, Hyderabad man now languishes in Thailand jail; family seeks MEA intervention

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Hyderabad woman appeals for help from MEA to rescue husband Shaik Ashraf from Thailand jail. Hyderabad woman appeals for help from MEA to rescue husband Shaik Ashraf from Thailand jail. A woman from Hyderabad has appealed to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to help bring back her husband languishing in a Thailand jail. The Thailand Police arrested Shaik Ashraf, 36, upon his entry from Myanmar, where he was allegedly trafficked for internet scam operations by a company. According to his family, Ashraf, a resident of the Afsar Khan colony near Hyderabad's Golconda, went to Dubai in search of a job in August 2023. Over there, he was allegedly lured by a Chinese travel agency who promised a job in an IT company in Thailand. In August 2024, he flew from Dubai to Bangkok, where he was allegedly received by another agent, who took him to Mae Sot, another city in Thailand. Ashraf's family said he was taken in a boat to an undisclosed location and asked to engage in internet scams as a job. "After six months he was trapped and after three months of my complaint we received an email from Ministry of External Affairs, Govt of India that Shaik Ashraf is in custody of Thailand Police and no assurance has been given to rescue him.

Telugu students tread cautiously with their dollar dreams



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Hyderabad: As the United States President Donald J Trump intensified the crackdown on illegal immigrants and launched deportations, with around 250 Indians reportedly deported back to the country, Telugu students are exercising caution with regards to their American dreams. Several students, who are planning higher education in the US universities for the Fall intake this year, are apprehensive that Trump's administration might introduce stricter immigration regulations. Apart from tighter visa rules, students are apprehensive over changes in the optional practical training (OPT) programme norms for the international students on F-1 visas, thereby impacting their job prospects.

The OPT programme aids international students on F-1 visa to work in the US for about 12 months in the fields directly related to course of study. However, several foreign students have been found illegally working in jobs, which are not linked to their studies, out of the college campus. The US administration may clamp down on this illegal

work. The OPT programme has already been opposed by the advocates of the 'Make America Great Again' campaign, stating that OPT has been taking away jobs of the American workers.

Another concern for prospective students has been the future of the H-1B visa, which enables highly skilled professionals to work in the US. While Trump had earlier said he would not stop it, the unpredictability of his stance on issues, particularly with regards to immigration, has led to concerns. "I am closely following the developments in the US. Given the past experience where several Indian students were deported under the previous Trump administration, I don't want to take risks," said Thota Sai Kiran, an engineering final-year student, who is planning for higher education in the US. According to IDP senior manager Faizul Hassan, after Trump took over the administration, the Indian students are being cautious with regards to their higher education in the US. "Though the immigration rules have not been released yet, students are cautious about their plans," he said.

Long before Trump took over the US administration, there has been a steady decline in the number of international students, particularly Indians. As per the Open Doors report 2023-24, a total of 3,31,602 Indian students were pursuing academics in the US universities. This, according to the US education experts, has declined compared to previous years. "Even before the Trump administration, the job situation was not favourable. This has accentuated the high rate of visa rejections. There have been instances where some students' visas were rejected by their university selection. Now, it's not that the interest in education in US is on the wane but the students are adopting a wait and watch mode," said Ajaya Kumar Vemulapati, director, IMFS.

'Ensure no outsider or ex-student enters campus': Calcutta HC after Saraswati Puja college row



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday observed that authorities of the Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri College should formulate policies to prevent the entry of outsiders and former students of the college. A single bench of Justice Jay Sengupta observed that the alleged threat culture on campus cannot continue and that the entry of ex-students without any valid reason cannot be accepted. Justice Sengupta said, "I do not want any untoward incident to occur in an educational institution." The court further observed that those students who have alleged that they have been threatened can file a complaint at the local police station at Chari Market. "The police should take immediate action, and if not, then the court will intervene." Traditionally, the Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri Day College and Law College,

which share a campus, celebrate Saraswati Puja separately within it. However, this year, allegations surfaced that the Day College students forcibly erected a pandal in front of the Law College's pandal, effectively blocking the latter's puja celebrations. In response, Day College representatives denied any involvement, claiming that outsiders were responsible for setting up the pandal. Following a row between two groups of students, a student had moved a petition before the Calcutta High Court seeking its intervention in the matter.

On January 30, the court asked police to remove the makeshift pandal outside the main building of the campus to allow the Law College students to perform Saraswati Puja on the campus on February 2. The single-judge bench of Justice Jay Sengupta had asked the police commissioner to depute a joint commissioner and deploy armed police personnel to ensure students of both the day and the law colleges could hold their pujas on the campus, and no outsiders were let in. Meanwhile, students of the Law College alleged that a group led by outsider Mohammed Shabbir Ali and his group have regularly been coming to the college and threatening and harassing the students there. The State government had filed a report on Wednesday stating that the makeshift pandal had been removed. The HC had ordered the removal of both pandals, to be carried out by police on Saturday, with the entire process being videographed. Following this, the two colleges will hold separate Saraswati Puja celebrations each year.

OYO's marital status check regressive, say Pune youngsters

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Hospitality chain OYO Rooms' recent decision to restrict unmarried couples from booking rooms at its properties in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut has not gone down well with a sizable section of youngsters in Pune. Announced on January 5, the new OYO policy requires guests to provide valid proof of marriage at check-in, regardless of whether the booking was made online or at the reception desk in Meerut. Partner hotels have also been given the authority to turn down bookings in accordance with local sensibilities. The company has said the policy might be expanded to more cities, reported PTI. "Yes. No law in the country denies an unmarried couple a stay in a hotel," the OYO website, however, says.

The new rule has sparked debates and raised concerns about moral policing. For years, the hotel chain had built a reputation as a safe and private space for young couples, offering a safe space from intrusive family members. Cities like Pune also lack adequate 'third places', a term coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg to describe places other than home (first place) and work (second place) where people can hang out and interact. The beaches of Mumbai and expansive gardens in Delhi and Pune are examples of third places. Hotel chains like OYO are used not only by couples but also by groups of friends looking for third places. A policy mandating marriage registration will automatically restrict mixed-gender friend groups from booking hotel rooms as well, said a Pune youngster. "Unnecessary and intrusive." Criticising OYO's decision, Pune-based Dhanraj Khatri, 25, asked if married couples are the only people who need a place to stay. "OYO was a safe space for young couples starting their journey together. This decision alienates a significant portion of their customers. Relationships don't need a marriage certificate to be valid, and hotel policies should reflect the values of



inclusivity and freedom that young people believe in today," he added.

"We strongly disagree with the new policy. It's unfair and outdated to restrict unmarried couples from staying together," said Khatri's girlfriend, 24, requesting anonymity. Sahil Yadav, 20, said, "This new policy is not right. Hotels shouldn't act like this. Restricting unmarried couples entirely is unnecessary. They could impose other conditions, like time limits, but making rooms available only for married couples doesn't make sense." Anushree Shirkhedkar, student, 19, said, "I understand they want to create a family-friendly environment, but this is taking away personal freedom. For those exploring a relationship, this implies that simply dating is wrong. Businesses should be service providers, not impose personal judgments or reinforce outdated societal norms." A 20-year-old student at the Maharashtra Institute of Technology in Pune said, requesting anonymity, "Hotels shouldn't ask for marriage certificates. Who are they to question us? It's unnecessary and intrusive. We're the ones paying them, and this decision could cost their business a lot. It's totally absurd."

Indian Railways hiring: Notifications issued for over 32,000 vacancies

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Railways Hyderabad: The Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs), Ministry of Railways, Government of India, have notified a staggering 32,438 various posts. Of the total posts, 1,642 vacancies are up grabs in the South Central Railways (Secunderabad).

Under the SCR, assis-

tant (S & T), workshop, carriage and wagon, loco shed (diesel and electrical), assistant operations (electrical), assistant P.Way, TL and AC (workshop), TL and AC, assistant track machine, assistant TRD, pointsman B and track maintainer-IV posts are up for recruitment.

Recruitment process comprises computer-based tests, physical efficiency

test, documentation verification and medical examination. The computer-based test contains 100 questions with 25 questions each from general science and mathematics, 30 questions from general intelligence and reasoning and 20 general awareness and current affairs questions. There will be negative marking and 1/3 marks will be deducted for each wrong answer. Registration pro-



cess is underway and the deadline to apply is February 22, while application fee can be paid up to February 24. For more details, visit the RRBs website <https://www.rbapply.gov.in/>.

Fake ED gang robbery in Karnataka: 2 arrested in Kerala, search on for others

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Karnataka Police arrest two members of the fake ED gang that raided businessman's home in Dakshina Kannada. Karnataka Police arrest two members of the fake ED gang that raided businessman's home in Dakshina Kannada. The Karnataka Police recently arrested two members of the fake ED gang that raided the residence of a businessman in the Dakshina Kannada district last month. Both the accused, identified as Anil Fernandes and Sachin, are residents of Kollam district in Kerala and were arrested in the neighbouring state. Yatheesh N, Superintendent of Police, Dakshina Kannada, informed that four teams have been formed to track down the remaining culprits. The police have also seized the Ertiga car used in the crime and Rs 5 lakh cash from the accused. On January 3, six people claiming to be Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials reached the Dakshina Kannada residence of Haji N Sulaiman, owner of Mangaluru Singari Beedi Works, in a Maruti Suzuki Ertiga car. They produced a purported search warrant and fled with Rs 30 lakh cash from the house. Haji N Sulaiman's son Mohammed Iqbal filed a complaint with the Vitla police station after the family learned they were conned. A police officer said they suspect that someone who has worked in Mangaluru Singari Beedi Works and is aware of the Sulaiman family's financial transactions planned the crime. "We are yet to arrest many more persons. It looks like the accused have divided the cash among themselves. The two arrested are not aware of other team members' whereabouts. We are trying to gather more information from them. A team is in Kerala and is trying to locate others," the officer further said. He added that the accused Sachin fell ill in police custody and has been admitted to the Puttu government hospital for treatment. Sachin's condition is stable.

Queen's University, Belfast set to open first offshore campus in Gujarat's GIFT city



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

For the first time, a university from the United Kingdom is set to open an offshore campus in India in the Gujarat International Finance-Tec (GIFT) City, after two universities from Australia — Deakin and the University of Wollongong — began operations there in the last academic year. The 1845-founded Queen's University Belfast (QUB) in Northern Ireland, UK, will set up its first international branch campus in GIFT City, which will be the largest in the smart city, spread over 145,000 square feet with a ten-floor building. Another university from the UK, Coventry University, is also keen to open its international branch campus in GIFT City. It is awaiting in-principle approval from the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), university officials told. As one of the oldest Universities in the UK, Queen's University will open with 500 seats across seven Master's programmes and already has plans for further expansion for PhD research and establishing itself in entrepreneurial and start-up sectors. The academic session is to commence in January 2026. The university opened up for online applications last week on January 30. "Initially, there will be five Master's level programmes — Construction and Project Management, Business Analytics, Financial Analytics, Finance and Leadership for Sustainable Development. Two further programmes in September 2026 — MSc in Artificial Intelligence and MSc in Artificial Intelligence for Business — will be introduced," Professor Margaret Topping, who is Pro Vice Chancellor for Global Engagement, told after several visits to GIFT City. Professor Topping, who is the lead academic for the project, attended a virtual roundtable with industry leaders at GIFT City on Tuesday. With a fee structure of 15,000 pounds for a year (full programme), the University will be offering a wide range of scholarships along with "value-added options". "The faculty will be a blend of both the UK and India, and that will vary a little bit depending on the programme. We will use some flying faculty initially, but we will also very soon be going out to recruit the best talent from India and indeed from anywhere else in the world. We will be launching a faculty recruitment campaign very soon and with a very effective package so that we can ensure the best possible talent-delivering program on our campus in India. Also, the Dean of the campus will soon be appointed," Prof Topping told this newspaper.

Judge's bodyguard dies at Kolkata's Bankshall court, probe suggests suicide

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

A police personnel, appointed as a bodyguard of a judge, allegedly died by suicide at Kolkata's Bankshall court on Wednesday. The police said the deceased was identified as Gopal Nath and was posted in the special branch of Kolkata Police. A sound of firing was heard around 7.30 am on Wednesday at Bichar Bhawan, the police said. The police and other personnel rushed to the spot and sent the body to the Calcutta Medical College for postmortem. A senior police officer of the Kolkata Police said, "Nath was the personal bodyguard of a judge here. Primarily, it seems to be a case of suicide and the bullet was fired from his service revolver. However, we are investigating why he went there early in the morning when nobody was there in the court. Daily work had not started in the court. We are investigating all aspects." Atri Mitra is a Special Correspondent of The Indian Express with more than 20 years of experience in reporting from West Bengal, Bihar and the North-East. He has been covering administration and political news for more than ten years and has a keen interest in political development in West Bengal. Atri holds a Master degree in Economics from Rabindrabharati University and Bachelor's degree from Calcutta University.

Overcoming legal hurdles, Pune's Riverfront Development project to accelerate despite public outcry



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

The foundation stone for the Riverfront Development (RFD) project—to beautify the 44-km-long river stretch passing through Pune—was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March 2022, almost five years after its detailed project report was prepared by the municipal corporation. After overcoming a legal battle mounted by environmentalists and residents, the civic administration has given a major push to its implementation, with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis moving to track the work regularly.

In 2017, Ahmedabad-based HPC Design, Planning and Management Pvt Ltd prepared the plan for the RFD, estimated to cost around Rs 4,700 crore. The development and beautification project covers both sides of the 44.4-km river stretch passing through the city, which includes 22.2 km of the Mula, 10.4 km of the Mutha and 11.8 km of the Mula-Mutha rivers. The project has faced opposition from environmentalists and civil society, who took the issue to the National Green Tribunal and Supreme Court, citing damage to the river's ecology and increasing chances of flooding during the monsoon. However, the civic administration has been able to overcome all hurdles before the project, considered to be a pet project of the prime minister. Riverfront project, Pune The development and beautification project covers both sides of the 44.4-km river stretch passing through the city, which includes 22.2 km of the Mula, 10.4 km of the Mutha and 11.8 km of the Mula-Mutha rivers. "The Pune RFD has been included in the 'war room' of the chief minister, so the process of land acquisition will be speeded up along with actual work on site," said Yuvraj Deshmukh, RFD-in-charge at the Pune Municipal Corporation. The project has been divided into eleven stretches for proper implementation. The work on the 3.7-km stretch from Sangamwadi to Bund Garden is 80 per cent complete and is likely to be open to the public in June. It will cost Rs 265 crore to the civic body. The development of a 5.3-km stretch from Bund Garden to the Mundhwa bridge has been undertaken at a cost of Rs 462 crore, with Rs 142 crore allocated for the riverside road. It is around 30 per cent complete and moving at a slow pace owing to land acquisition problems. The PMC has also undertaken work on an 8.8-km stretch from Wakad to Sangvi at an estimated cost of Rs 297 crore, for which the design of the riverfront is being developed.

The project aims to construct relevant embankments of 91 km along the banks to protect low-lying areas from flooding, as stated in the project report. In sparsely developed areas, rural riparian embankments will be built, while urban riparian embankments will be constructed in moderately developed areas. In intensely developed areas with high banks, more engineered embankments will be built. The embankments on both sides of the river will be designed to contain floods. There will be green embankments in a 247-hectare area, which will include landscaping on the sloped pitching of the urban and rural riparian. The project proposes to reduce the impact of indiscriminately built obstructions such as bridges, causeways, weirs and check dams on the flow of water in Pune's rivers by removing, streamlining, remodelling or rebuilding them. The effect of such interventions will be to reduce the high flood level, according to the master plan. An interceptor sewer will be laid in the project area to curb and divert sewage to the nearest sewage treatment plant, preventing sewage from flowing directly into the river. Environment clearance for the project has been granted on various conditions, including that the civic body ensures only treated sewage water is released into the river.

Building embankments will enable the creation of a continuous public realm along both banks of Pune's rivers, allowing people to move along the length of the river. Pedestrian and cycling routes are proposed along the riverfront. The project aims to create a network of gardens, open spaces and public places that will help preserve the natural environment and turn the Pune rivers into an important asset for the city. Existing open spaces like gardens and parks, heritage structures along the river and ghats will also be integrated with the riverfront development. There are 22,150 trees in the project area, of which 11,000 trees will be cut and 11,150 trees will be transplanted. The project will include the planting of 30,000 trees of local species in the project area. Eighty-four per cent of the riverbank will feature a green embankment consisting of vegetated areas. All the species recommended for grasses, shrubs and trees are those that attract and "are highly favourable and conducive as habitats for fauna". The redevelopment of 82.45 hectares of the garden alongside the river has also been proposed. There are four bridges at strategic locations for pedestrian connectivity across the river. Similarly, three new vehicular bridges are proposed to be developed by the PMC, while all existing bridges will be integrated with the proposed embankments. Four barrages are proposed on the river. The Bund Garden Barrage will be retained, while a check dam and a weir will be converted into advanced barrages, with an additional barrage proposed in the project. This will enable water sports and boating in the river. The project proposes public amenities on 23 hectares of land, which would involve 18 temples, 18 crematoriums and an increase in food courts from five to eleven. The public will be able to access the river through 249 staircases, 19 ramps and refurbished 74 ghats. It also proposes parks and gardens on 50 hectares of land.

'GBS cases under control, drinking water 100% purified,' says PCMC chief Shekhar Singh

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Shekhar Singh, Municipal Commissioner, Pimpri-Chinchwad, spoke on a range of issues affecting the industrial city during an interaction with The Indian Express. Emphasising that the Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) situation was under control in the city, Singh, who is also the administrator of the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC), assured that the drinking water supplied was 100 per cent purified. He also ruled out the possibility of dismantling BRTS routes and promised to ease the growing traffic jams in the industrial city in coordination with the traffic police.

Manoj More: What is the current situation vis-a-vis GBS cases in Pimpri-Chinchwad?

The situation is under control. There are only a handful of patients undergoing treatment. After we learnt that the problem was created by water supplied through a well in Pune city, we realised that few private wells provide water to societies. Now, it is a fact that most societies do not use that water for drinking water. They use it for horticulture and other things... But when we started testing wells in the city to trace contamination, in one of the wells, the water was not contaminated from a biological point of view but there were a lot of leaves and it was not very clean. So, we put up a board that said no one should fill water from that well any longer... Then we started disinfecting the wells, private ones like it is done in rural areas...

We got three patients from Parandevadi and Talegaon Dabhade, where we realised that they had a history of drinking water from jars. So, we also decided that whichever jar bottling plants are there in the city, we need to start keeping a tab on them as well. There are about 10 units that we could locate in the city. Manoj More: After the GBS scare, have you reviewed the entire water supply system as there is speculation that drinking water supplied in Pimpri-Chinchwad is not 100 per cent purified?

If you mean that we are not 100 per cent purifying water at the water treatment plant, that is not correct. We are — both at Ravet and Chikhli. But I have no problem accepting that there are a few leakages in the lines. God forbid, if there is a drainage line or something like that which comes in close contact with the leakage area, issues might crop up. But to say that we are not treating water is absolutely incorrect. Tanker supply is something that we do not control from a private supply point of view. But, with this GBS thing, it is probably coming to fore that we might have to intervene a bit as far as the disinfection of private wells are concerned. Now, I am again repeating that the majority of societies do not use tanker water for drinking water. It is a fact. But, there might be some or very few cases where they might be doing it. Partha Sarathi Biswas: During COVID, we had a war room. Obviously, the number of cases is not too high. But, given the ferocity of the disease, do you have any plans for starting one?

We already started a control room last Thursday. And, we have already declared a helpline number as well. We are putting a doctor on that helpline number. And we are also telling people that if you call the Sarthi helpline, it will redirect you. So, no need to really remember that number because people in PCMC largely know the Sarthi helpline numbers. So, that command control centre, sort of a war room, is already operational. And, apart from that, for every zone, we have put in a doctor separately to tackle issues.

Anuradha Mascarenhas: Is there a cluster of GBS in Pimpri Chinchwad? No, there is no cluster. So, one interesting aspect is that even last year, we had about 83 GBS cases. Throughout the year, there were patients admitted in our hospitals, both private and municipal. Manoj More:

The traffic congestion in Pimpri-Chinchwad is growing by the day. This has been happening for nearly 15 years. Do you accept that PCMC and the traffic police have failed to resolve this issue? And do you have a solution to ease citizens' nightmares?

So, you have overstated the problem as far as the five-hour traffic jam is concerned. I was talking about 25 junctions where there is a problem... One of the junctions we have taken up is Nashik Phata. Something that complicates things in Nashik Phata is the signal. Even today, I can close that signal and make the two lanes free for traffic movement on both sides. Motorists will have to take a U-turn from the Vallabh Nagar subway if they intend to come to Kasarwadi from the Pune side which is not a big deal. What is stopping me from doing this is the pedestrian overbridge. So, currently, Maha Metro had to implement a pedestrian overbridge connecting the Metro station with the Kasarwadi Metro station, on both sides of the highway. They are starting the work now. Once that bridge is completed, I think we can close the signal and a lot of that issue will get resolved. Manoj More: Citizens and activists have been demanding that BRTS routes, at least on the Pune-Mumbai highway stretch, should be dismantled. What is your take?

There is no question of doing away with BRTS routes in the city. In fact, I feel BRTS routes should be further expanded and more buses should be purchased. We should do everything to encourage public transport and ensure that fewer private buses come on to the roads which will help us from decongesting our roads. Anuradha: Post-Diwali, we reported that Pimpri Chinchwad was the top-most polluting city in Maharashtra. What action has been taken?

There are two kinds of areas in PCMC which are polluted — one where construction activity is underway and the second is the industrial area. We also have several illegal MSMEs operating in the city. We have started adopting stern measures to ensure that construction firms comply with norms regarding pollution. In the last one or two months, fines to the tune of Rs 45 to 50 lakh have been levied. Recently, we issued 'stop work' notices to five construction sites. And if they do not comply even after two violations, then there will be a total stop work for 30 days.

From a vehicular pollution point of view, I think it's a bit of a longer battle. And it is one of the reasons why we went for GRAP [Graded Response Action Plan] this year. And it is still a work in progress. It will not happen immediately. Anuradha: There is increasing concern about stray dogs in PCMC areas. Please comment. The stray dog issue, again, is one that all cities are grappling with. We are trying to ramp up our sterilisation efforts. That also takes a hit because you need to keep a dog after sterilisation for five days... we have ramped up our kennels from about 89 two years ago to almost 240. They will get operationalised very soon. In the next two to three years, we can see the population stabilising. Ajay Jadhav: Is there a need for a separate municipal corporation for Hinjewadi and surrounding areas as it has been talked about in political circles? There is no talk of a separate municipal corporation from a Hinjewadi point of view. The proposal of villages in the surrounding area has always been to merge with PCMC. The new proposal is bringing villages beyond the Indrayani river — Talegaon, Alandi, Chakan — together as a new municipal corporation. So the government is probably considering that. One thing is for sure, the sooner that the suburban areas come under the purview of a municipal corporation, the better it is. Ajay Jadhav: The Metro network is being expanded in Pune city. Why is the same not being done in PCMC if it wants to promote public transport? There is a plan to expand the Metro network and connect the two lines.

'Woke up at 3 am because I was so excited': Delhi school students volunteer at polling stations



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Checking the snaking queue at Satya Public School in Devli village in Delhi, Satish Kahi, 17, and Suraj Patel, 15, are carefully matching names on voter IDs with the slips handed over to the hundreds coming in to vote, while also helping elderly and disabled electors with wheelchairs. They are among the thousands of student volunteers from government schools deployed at polling booths on Wednesday to ensure a smooth polling experience during the Delhi Assembly elections 2025. From a government school in Malviya Nagar, the duo said they were not provided with any training and were told to check the voter slips, ensure that people are not carrying their phones inside the booth and to provide wheelchair service to the elderly. "There was some confusion about which school we had to go to. We

were first asked to go to one polling booth and then to another. It took an hour before we were able to figure out that this is the school we have to come to. We have been standing here since morning," Kahi said. A Class 11 student, Puneet, 16, is a volunteer at a pink booth at MCD Primary School in Madangir village of the Ambedkar Nagar constituency. "Our school sent us, and we will be getting Rs 800 for volunteering today. Three days ago, we trained at Kamla Nehru College. We have to help old and differently abled people. We offer them wheelchairs and also help them cast their vote," he said. "I am very excited. I am doing this for the first time, and every time someone thanked me for helping them, it made me happy. It feels like I have grown up. It is a big responsibility," he said. "I woke up at 3 am because I was so excited. We are getting snacks every now and then." Like Puneet, Kahi and Patel, Raja Kumar and Yogesh are also volunteering at polling booths.

Students from a Delhi government school, the trio were trained in Mangolpuri in sign language to help voters with hearing impairment. "We even learnt to communicate our names in sign language. We have to help the differently abled voters," Yogesh said. Prerna Sagar, 17, a Class 11 student at Rajkiya Uchha Madhyamik Kanya Vidyalaya in Madangir village, is among the six girls selected from her school to volunteer. A resident of Madangir and a member of the National Service Scheme, she was selected six days ago. Dressed in her white T-shirt, white cap and black trousers, she said the group has been told to help the old and disabled voters.

Feel irritated and upset: Unable to find names on voters lists, some turned away from polling booths

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Living in rental accommodations, frequent house changes, and in some cases, baffled residents — many in the national capital found their names removed from voters' list Wednesday when they went to vote in the Delhi Assembly election 2025. In Mayur Vihar, Narinder Sharma, who lives in the Hindustan Times Apartment, also found his name missing. "I have been voting since 2010. My name is not there this time. I also filed a complaint online, but they said I would have to register again," said Sharma, who works in an IT firm.

"My mobile is connected to my voter ID. If my name is not on the list and deleted, I should have been informed or gotten a message, but there was no information from the Election Commission. I feel very irritated and upset because I am a citizen and have the right to vote. My wife also lives with me, but her name is on the list," he said. Fatima Bhano, 38, a resident of Viji Nagar Rithala couldn't find her name in the voter list at Delhi Rithala Pratm Vidyalaya. "My name is not in the voter list. They are now asking me to another sector. For me, the biggest issue is the inflation. The electricity bill even in the winters was so high" Bhano has two children but chooses to send them to private schools. "The government schools are in a very bad condition. Its all a show, they just lie about schools being great but there are not," she said. Polling agents of Congress and AAP in Shalimar Village also alleged that names of some people were missing from the voter list.

At Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya (SKV) No 2, a model polling booth in the Rajouri Garden Assembly constituency, Azhar Abbas Khan, 58, was one such voter. Khan said he has been living in the Rajouri Garden area of Delhi since 1989 and has voted in the constituency in almost all the elections in between. Khan said he arrived at the government school at around 9.15 am only to be told his name was not on the voters' list. "My name has been deleted. Maybe it's because I changed my address," he said. On his way to the municipal corporation primary school in Raghur Nagar, crossing through the cramped labour chowk, Khan pointed to an open drain. "The MLA has done some work.



However, hygiene issues and waterlogging caused by the overflowing drain have not been sorted. People from my area complain, but nothing has been done about it," he said.

Khan walked to the polling officers inside the Raghur Nagar primary school, one kilometre away, in his last attempt at finding his name. "What is your address on the voter card?" a polling officer asked Khan. "L- 185," said Khan. As the polling officer examined the voters' list in the L-block section, his and son Irfan Khan's names were marked as "deleted". Disappointed, Khan called his son, telling him that they could not vote. "I have lived on rent all my life. I even voted in the Lok Sabha (2024). After that, I shifted. How many times will I change my address?" he asked. Meanwhile, Deboo Singh, 74, travelled from Darbhanga, Bihar, to cast his vote and was out of the polling booth within 10 minutes. He shifted out of Delhi three years ago but found his name on the list. "I have been travelling back to Delhi for every election for the past three years," said Singh, who was a resident of Rajinder Nagar when he first came to Delhi in 2004 and started working as a security guard but went back to his village in 2022. "Mudda toh kuch nahi hai, hum 20 saal se ek hi party ko vote de rahe hai, BJP se hi humara purana rishta hai (There is no specific electoral issue for me, I have been voting for the BJP for two decades). I came specifically to Delhi from my village to cast my vote here and will return home after taking a dip at Mahakumbh on February 11," said Singh.

Parents of victim in R G Kar rape-murder seek time as Calcutta High Court weighs reinvestigation



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

The parents of the victim in the R G Kar Medical College rape-murder case have sought additional time from the Calcutta High Court regarding its decision to order a reinvestigation. Their counsel, Gargi Goswami, informed the court: "We had appealed to the Supreme Court asking whether the single bench of Calcutta High Court has the liberty to hear the matter. The matter will be heard this week in Supreme Court; thus, we are praying for time." The state government, meanwhile, submitted a report asserting that it had "no role" in the investigation.

The parents of the deceased doctor initially approached the High Court in December 2024, expressing distrust in the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) probe. Their counsel argued that key evidence had been lost and urged for a fresh investigation. However, Justice Tirthankar Ghosh, presiding over the single bench, deferred action, seeking clarification from the Supreme Court, given that an earlier division bench had assigned the case to the CBI and mandated progress reports. The case has been mired in controversy. Two prominent figures — Sandip Ghosh, former principal of R G Kar Medical College, and Abhijit Mondol, a former police officer — were granted bail in December 2024 after the CBI failed to file a chargesheet within 90 days. Both had been arrested in September on allegations of evidence tampering and attempting to suppress the case.

The High Court first transferred the case to the CBI after suspecting bias in the local police investigation. Three days prior, a civic police volunteer, Sanjay Roy, had been arrested as the prime suspect in the crime, which took place on August 9, 2024. The trial began in November, and in January, a Sealdah trial court sentenced Roy to life

imprisonment. With the Supreme Court now involved, the future of the case remains uncertain, as the victim's family continues to push for a fresh probe.

Why Mumbai's STP project got lion's share of funding in this year's BMC budget

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

In its annual civic budget for the financial year 2025-26, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) allocated Rs 5,545 crore, which is 12.8 per cent of the entire capital expenditure, for constructing seven sewage treatment plants (STP) in Mumbai. This marks a 35 per cent jump in allocation as compared to last year. With the overall cost pegged at over Rs 30,000 crore, the ground-breaking ceremony for this project was carried out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January 2023. Here's a look at why the STP project received a major chunk of funding in this year's BMC budget.

What is the STP project?

An STP is a treatment facility that scientifically treats wastewater for potable and non-potable uses. The STP project being executed by the Mumbai Sewage Disposal Project (MSDP) department will see seven STPs being constructed across Mumbai with a collective capacity of treating 2,464 million litres (MLD) of water daily for potable usage. In addition to this, the STPs will have a combined capacity to treat 1,232 MLD of water further for non-potable use.

Where will these STPs come up?

The STPs are being constructed at seven locations in Mumbai — Worli, Bandra, Dharavi, Versova, Malad, Ghatkopar and Bhandup. Of these seven STPs, the largest one is located in Worli, which will have a capacity of treating 500 MLD of water, followed by Malad (454 MLD), Dharavi (418 MLD), Bandra (360 MLD), Ghatkopar (337 MLD), Bhandup (215 MLD) and Versova (180 MLD).

After successful space docking, Isro's SpaDex satellites face delay in undocking exercise



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

In a sign that its SpaDex experiment involving space docking is experiencing technical issues, the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) has delayed an undocking manoeuvre that was scheduled soon after the successful docking on January 16. Space docking refers to the joining of two fast-moving satellites in space. On January 29, Isro chairman V Narayanan indicated that the space agency is still conducting a review of the undocking process and that the move could take a while. He was speaking after the launch of the NVS-02 satellite by the GSLV-F15 rocket. Isro sources have indicated that "there are some issues with the docking experiments" and that the "undocking has not been possible yet". Isro had on January 16 announced the successful docking in space of two satellites it had launched on December 30 which were moving at a speed of over 28,000 kmph. The SpaDex experiment made India the fourth country in the world — after the US, Russia and China — to successfully demonstrate the capability of docking spacecraft. "SpaDex Docking Update: Post docking, control of two satellites as a single object is successful. Undocking and power transfer checks to follow in coming days," ISRO had reported on its official social media handle on January 16. Ahead of the mission's launch, the agency

had said, "After successful docking and rigidization, electrical power transfer between the two satellites will be demonstrated before undocking and separation of the two satellites to start the operation of their respective payloads for the expected mission life of up to two years." On February 2, Switzerland-based s2a systems which develops and operates "systems for Space Situational Awareness" posted images on social media indicating that the SpaDex satellites are still in a docking position.

"SpaDeX A & B during today's pass over South America, 2025-02-02, 01:19:06 UTC," s2a systems reported on social media with visuals of the docked SpaDex satellites in space. Replying to a query on SpaDex on January 29, Narayanan said in Sriharikota that they have to think of the money involved in such projects and utilise it to the maximum. "Now we are in the process of reviewing when to do the undocking, the power connections and when to totally separate them again and dock again. All these processes are going on. We do not want to undock and leave it," the Isro chairman said. "We have loaded five kg of propellant on both the satellites. The propellant is needed for docking and undocking exercises. Currently we have 60 to 70 per cent of the propellant (as of January 29) remaining in the spacecraft. There are going to be a lot of experiments in the docking, undocking, power connection exercises and it is not a one time exercise," he said. "Both the satellites are currently moving as one entity and we want to study if things are going correctly and whether they can be controlled together. After complete review and freezing of the experiments that we have planned we may discuss after a month or two," he added. Isro sources said the agency has "not been able to undock" the satellites yet. Space docking is considered essential technology for India's future space ambitions such as bringing back a sample from the Moon, the plan to build its own space station, the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), and a possible human landing on the Moon.

Drones to monitor sensitive state board exam centres in Maharashtra

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

The Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (MSBSHSE) announced Tuesday that it will carry out drone surveillance of sensitive board exam centres in the state. A facial recognition system will also be employed at the exam centres to confirm the identities of examination officials like the centre director and supervisors, said the notice issued by MSBSHSE secretary Madhuri Savarkar. Class 10 exams held by the Maharashtra state board will begin on February 21 and will continue till March 17, 2025, and Class 12 exams will be conducted from February 11 to March 11, 2025. The notice also mentions various other instructions for exam centres. Photocopying centres will remain closed in a 500-metre radius around exam centres and Section 144 will be in place around the area of the examination centre.

District officials must also ensure that all facilities are available at the centre a day before the examinations, it said, adding that cases will be filed under the Maharashtra Prevention of Malpractices Act 1982 in case any illegal activity



is detected. Video recording will also be carried out outside the examination centres. The decisions were taken at a recent meeting attended by state Chief Secretary Sujata Saunik, Principal Secretary of School Education and Sports Department Ranjit Deol, Commissioner of Education Sachindra Singh, all collectors, senior police officials and other officers of the state.

Bombay HC to hear Skoda Volkswagen's plea against USD 1.4 bn tax notice on Feb 17

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

bombay high court on skoda volkswagen tax noticeThe automobile company last month filed a petition in the HC, challenging a show-cause notice issued by the authorities in September 2024 under the Customs Act. The Bombay High Court on Wednesday said it would hear on February 17 a plea filed by Skoda Auto Volkswagen India challenging the tax demand of USD 1.4 billion by Indian customs authorities.

The Volkswagen group, currently led in the country by Skoda Auto Volkswagen India, has been accused of deliberately misleading customs authorities through its mode of import of parts as individual units rather than as a component of a 'completely knocked down' (CKD) unit, which attracts higher import duty. The automobile company last month filed a petition in the HC, challenging a show-cause notice issued by the authorities in September 2024 under the Customs Act. On Wednesday, the company's counsels mentioned the plea before a division bench of Justices B P Colabawalla and Firdosh Pooniwalla, seeking urgent hearing. The notice alleged that the company misclassified its imports of Audi, Skoda and Volkswagen cars as "individual parts" instead of "completely knocked down" (CKD) units, thereby paying significantly lower customs duties. The CKD units attract a 30-35 per cent duty, but Volkswagen



declared its imports as separate components in different shipments and paid only 5-15 per cent in duties, it said. The VW group, through its various brands, including Audi, VW, and Skoda, has sold a variety of models, which have been imported as CKD units and assembled in India. Some of the models include Octavia, Superb, Kodiaq, Passat, Jetta and Tiguan. In 2019, Volkswagen Group India received regulatory and statutory approvals to merge its three passenger car subsidiaries in the country into one entity — Skoda Auto Volkswagen India — in order to work more efficiently at all levels to gain significant market shares for Volkswagen and Skoda by 2025.

Who is on the flight carrying 104 individuals deported from the US?

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

A United States military C-17 aircraft carrying 104 deported Indian nationals from Haryana, Gujarat, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Chandigarh is set to land at Amritsar airport around 1 pm today. The flight, which departed from San Antonio, Texas, on Tuesday afternoon, has 11 crew members and 45 US officials on board. According to sources, the highest number of deportees — 33 each — are from Gujarat and Haryana, followed by 30 from Punjab. Two passengers each are from Uttar Pradesh and Chandigarh, while three are from Maharashtra.

The deportees include 25 women and 12 minors, with the youngest passenger being just four years old. Forty-eight individuals are below the age of 25. A senior Punjab Police official said that most of the 30 deportees from Punjab hail from the Majha belt, including Gurdaspur, Amritsar, and Tarn Taran, while others are from Jalandhar, Nawanshahr, Patiala, Mohali, and Sangrur. The repatriation comes amid increasing US immigration enforcement measures, particularly targeting individuals who entered the country illegally or overstayed their visas.

Punjab police have made strict arrangements at the airport. Speaking to media persons on Tuesday, Punjab DGP Gaurav Yadav said, "We discussed it in the meeting chaired by the Chief Minister today. He has asked us that the Punjab government receive them in a friendly manner.



A United States military C-17 aircraft carrying 104 deported Indian nationals from Haryana, Gujarat, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Chandigarh is set to land at Amritsar airport around 1 pm today. The flight, which departed from San Antonio, Texas, on Tuesday afternoon, has 11 crew members and 45 US officials on board.

We shall set up our counters there (at the airport). We are in touch with the central government. Whenever we shall receive any more information, we will share it. We still have unconfirmed reports that a large number of people are likely to be deported. "Earlier, Punjab NRI Affairs Minister Kuldeep Singh Dhalwal said it was better to "send illegal residents back home rather than putting them in jail in the US."

Mumbai court rejects former censor board CEO Rakesh Kumar's discharge plea in bribery case



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

CBI, voice sample, bribery case, chandigarh news, indian express CBI booked three people, including Singh and a member of the CBFC, under relevant sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act. A special court Tuesday rejected an application filed by former Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) chief executive officer (CEO) Rakesh Kumar Singh seeking to be discharged from a corruption case filed against him in 2014. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had booked him, claiming that he had demanded bribes for censor certification for films.

"Demand of money by Rakesh Kumar is prima facie appearing. He was collecting the amount through his agents.

Demand and acceptance of the amount can be proved by circumstantial evidence also as many times direct evidence is not available. It can be proved only after recording of evidence. Hence, there is sufficient material to frame charge. Therefore, he cannot be discharged as prayed," CBI Special Judge S M Menjoge said in his order. CBI booked three people, including Singh and a member of the CBFC, under relevant sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act. Singh sought to be cleared from the case, stating that there was no evidence that he had demanded or received a bribe. He further submitted that the CEO of the CBFC is not the sole authority to issue certificates clearing films, so he could not have sought a bribe.

CBI opposed his discharge plea by stating that there was evidence that he had sought a bribe through a co-accused for clearing a Chattisgarh film, Mor Dauki ke Bihav, for its early release in 2014. It was also claimed that evidence showed that he had obtained an iPad and a laptop to clear a Tamil film. CBI claimed that Singh had dumped the articles in the Arabian Sea.

The agency claimed that the bribe amount was negotiated by various accused with a rate for certificates to be issued early. Singh said the allegation of throwing the articles into the sea was false as nothing was recovered. The court said these aspects can be looked at during the trial.

A three-step implementation plan that gives thrust to primary prevention of diabetes

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

An expert group has laid down clinical guidelines for clinicians in India and other Southeast Asian regions to implement primary prevention programmes for type 2 diabetes. Drafting a three-step implementation process of screening, diagnosis of intermediate hyperglycaemia and design and delivery of personalised intervention, the experts from different countries have said that the new guidelines present "a simplified yet effective approach" for clinicians to identify, sensitise and treat individuals at high risk of type 2 diabetes. "Call to action for clinicians in the South-East Asian regions on primary prevention of diabetes in people with prediabetes - A consensus statement", which has been published in Diabetes Research and Clinical Practice, puts the emphasis on primary prevention of diabetes. The publication was authored by an international scientific group, with primary contributions from A. Ramachandran and Nanditha of Dr. Ramachandran's Diabetes Hospital and the India Diabetes Research Foundation, Chennai. Dr. Ramachandran is the hospital's chairman and managing director and Dr. Nanditha, its director.

Primary prevention is one of the most effective ways to address the growing diabetes epidemic. Dr. Ramachandran and Dr. Nanditha, in an email interview, said that scientists, doctors, and other stakeholders are increasingly concerned about the rising prevalence of diabetes, particularly among the Indian population. Asian Indians, as an ethnic group, face a higher risk of developing diabetes, even at lower levels of obesity and with fewer traditional risk factors. Randomised control trials have shown that primary prevention of diabetes or delaying its onset is achievable through lifestyle modifications. Additionally, certain pharmacological interventions, such as metformin, have proven effective. Together, lifestyle changes and targeted medications represent the most cost-effective strategies for diabetes prevention and to handle the epidemic of diabetes.

The consensus statement outlines a three-step plan. Screening to identify high-risk individuals using a non-invasive risk score assessment prior to a blood test is the first step. Validated risk scores are available for Asian Indians and other ethnicities. This, the article said, is an efficient method in terms of time and cost to detect people with prediabetes. In addition to the risk score, factors such as history of prediabetes, history of gestational diabetes, polycystic ovarian syndrome, history of hypertension and low birth weight should be taken into consideration while determining the risk of an individual for diabetes. Diagnosis of prediabetes/intermediate hyperglycaemia is the second step. This will look at certain specified criteria to confirm



the presence of intermediate hyperglycaemia/prediabetes. This includes fasting plasma glucose of 110 to 125 mg/dL or HbA1c of 6.1% to 6.4%. Devising the strategy for primary prevention comes next. In this, diet, physical activity and medication play a crucial role. This includes a healthy meal plan for weight management enriched with macro and micronutrients, moderate intensity exercise and strength training for weight management and initiation of medication if hyperglycaemia or weight loss cannot be achieved with lifestyle changes alone, the article says. The expert group noted that recommendations provided on dietary intake and physical activity can be tailored by the clinician to suit individual needs.

The doctors said that currently, the majority of individuals with diabetes are treated by family physicians and general practitioners. These healthcare providers have access to populations at high risk of diabetes, particularly the relatives of patients already diagnosed with the condition, making them well-positioned for screening efforts. However, awareness about primary prevention of diabetes remains limited among primary care physicians, despite their familiarity with preventive measures for infectious diseases, such as vaccination programmes. During a meeting of health scientists, a consensus emerged that raising awareness among primary care physicians is one of the most effective strategies for implementing primary prevention in a developing country like India. This article, they said, aims to provide information on screening methods to identify individuals at high risk of diabetes and outlines strategies for preventing the disease in such populations. "We believe that this approach represents one of the best and most feasible first steps toward reducing the incidence of diabetes in India. Primary care physicians, who have access to high-risk populations in both urban and rural areas, are uniquely positioned to play a pivotal role in this effort," the doctors added.

Budget allocation for health sector remains insufficient, say healthcare professionals

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Healthcare professionals and activists in the State have expressed concern over the "dismal increase" in the Budget allocation for the healthcare sector from last year. Members of the Praja Arogya Vedika (PAV), affiliated to Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, have already written to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman expressing concern over the continued shortfall in the Union government's healthcare Budget allocations. Citing a 2010 report of the World Health Organisation (WHO) that recommended spending 6% of GDP on healthcare to improve accessibility of health facilities to the public, PAV members said the current allocation remains at approximately 2% of the GDP, a far cry from the WHO's recommendation. "The allocation continues to fall short of both expectations and the urgent needs of the nation's healthcare system," said the members. Explaining the consequences, organisation general secretary T. Kameshwar Rao said the persistent underfunding will lead to inadequate health infrastructure in the State, limited access to care, especially in rural areas, rising out-of-pocket expenses for citizens, and a weakened public health system.

"The disease pattern is on the rise these days. The different surveys being conducted at the State-level paint a grim picture. Cases of cancer, diabetes, blood pressure and other life-style diseases are on the rise. While it is the case, the spending on infrastructure, medicines, health staff should also increase proportionately. But the allocation remains more or less the same from last year," Mr. Kameshwar Rao said, adding that the GST on medicines should be removed too. The Indian Medical Association (IMA), A.P., too, feels that the allocation should have been increased. "The National Health Policy-2017 recommended that the health expenditure be increased from the then 1.15% of the GDP to 2.5% of the GDP by 2025. But this time, it is less than 2%," said Ravi Krishna of the IMA.

The IMA, while welcoming the announcement to increase medical seats, emphasised that the government should at the same time take measures to ensure employment for all graduates. Government Doctors' Association president Jayadheer Babu said merely increasing the num-



ber of medical seats will not guarantee an improvement in healthcare services. "In States like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, we have more medical colleges than required. What will we do with so many colleges? Government spending should be directed instead on improving infrastructure at medical colleges in the country. Many do not have basic facilities," he said.

WhatsApp introduces image, voice input for ChatGPT, enhancing AI interaction

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Hyderabad: WhatsApp has rolled out significant updates to improve AI-powered interactions with OpenAI's ChatGPT. Initially limited to text-based queries, ChatGPT on WhatsApp now supports image and voice message inputs, making AI conversations more dynamic and accessible. With the latest update, users can upload images, which include memes and photographs, to ChatGPT, and then it will respond in text. The user can use this for information on what objects are, places, or even the meaning of viral memes. However, it can only comment on the image but not create one.

The U.S.'s exit from WHO, a chance to reshape global health



EMS News Agency, Feb 7

On January 20, 2025, the United States government issued an executive order to withdraw from membership of the World Health Organization (WHO). This has raised apprehensions that reduced funding for WHO would impact the functionality of the organisation. However, as the executive decision by the U.S. government has already been made, it is time to reflect on some fundamental questions such as why a single country's exit from WHO is causing so much concern. How can the U.S.'s exit from WHO be converted into an opportunity to create a stronger WHO? Why is there a need for an increasingly greater role of countries in Asia and Africa in global health.

Funding intricacies

To understand the impact of the U.S.'s withdrawal from WHO funding, we need to understand WHO's funding system. There are two broad categories of funding sources. In the first, the assessed contribution (or AC) is a fixed amount each WHO member-state must pay annually as a sort of membership fee. This is what the U.S. President has argued as being disproportionately high (for the U.S.) and cited as one of the four reasons for the U.S.'s decision regarding its withdrawal. The assessed contributions ensure assured funding, which WHO uses to pay the salaries of regular staff, both technical and administrative, and maintain day-to-day functioning. This is the minimum resources the organisation needs to ensure a continuity of operations. The other funding pool is from voluntary contributions (or VC) which comes from a range of donor agencies and additional contributions from WHO member-states. VCs are broadly for projects and other time-bound activities. WHO uses VC funds in the hiring of short-term staff and consultants. However, the problem with VC funds is that these are — as the name suggests — voluntary, always time-bound, linked to specific activities, and, thus, unpredictable. For example, many member-states and donors provide funds for polio elimination, patient safety, primary health care or antimicrobial resistance-related work. These contributions are tight-jacketed and non-transferable to other activities. With the U.S.'s withdrawal from WHO, the VC would also be impacted, as many U.S.-based or U.S.-aligned donors may either reduce, or worse, completely stop the funding to WHO. As an example, the ongoing turmoil and uncertain fate of USAID would additionally impact WHO funding. Clearly, the financial impact on WHO is likely to be far greater than the direct share of the U.S. government funds for WHO.

Another argument given for the U.S.'s withdrawal, which has been used frequently by some others to criticise WHO, is that the organisation is highly bureaucratic, acts slow and is in need of urgent reforms. This is partially true and to be fair in assessment, every global institution needs some reforms and WHO is not any different. In fact, there is far more to WHO's credit than the occasional systemic blips it has faced. In this era of emerging and multi-sectoral challenges such as antimicrobial resistance, climate change, global warming and animal health, increasing re-emergence of diseases and a steep rise in lifestyle diseases, the world needs a stronger WHO, more than ever. Why institutions fail in their book, Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty, Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson (they were conferred the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2024) hypothesize, inter alia, that nations thrive upon the foundation and the strengths of functioning and stronger institutions.

Expanding the analogy at a global level, the world needs stronger institutions for peace and global health. However, in the last few decades, the fibres of global collaboration have been damaged. There is rising nationalism in many

countries and 'Nation first' is becoming a vote-catcher for many leaders. This phenomenon of hyper-nationalism is global but relatively new, and, thus, arguably more virulent in high-income countries. Hyper-nationalism often undermines global institutions. With the U.S.'s exit from WHO, the likelihood of key multi-country alliances such as G-7, G-20 and others stepping in to support and fund WHO are feeble. Yet, for its tremendous body of work in the last 75 years, it is a moral imperative for all countries that the alternatives are explored to protect and save global institutions. The legitimate governments and elected political leaders in the global south and countries such as India, Brazil, South Africa, Thailand, Egypt and many others need to step up to support WHO in specific, and the United Nations in general. There is another important consideration — the inexcusable gap in global health priorities and funding. The health challenges which affect the countries in Asia and Africa are grossly underfunded; mPox did not get global attention till it started affecting people in high-income countries in 2022. The vaccines and drugs against mPox are barely available in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other settings where disease is most rampant but offered liberally in the U.S. which has a few mPox cases. This is a reminder that high-income countries continue to shape the policies, health agenda and command influence in global health, inadvertently widening health inequities. Global health has arguably been a case of 'He who pays the piper calls the tune'. The decision to recall U.S. government personnel who have been seconded to WHO and subsequent apprehension that such a step would slow down ongoing programmes reflect how global health agencies are a little too dependent on subject experts originating from a single or select few countries. Global health will be better off if a pool of subject experts in various areas of public health are available from different countries and in the majority of the countries. There are a few things which should be considered immediately. The global south must act first, countries in the global south, especially Asia and Africa, must team up to supplement WHO funding gap after the U.S.'s exit. BRICS could be one such platform. Second, countries such as India, Ethiopia, Ghana, and others in the global south need to invest in training of experts not just in public health but also global health (these are different areas). For example, India should have trained experts in conditions which affect Africa and diseases which are not prevalent in our country. The era of providing only financial support to any country is behind us. It is time for 'pooled' technical expertise in health, as in any other sector. Third, the countries in the global south should set up a few premier institutions at the country or at regional levels through inter-country collaboration to train their experts in global health. It is the expertise from low- and middle-income countries which will be of help to each other and to WHO by the secondment of such experts. That way, global health can improve at a much lower cost than by expertise from high-income countries.

Fourth, we have been hearing of reforms in WHO for a long time. One of the steps which should be considered urgently is to trim staff and move the headquarters to one of the regional offices in Brazzaville (Congo), Cairo, Manila or New Delhi. This would reduce the headquarter's operational costs. Though this might be a problem in terms of air connectivity, the time and the focus of WHO's work needs to be on geographies where attention is needed: Africa and Asia. It would be a very strategic move to scale down the headquarters and move specific divisions to the regional offices.

It is very likely that four years later or some time in future, when there is a new U.S. President, the U.S. would rejoin WHO. However, till then, the U.S.'s withdrawal should be explored as an opportunity for the public health community and political leadership in the global south to initiate country and regional level and collaborative actions to reshape the global health agenda, which is much under the influence and the guidance of high-income countries. Global health should not be at the mercy of funding or the expertise from one or a handful of high-income countries. It must be truly a joint venture for the entire world, led by the global south. Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya is a medical doctor and a specialist in global health, with nearly 17 years of professional work experience with the United Nations system including the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. The views expressed are personal.

Tulsi Gabbard passes Senate committee vote, paving way to DNI confirmation

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

Hindu-American Tulsi Gabbard, U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial pick to oversee spy agencies, has been approved by a key Senate committee for Director of National Intelligence (DNI) in a private vote, paving the way toward a wider Senate vote on her confirmation. The Republican-led Senate Select Committee on Intelligence approved Ms. Gabbard's nomination in a closed committee vote of 9-8, along party lines. The full Senate is expected to vote on her confirmation as early as next week, the Washington Post reported.

Ms. Gabbard, 43, a former Democratic congresswoman from Hawaii, had faced bipartisan scepticism about her suitability for overseeing the spy agencies. "The Intelligence Committee just voted for Tulsi Gabbard's nomination to be the Director of National Intelligence favourably to the full United States Senate," Senate Intelligence Committee Chair Tom Cotton told reporters on Tuesday (February 4, 2025) after the closed-door vote.

"We look forward to her confirmation and working with her to keep America safe," he was quoted as saying by the Hill. The vote took place only hours after Senator Todd Young, a key Republican swing vote, announced that he would support her. Ms. Gabbard secured another big win on Monday (February 3, 2025) as Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine) said that she would back her in the committee vote.

A four-term Congresswoman, 2020 presidential candidate and NYT bestselling author, Ms. Gabbard, is a veteran with three deployments to war zones in the Middle East and Africa. She recently moved from being a Democrat to a Republican member. In October 2022, she announced she was leaving the Democrat Party, and becoming an Independent. On August 26, 2024, Ms. Gabbard formally endorsed Mr. Trump for a second term and soon after began serving as co-chair of his transition team.

On October 22, 2024, she joined the Republican Party because of President-elect Ms. Trump's leadership and how he has been able to transform the Republican Party, bringing it back to the party of the people and the party of peace. From the moment Mr. Trump announced Ms. Gabbard as his nominee to be DNI, questions have cropped up about her past views and statements. Those include her



2017 meeting with then-Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, which occurred as he was accused of using chemical weapons on his own people, as well as her stance on Russia given multiple comments she made about the war with Ukraine that were considered sympathetic to Moscow and were echoed on Russian state TV. As per the US law, all the Cabinet ranking positions and several other senior administration positions need to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate. It starts with a confirmation hearing by their respective Senatorial committees.

Protests erupt across US against Trump, Project 2025

Washington: A movement to oppose the early actions of President Donald Trump's administration is taking off online, with plans to protest across the US on Wednesday.

The movement has organised under the hashtags #buildtheresistance and #50501, which stands for 50 protests, 50 states, one day. Many of the protests are planned at state capitols, with some in other cities.

The movement has websites and accounts across social media. Flyers circulating online decry Project 2025, a hard-right playbook for American government and society, and include messages such as "reject fascism" and "defend our democracy."

Donald Trump wants US to take over Gaza Strip; won't rule out deploying U.S. troops



GNS News Agency, Feb 7

In a surprise announcement, President Donald Trump said the U.S. "will take over" the war-ravaged Gaza Strip, "own it" and undertake economic development there that will create "unlimited numbers of jobs and housing." Mr. Trump made these remarks on Tuesday (February 4, 2025) during a joint press conference in the White House with visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu standing beside him. Mr. Trump also suggested that the U.S. develop the land but gave no details on who would be allowed to live there. Netanyahu press conference with Trump at The White House

He also said that all Palestinians currently living in Gaza — around two million people — should leave and be placed in other countries in the Middle East. Gaza ceasefire: Hamas hands over three hostages to Red Cross "The U.S. will take over the Gaza Strip and we will do a job with it too. We'll own it and be responsible for dismantling all of the dangerous unexploded bombs and other weapons on the site, level the site and get rid of the destroyed buildings," Mr. Trump said. "Create an economic development that will supply unlimited numbers of jobs and housing for the people of the area, do a real job, do something different," he said. "The only reason the Palestinians want to go back to Gaza is they have no alternative. It's right now a demolition site. This is just a demolition site. Virtually, every building is down. They're living under fallen concrete that's very dangerous and very precarious. They instead can occupy all of a beautiful area with homes and safety, and they can live out their lives in peace and harmony, instead of having to go back and do it again," Mr. Trump said. Asked about the possibility of sending U.S. troops to Gaza, Mr. Trump said the U.S. would "do what is necessary" as he laid out plans for the U.S. to take the area over, and suggested he would visit the territory.

Calling the Gaza Strip a "symbol of death and destruction" and a "hell hole right now", Mr. Trump said it is "so bad

Broken promises in a warming world

GNS News Agency, Feb 7

There can be no doubt that U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to pull the United States out of the Paris Agreement, which will legally come into effect in a year, is a major blow to global efforts to combat the threat posed by anthropogenic global warming. The U.S., the world's richest nation, owning a third of the world's wealth, and with the highest annual gross domestic product, is singularly responsible for global warming, having contributed well over a fifth of the cumulative emissions of carbon dioxide, from the pre-industrial era to date. Under the principles and terms of the United Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to which the U.S. is a signatory, it is also supposed to take the lead in climate action while providing the financial and technological means to developing countries to do the same.

By any reckoning, climate action by the U.S. has always fallen well short of its responsibility under the global climate regime, irrespective of the dispensation in Washington DC. Its emissions steadily rose from 1992 to 2005, while its political class consistently swung away from serious efforts, resulting in the U.S. Congress, through a bipartisan consensus, keeping the country out of the Kyoto Protocol. Since then, its emissions have declined, though at a rate that is much slower than what it owes the world. The eventual move away from legally binding commitments on developed countries, as in the Kyoto Protocol, to voluntary contributions pledged by all countries in the Paris Agreement, with the pious hope of increasing ambition as time went by, was solely to accommodate the constraints of U.S. domestic politics which would not allow ratification of any binding emissions reduction commitment. Initiated at Copenhagen in 2009 and consolidated at Paris, six years later, this move was Barack Obama's legacy.

After the Trump victory, much is being made of the Biden administration's efforts at climate action. The U.S. became the world's highest producer of crude oil under the Biden administration. The paltry target of \$300 billion annually as climate finance, from COP29 at Baku, was the outcome of the joint obduracy of the U.S. and its developed country allies. Biden's swan song, the updated nationally determined contribution submitted in December 2004, offered to reduce emissions by only 60% below 2005 levels by 2035, perpetuating the continued appropriation by the U.S. of a vastly disproportionate part of the global carbon budget. This does not represent any higher "ambition" as understood in the Paris Agreement, despite the U.S. hectoring the developing countries at the Dubai and Baku climate summits on the need for enhanced mitigation targets for all.

The Trump withdrawal from the Paris accord fits well within the frustrating pattern of weak commitments and weaker climate action, accompanied by aggressive intervention in multilateral platforms, under Democratic presidencies, followed by the spurning or withdrawal from even these commitments under Republican incumbents. In the event, other countries, notably the large emerging economies, are left with increasing burdens and commitments for climate mitigation. For the bulk of the developing world this has meant the withdrawal of aid and assistance, and even loans, for development and industrialisation, and enhanced energy use to meet basic human development needs. They are sought to be forced into early decarbonisation that perpetuates global inequalities and deprivation, including rising risk of hunger and food insecurity.

The reactions to the U.S.'s withdrawal from climate diplomats, national spokespersons, and the media in general, have been a mixed bag of resignation and bravado. The Secretary of the UNFCCC, Simon Stiell, and many others have suggested that it is the U.S. that will miss out on the sterling investment opportunities for private capital that green transitions now provide. If anything, this is a mark of the enduring success of the American contribution to climate discourse — that markets are the best route to deliver climate change mitigation. By this logic, all that the rich countries' governments need to do is to provide signals to the private sector that will release the power of global capital, who will then innovate and invest to achieve the commitments to emissions reduction. The record shows however,

for the people anywhere near it, and especially those who live there... It's been very unlucky. It's been an unlucky place for a long time." Mr. Trump added that "we'll be a great keeper of something that is very, very strong, very powerful and very, very good for the area, not just for Israel, for the entire Middle East, very important. And we'll again have thousands of jobs, and there'll be jobs for everyone, not for a specific group of people, but for everybody." When asked about the U.S. taking over a sovereign territory and whether it would be a permanent occupation, Mr. Trump said "I do see a long-term ownership position and I see it bringing great stability to that part of the Middle East, and maybe the entire Middle East." He said this decision was not made lightly and everybody he has spoken to about it "loves the idea of the U.S. owning that piece of land, developing and creating thousands of jobs with something that will be magnificent in a really magnificent area that nobody would know, nobody can look because all they see is death and destruction and rubble and demolished buildings falling all over, just a terrible, terrible sight." "I think this is an idea that's gotten tremendous, and I'm talking about from the highest level of leadership, gotten tremendous praise. And if the United States can help to bring stability and peace in the Middle East. We'll do that," Mr. Trump said.

Mr. Netanyahu, when asked about the U.S. taking over Gaza, said, "I think it's something that could change history." "And I think it's really worth pursuing this avenue," Mr. Netanyahu said, adding that Israel's goal is to make sure that "Gaza never poses a threat to Israel again." President Trump is taking it to a much higher level. He sees a "different future for that piece of land that has been the focus of so much terrorism, so many attacks against us, so many trials and so many tribulations. He has a different idea. And I think it's worth paying attention to this. We're talking about it. He's exploring it with his people, with his staff. I think it's something that could change history, and it's worthwhile really pursuing this avenue." When asked who does he envision living in the Gaza Strip after it is rebuilt, Mr. Trump said "I envision world people living there. The world's people. I think you'll make that into an international, unbelievable place. I think the potential in the Gaza Strip is unbelievable. And I think the entire world, representatives from all over the world, will be there, and they'll live there. Palestinians, also. Palestinians will live there. Many people will live there." Mr. Trump said that "you have to learn from history" and one cannot let history keep repeating itself. "We have an opportunity to do something that could be phenomenal. And I don't want to be cute, I don't want to be a wise guy, but the Riviera of the Middle East, this could be something that could be so magnificent."



that this logic leads to both underwhelming commitments to actions and the failure to achieve even these as promised.

The fact that over 80% of primary energy use in the U.S. and over 70% of it in the European Union still comes from fossil fuels, 33 years after the UNFCCC was signed, is testament to the failure of markets as the golden bullet to solve the climate crisis. Developed and developing countries' commitments fundamentally differ in the relatively large role that a public sector plays in the latter's economies. This provides a measure of accountability to their commitments that those of the global North lack. Academia and civil society in the global North have also been complicit in promoting the illusion that, despite national withdrawal, action by sub-national governments, corporations and local communities could substitute. Indeed, as a University of Colorado Law School paper, published in 2024, notes, the number of states moving to anti-regulatory or "emissions inaction" policies or at best marginal policies is much larger than those with active emissions reduction strategies. At the level of local communities, the paper notes that those with emission regulations are mere outliers with a huge majority having emissions inaction strategies. Without even the weak carrot and stick policies of an Inflation Reduction Act, action is much less likely to flow from actors traditionally unwilling to take the initiative. The extent of this complicity of climate academia is demonstrated by the lack of any serious discussion of climate denialism in the U.S. within the context of global climate governance in the successive reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), including the first Trump activated withdrawal, which occurred during the period when the bulk of the Sixth Assessment Report was prepared.

Developing countries, in the face of the U.S. withdrawal, need a calibrated strategy that must not fall prey to the illusion that they can make up the huge gap created by this withdrawal. Nor should it be forgotten that the reaction of other developed countries is likely to be more of rhetoric than substance. It may be recalled that the details of the implementation of the Paris agreement were finalised during the first Trump presidency, when the U.S. and other Northern negotiators actively colluded in transferring an increasing part of the burden of climate action on to the global South. The second Trump administration too may not walk out of the negotiations and remain to insist on increased commitments by the global South or at least collude in such calls. Indeed, with outstanding irony, the executive order initiating the withdrawal still refers to the global climate leadership of the United States.

It is equally bravado to call on developing countries to respond to the U.S.'s move by abandoning multilateralism in the climate arena. Adherence to multilateralism is not gene-fueled to a moral principle but necessitated by the inherent and irreducibly global nature of the global warming challenge. India, as indeed the rest of the global South, must hold its course on climate action, but also prepare for the future with increased attention to urgently bridging development deficits and far greater emphasis on adaptation than seen so far. In the ultimate analysis, global climate action that is just, equitable and effective requires political will. The future of climate action and the safety of humanity requires concerted political action by all other nations to bring the U.S. back to the path of reason and the path of meaningful international cooperation. Tejal Kanitkar is at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru.

Trade diversion due to US-China tariff war could boost Indian exports: Official



off," the report stated. However, the report added that despite this remarkable catch-up, India remains far behind its Asian peers in terms of competitiveness and, consequently, market share. "India mainly supplies telecommunications equipment—such as Apple ramping up its iPhone production in India, which accounted for nearly two-thirds of all electronics exports in 2023. More advanced electronics, such as semiconductors, are supplied by Korea and Taiwan. Moreover, China itself remains a significant supplier, accounting for 27 per cent of total US electronics imports in 2023," the report said.

To better capture the trade diversion this time around, the government has reduced basic customs duties on a number of items. But has kept the effective rates on a range of items the same indicating a cut in cess moving forward. The government's decision in the Union Budget to lower import tariffs on various goods is a deliberate move to rationalise India's trade tariffs, which had faced criticism—most notably from US President Donald Trump—for being too high. Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey told The Indian Express. He stated that the customs duty changes announced in the Budget would send the right signal to both the global market and the domestic industry that India is focused on rationalising and simplifying its import tariff structure. The think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that the top 100 US export products accounted for 75 per cent of India's total imports from the US, amounting to \$42.2 billion in 2023-24. "While India's simple average tariff is 17 per cent, the actual duties on key US imports are much lower. Petroleum crude (\$5.03 billion) faces a minimal duty of Re. 1 per tonne, while cut and polished diamonds (\$3.09 billion) are taxed at 0%, as most are reimports. Other major imports, including coking coal (\$2.37 billion), aeroplanes over 15,000 kg (\$1.94 billion), steam coal (\$1.76 billion), and liquefied natural gas (\$1.41 billion), carry a modest 2.5 per cent duty," GTRI said. Gold in unwrought non-monetary forms (\$1.18 billion) is taxed at 6%, while aluminium scrap (\$0.89 billion) enjoys a 0% duty. Almonds (\$0.87 billion) are subject to a duty of Rs 35 per kg. In reality, the weighted average tariff on US exports to India is below 5%, much lower than India's overall tariff average, the think tank stated.

India was the fourth-largest beneficiary of the trade diversion following the US-China trade war initiated by US President Donald Trump during his first term, and domestic exporters could experience a similar boom as a fresh trade war erupts between the two largest economies, a senior government official said. The US tariff war with China escalated as Beijing on Tuesday retaliated against the 10 per cent US tariff by announcing 15 per cent levies on coal and liquefied natural gas, as well as 10 per cent on oil and agricultural equipment from the US. China also announced it would investigate US tech giant Google for alleged anti-trust violations.

Early indications from exporters suggest that traders in India are receiving higher orders amid fears that tariffs will rise in China. A similar tariff war previously helped India increase exports, as it became the fourth-largest beneficiary of the trade diversion away from China following the tariff war," an official said. A report from Oxford Economics last year on the effects of the US-China trade war during Trump's first term noted that US trade rerouting had been particularly pronounced in the large electronics market, where China's share had plummeted by 19 percentage points since 2017.

"India's share in US electronics imports has risen nearly tenfold since then, reaching 2.1 per cent. Electronics now also account for a greater share of India's overall exports, meaning the government's ongoing efforts to become a high-tech powerhouse appear to have partly paid

India's ambitions to break into the SMR value chain – the three big enablers in the Budget

India's ambitions to enter the global manufacturing value chain of Small Modular Reactors is getting the institutional backing needed to catalyse the move, with three key policy enablers flagged by the government in its budget.

The first step is the creation of a separate vertical within the Department of Atomic Energy with the explicit objective of fostering private participation in what is now an overwhelmingly state-controlled Indian nuclear establishment. This would be on the lines of what was tried out in the space sector, which is now proving to be a resounding success. The exercise would be aimed at tapping the SMR design and fabrication potential, since private players are seen as far better positioned at negotiating the terms of the future tech transfer deals with global companies that are leaders in this area, absorbing technology and manufacturing these new-age light water reactor-based projects.

The second is a proposed amendment to the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, which currently allows only limited participation for the Indian private sector players in the country's nuclear energy sector and limits this to private companies coming in only as suppliers of equipment. The proposed changes are aimed at opening the door wider for the private sector for an entry into nuclear power plant operations and enabling them to enter the SMR sector as operators, which is currently allowed under the Act to state-owned Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL) and a couple of joint ventures that NPCIL has with state-owned companies such as NTPC Ltd and NALCO. The third is likely changes being moved to the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010. The original legislation sought to create a mechanism for compensating victims from potential damages caused by a nuclear accident, and allocating liability and specifying procedures for compensation. These provisions have been cited as an impediment by foreign players such as GE-Hitachi, Westinghouse and French nuclear company Areva to investing in India, primarily on the grounds that the legislation channelised operators' liability to equipment suppliers. Foreign vendors have cited this as a disincentive when it comes to investing in India's nuclear sector amid apprehensions of incurring future liability.

"The entry of private players has been a resounding success in space. The idea of a nuclear vertical essentially involves carving-out a dedicated space within India's nuclear establishment to open the doors wider for private players. There is no question that the private sector players are in a better position to negotiate and execute ventures with foreign companies that are keen to participate in India's atomic energy sector," a senior government official said. Some private players are already learnt to have shown interest in deploying these small reactors at their captive site. Since the talks are sensitive, sources said disclosing names may not be appropriate at this stage.

There are two triggers for this policy push that was outlined in Budget 2025-26. One, amid a scaling down of coal-fired generation as part of the overall energy mix and an increase in renewable capacities, a number of countries — including India — are looking at scaling up of nuclear energy to meet the demand for base-load power. While



renewables capacity addition in India has sharply surged over the last ten years, there are multiple hurdles that green power poses. Nuclear offers a practical solution, especially since the grid needs new electricity sources for both base load and variable demand peaks. Nuclear generation offers a relatively clean, round-the-clock power source that can tide over the limitations of renewables — not generating power when the sun's not shining or the wind is not blowing. This is important given that there are not enough viable storage options currently to tide over these shortfalls that renewable power faces.

Two, India is hoping to pitch itself as a credible alternative to the incumbents in this niche field of SMR design and manufacturing, riding on its strong track record of having operated small-sized reactors (heavy water based) over an extended period of time and the ability to manufacture nuclear reactors cost-effectively, and at scale. This also comes at a time when China is working on an ambitious plan to seize the opportunity of global leadership in the SMR space, unlike large reactors where that country has been a latecomer. Like India, Beijing is seeing SMRs as a tool of its diplomatic outreach in the Global South and that the country could shake up the SMR industry, just as it has done in the electric vehicle sector. SMRs — reactors with a capacity of 30MWe to 300 MWe per unit — are increasingly seen as important for nuclear energy to remain a commercially competitive option in the future. India is pushing for a leadership slot in this small reactor space, both as a way of fulfilling its commitment to clean energy transition, and bundling SMRs as a technology-led foreign policy pitch. India's Department of Atomic Energy is in exploratory talks with Holtec International, based in Camden, New Jersey — a privately-held company that is now billed as one of the world's largest exporters of capital nuclear components — for possible collaborations. Currently, two SMR projects have reached the operational stage globally. One is an SMR named Akademik Lomonosov floating power unit in Russia that has two-modules of 35 MWe (megawatt electric) and started commercial operation in May 2020. The other is a demonstration SMR project called HTR-PM in China that was grid-connected in December 2021 and is reported to have started commercial operations in December 2023. There are multiple Western companies that are in various stages of getting certifications for their SMRs, including Holtec International's SMR-300, the Rolls-Royce SMR, NuScale's VOYGR SMR, Westinghouse Electric's AP300 SMR and GE-Hitachi's BWRX-300.

a little longer time. While some of the netizens were excited about the initiative others criticised the idea.

"I would rather suggest to deliver the cars quickly to the people who have booked it ... it's a good initiative but customer satisfaction is priority... people have been waiting and also deliver the base models too... not only prestige one. I hope this is acknowledged," said an Instagram user.

"This idea will fail! because buying a car is an emotion, not a vegetable that you can buy everyday, everyone has time to visit showroom and buy new car. its not something that you do everyday" (sic), wrote another Instagrammer. After delivering the iPhone 16 within minutes, this is the major update Zepto has made till now. At present, Zepto operates in 10 metro cities across India, including Hyderabad.

For Ashley Madison, a dating platform for married people, not just Bengaluru and Mumbai, but Thane, Jaipur, Ahmedabad and Ghaziabad are big markets



Discretion lies at the heart of Ashley Madison, a dating platform for married individuals boasting over 85 million users worldwide. The platform faced a massive backlash in 2015 when a security breach exposed user data, a scandal that resurfaced in public memory earlier this year with the Netflix documentary Ashley Madison: Sex, Lies & Scandal.

"That was a moment when we truly let our membership down," admits Paul Keable, the platform's Chief Strategy Officer, who visited India in October last year. "But even during our worst period, over 100,000 people were joining us every day. It showed us that, despite every pundit predicting the end of our business, we would survive if we took the right steps to rebuild trust — and that became our focus for the next four to five years." Since then, the platform has enhanced its security measures, adding a dedicated privacy team to complement its existing security team and prioritising discretion in all aspects of its operations. "Unlike traditional dating platforms, where users' photos are visible to potential matches, discretion is paramount on our platform," explains Keable.

The platform offers users a private locker to store intimate photos, including those that reveal their faces. These photos remain secure and can only be accessed by sharing a key with a specific person in conversation. "If the interaction doesn't progress, you can retract the key. Moreover, the system prevents screenshots, ensuring privacy at every step," he adds. Keable was in Mumbai to re-launch Ashley Madison, which first entered the Indian market in 2014 but quickly shut down following the scandal. Despite this, India now ranks eighth globally in sign-ups for 2024. While Keable doesn't subscribe to the notion that "all publicity is good publicity," he acknowledges that the Netflix documentary about the platform, which topped charts for two weeks, drove a 20 per cent increase in their user base and introduced them to a younger generation. "It brought Gen Z—who were kids when the 2015 controversy erupted—into the fold. They had no idea about us, but now they're discovering us in a brand new light," he explains, noting that Gen Z is leading growth in India.

The average age of sign-ups in India is significantly younger than the global average: 24 for men and 26 for women compared to 38 and 42 globally. Keable attributes this to Gen Z's unique relationship with sex. "Unlike the previous generation who grew up in an environment where sex was seen as "cool" and almost everyone was boasting about it, this generation isn't having as much sex as the last one but seeks quality over quantity. They have grown up with a wealth of information on sex and sexuality, courtesy of the Internet, something that the previous generation didn't really have access to and that has shaped their priorities," he says, adding, "Gen Z is exploring non-traditional activities like group sex, BDSM and other kinks."

A notable shift is the emergence of transparency in relationships. While secrecy was once paramount, up to 20 per cent of users now have partners who are aware of their Ashley Madison activity. "The next evolution of our brand is addressing desires in non-monogamy on a disclosed level — where the partner is aware or even participates. This segment has shown significant interest over the past six years, and we aim to cater to it," Keable shares. When asked why India — where marriages are often viewed as sacrosanct — presents an attractive market for a platform like Ashley Madison, Keable clarifies that the platform doesn't promote infidelity. "If I could convince happily married couples to have affairs, our business would be much larger than it already is," he says. He argues that India's conservative approach to conversations about sex actually heightens the platform's relevance. "A 25 or 26-year-old exploring non-monogamous activities, whether disclosed or not, wouldn't want their friends, family or parents to know about it. What we offer is discretion, and I believe that will be a key factor driving our membership growth over

the next 12 months," he explains. Paul Keable, Chief Strategy Officer at Ashley Madison. Keable identifies three key life stages when people are most likely to seek a partner outside their marriage. Founded in Toronto in 2002 by Darren Morgenstern, Ashley Madison operates on a credit-based system instead of the traditional subscription model to deter the "spray and pray technique" often used by men. Male users purchase credits — starting at Rs 599 for 100 credits — and are charged eight credits to message a woman. The platform remains free for women, and once a woman responds, the conversation can become free. Additionally, men can opt for paid features to prioritise their messages, increasing visibility and chances of engagement. While this setup might suggest a male-dominated space, Keable points to a report by Ernst & Young (E&Y) from a few years ago, which found an active user ratio of 1.13 women to every 1 man on the platform, challenging the stereotype that "women don't cheat."

When asked the perennial question — why do people cheat — Keable references a study by sociologist and Missouri State University professor Dr Alicia Walker, who studied a group of men and women using Ashley Madison and published findings that challenge stereotypes. "Her study revealed fascinating insights," he explains. "Around 80 per cent of women on our platform report being in sexless or orgasmless marriages. Society offers them two unappealing options: divorce or endure an unsatisfactory sex life. Neither of which is really appealing, particularly if you have children and are happy in other aspects of your life. So why not outsource that, why not find a different pathway to fulfil that need? Many have said their affairs made them better mothers, lovers, and wives." Similarly, men, he says, are perceived to be "high libido, sexual animals" but her findings revealed that men cheat for emotional validation. "Men are taught to suppress emotions and not seek validation, yet they crave it," he says. "Think about how infrequently men receive compliments. Tell a man his jacket looks amazing, and you'll see him wearing it more often. Men seek emotional validation, and often, it translates into physical interactions because they equate their worth with being desired physically." Keable identifies three key life stages when people are most likely to seek a partner outside their marriage: the pregnancy phase, the empty nest period, and later years marked by grey hair.

"The first stage often arises after a woman gives birth, when either the dynamics between the couple change — be it the woman's interests shifting or the man no longer seeing his wife in the same light. The second occurs when children leave home for studies or jobs, leaving the couple without the buffer of parenting. They often find they no longer recognise each other outside the roles of mother and father," he explains. Keable further highlights that the notion of sexuality being confined to younger years no longer holds true. "We now live in a world where people's sex lives extend well beyond their 50s and 60s, even into their 70s," he adds.

When asked about abstinence in old age and its connection to spiritual enlightenment, Keable explains, "Abstinence often served as a way for individuals to find purpose, especially when sex wasn't readily available. Factors like erectile dysfunction played a role, but the advent of Viagra changed that for men. Meanwhile, women globally are taking greater ownership of their sexuality, sparking a dramatic shift in conversations. While the Indian market remains traditionally conservative, these dialogues are evolving rapidly. What a 60-year-old does today will look very different from what a 60-year-old will be doing a decade from now." When it comes to sign-ups from Indian cities, Bengaluru is topping the list, followed by Mumbai, Pune, Thane and Hyderabad. Central Delhi is at number six and South West Delhi at number nine. Other cities in the list include Ahmedabad at number 11, Jaipur at number 13, Kanchipuram at number 17 and Ghaziabad at number 19. When we expressed surprise, Keable shared that the platform is largely for the traditional middle-class. "Because they are grappling with the pressures of modern monogamy, where a spouse is expected to be a best friend, economic partner, intimate companion, and co-parent — a heavy burden for one person," he explains. "Affluent individuals have historically found distractions through affairs or other means, but during COVID, with everyone confined at home, traditional escapes vanished, and if there were any cracks in one's relationship, they started to deepen and widen. Our membership grew by around 30 per cent in that period." He concludes by saying, "While societies approach marriage and dating differently, infidelity is universal, cutting across economic, religious and social boundaries."

4 animals that can swallow humans whole

Discover the real-life animals that possess the size and ability to swallow humans whole, supported by documented cases and expert analysis. Discover the real-life animals that possess the size and ability to swallow humans whole, supported by documented cases. The idea of being swallowed whole by an animal has long fueled folklore, thrillers, and nightmares. From the biblical story of Jonah to modern survival accounts, it seems the concept is both terrifying and oddly fascinating. But what if these stories aren't just tales spun to entertain? In the wild, some creatures truly have the anatomical capabilities to engulf humans whole or trap them temporarily within their cavernous mouths. Imagine diving into a tranquil ocean, only to find yourself face-to-face with the gaping maw of a whale shark. Or hiking in the jungle and crossing paths with a reticulated python, coiled and ready. While such scenarios are rare, they're not entirely fiction. Over the years, encounters with creatures like massive pythons, crocodiles, and even whales have shown that nature can be stranger—and more terrifying—than we imagine. Let's dive deeper into the creatures capable of such feats, backed by real-life accounts. Animals that can swallow humans whole: Real-life incidents and details

While extremely rare, certain animals have the size and anatomical adaptations to potentially swallow humans whole. Below are detailed insights into these species, along with real-life accounts where applicable.

1. Reticulated Python

Anatomy and Capability: Reticulated pythons can grow over 20 feet long, making them the longest snakes in the world. Their flexible jaws and powerful constriction allow them to engulf prey significantly larger than their heads.

Real-Life Incidents: In 2018, in Indonesia, a 54-year-old woman named Wa Tiba was swallowed whole by a 23-foot reticulated python. Villagers found the snake and her

body inside its stomach. In 2017, another Indonesian man named Akbar was killed and swallowed by a python while working on his palm oil plantation.

2. Green Anaconda

Anatomy and Capability: Native to South America, green anacondas are known for their immense weight, with some individuals exceeding 500 pounds. They use their constriction power to subdue prey before swallowing it whole. **Real-Life Incidents:** While verified cases of anacondas swallowing humans are scarce, their ability to consume prey as large as deer suggests the potential. Locals in the Amazon have reported close encounters, though most lack concrete evidence. Discover the rare but chilling stories of man-eating snakes like the reticulated python, African rock python, and anaconda. Explore verified cases and the reasons behind these unusual encounters. Reticulated pythons can grow over 20 feet long, making them the longest snakes in the world.

3. Saltwater Crocodile

Anatomy and Capability: Growing up to 23 feet in length, saltwater crocodiles are apex predators capable of swallowing large prey whole. Their powerful jaws can crush bones, and their digestive systems can handle tough materials. **Real-Life Incidents:** In 2016, a 24-year-old woman was attacked and eaten by a saltwater crocodile while swimming in Australia's Northern Territory. Numerous accounts from Southeast Asia and Australia document crocodiles consuming humans during fishing or swimming.

4. Humpback Whale

Anatomy and Capability: Humpback whales use their enormous mouths to filter-feed on krill and small fish. While their throats are too narrow to swallow humans, their size can trap people accidentally. **Real-Life Incident:** In 2021, lobster diver Michael Packard was briefly trapped in the mouth of a humpback whale off Massachusetts.

Vidaamuyarchi actor Aarav calls Ajith 'kind', opens up on his journey after Bigg Boss: 'I don't have the luxury to fail'



At one point in 2017, actor Aarav was a household name. Everyone who was glued to the screens to watch the first season of Bigg Boss Tamil became fond of the tall guy with a genial smile and a sculpted physique. Come 2025, Aarav is back at the centre of a lot of attention for his role in Ajith Kumar's Vidaamuyarchi, directed by Magizh Thirumeni. "Of course, when it is a project of this magnitude with names like Ajith sir, Magizh sir, and Lyca Productions, it is bound to create a lot of anticipation. Everywhere people would ask me for updates, but yeah, Ajith sir fans just want to know about the film. But I knew how to handle that buzz and pressure because I was very confident about the movie. Also, they were all happy to see me, and were very welcoming," says Aarav in this conversation with SCREEN.

At this juncture of your career, how important were the interactions with Ajith Kumar? What were your learnings, as an actor, and a person?

We have often heard about the kind of person he is, and how he is not just a gentleman but also a kind co-actor. But in this Vidaamuyarchi journey, I was able to see a wonderful side of him. Apart from being a fantastic actor, he is also someone who wants his co-actors to shine bright. He spoke to me about my career, and instead of doling out advice, he would talk about things from his own career, which becomes an inspiration in itself. His contagious energy also teaches us how to be a good person, how to be with your co-actors and crew, and how to treat all equally. Aarav and Ajith Kumar Aarav and Ajith Kumar share screen space for the first time in Vidaamuyarchi. You've worked with Magizh in Kalaga Thalaivan, and now in Vidaamuyarchi. How has your equation with him developed over the years? Magizh sir is a perfectionist, and is one of the most intelligent filmmakers in Tamil cinema right now. His writing is both intense and extensive. Each character comes with a proper detailing even if it is not the main part of the narrative. He would give each of them a sense of a background, which aids the actors in the performance. He knows exactly what he wants from his actors. So, it is a thing of honour that he has liked my work to bring me back to his world. His films are like my training ground, and it made me connect with the actor in me.

Do you know what defines you apart from cinema?

Honestly, yes I do. There is a definite idea in my mind as to what I want to do. There will come a time when I get to explore my passions and hobbies. It will take some time to come to fruition, but I hope things pan out well. On the acting front, you are shuffling between playing the antagonist and the protagonist. Do you think balancing both is possible?

Honestly... it all comes down to the script and the kind of role I am offered. Another important factor is definitely the director. I am very clear that there are certain scripts that need me as a hero, and there are certain others where various factors, including the director's credentials, make me gravitate towards antagonist roles, or any other character for that matter. Things have to come together to make me accept the role of an antagonist or any other character. But yeah, predominantly, I want to do lead roles. Here's the BTS Video from Vidaamuyarchi. Finally, despite a strong outlook towards life, and the support of a loving family, it must have been difficult to go through that almost catastrophic accident during the Vidaamuyarchi shoot. Even yesterday, I was watching the BTS video of Vidaamuyarchi with my family. Seeing how we weathered a storm, a grueling 121-day shoot, it was already emotional. When the accident sequence came up, I was in tears. There is so much effort that has gone into making Vidaamuyarchi. Also, this isn't to evoke any sort of sympathy from the audience. It is not often that so many risks are undertaken on a really big-budget film. Everything was extreme. So, the tears were also a result of the satisfaction that the day is finally here when people are going to see our efforts on the big screen.

Is understanding the character a very collaborative process or do you just deliver what is wanted of you?

There is an almost minimal method acting in my process. I do sit down and do homework to understand how the character should be portrayed. Magizh sir gives an idea as to what the character would be about, and we make in-

Aamir Khan's son Junaid opens up about dad's 60th birthday, says his plans are made at the last minute

Aamir Khan made his debut in the movies almost 37 years ago as a 23-year old boy in the romantic film Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak. This year, the actor, who continues to be a movie star, is turning 60 and his fans around the world are looking forward to the next chapter in his life. During a recent chat on SCREEN Live, his son Junaid Khan opened up about the plans for his 60th birthday and said that they are keeping their schedules open for whatever plans his father might make at the very last minute.

Junaid shared, "I don't think we have made any plans yet. I mean, he also has five films in post production right now, one of them he has acted in. He tends to plan these things a little last minute so we have kind of been like 'okay, we'll be free and hope that you are not working so we can hang out with you'. But I am sure we will do something. I am not sure what it is yet." Aamir is turning 60 on March 14, 2025. Junaid is Aamir's son from his first marriage with Reena Dutta. He is currently looking forward to his first theatrical release Loveyapa, which also stars Khushi Kapoor. At the trailer launch of the film, where Aamir was also present to lend his support, the actor declared he has given up smoking. He said that he had made a pledge to give up smoking for his son's film. When asked about the same, Junaid said that his father gave up smoking as a part of his new year's resolution and it had nothing to do with the film. He said, "He has given up smoking already and I don't think it had anything to do with the film. I think he just had a new year's resolution."

At the trailer launch, Aamir said, "Mujhe lagta tha mujhe chhodna bhi hai, mere bete ka career shuru ho raha hai.

Ajith Kumar film mints Rs 9.23 cr in advance sales, set to become his biggest opener?

Vidaamuyarchi Box Office Collection Prediction Day 1: Ajith Kumar is set to make a comeback to the big screen after a two-year hiatus with Vidaamuyarchi, which is scheduled for release this Thursday. While some sections of fans have complained about the lack of aggressive promotions, it hasn't affected the film's advance bookings. According to Sacnilk, the film has already sold 5,00,021 tickets across India, earning Rs 9.23 crore in advance sales. However, this data does not account for block seats. If those are included, the film's advance booking revenue stands at Rs 15.55 crore, as per the website. Looking at the state-wise collections, Vidaamuyarchi has earned Rs 7.87 crore in advance sales in Tamil Nadu, followed by Rs 18.51 lakh in Kerala and Rs 92.16 lakh in Karnataka. However, the film has struggled to generate momentum in the Telugu states, with advance sales of Rs 4.17 lakh in Telangana and Rs 8.54 lakh in Andhra Pradesh.

According to several reports, the film is expected to collect Rs 32-35 crore on its opening day. As per Koimoi, Vidaamuyarchi has been mounted on a reported budget of over Rs 200 crore, with Ajith Kumar's remuneration alone estimated to be between Rs 110-120 crore. If these predictions hold true, Vidaamuyarchi could surpass Valimai (2022) as Ajith Kumar's biggest opener to date. Valimai earned Rs 31.70 crore on its first day. Trade analyst Ramesh Bala has also noted that Vidaamuyarchi has already secured Ajith's highest-ever opening in several international markets. Ajith's last film, Thunivu (2023), received mixed reviews but was deemed a commercial success, although it did not perform exceptionally well at the box office. The film also faced an unexpected roadblock when the Tamil Nadu government initially denied permission for early morning special shows. However, in a relief for Ajith and the makers, the government has now approved 9 AM special screenings. Set against the picturesque backdrop of Azerbaijan, Vidaamuyarchi boasts an impressive star cast, including Arjun, Trisha, Regina Cassandra, Arav, and Vijay Remya. The film's music is composed by Anirudh Ravichander and is directed by Magizh Thirumeni.

Rajkumar Hirani recalls being confronted by Aamir Khan's assistant over a 'problematic' 3 Idiots scene: 'Aapne hum gareebo ka mazak udaya hai'



One of the major criticisms against Rajkumar Hirani's 3 Idiots was directed at a particular scene set in an impoverished household, which many perceived as mocking poverty. Rajkumar Hirani's Aamir Khan-starrer 2009 movie 3 Idiots had emerged as the highest-grossing Indian film of its time. Although the movie opened to thunderous success and became the highest-grossing Indian film of its time, director Rajkumar Hirani's 3 Idiots also received its share of

flak. One of the major criticisms was directed at a particular scene set in an impoverished household, which many perceived as mocking poverty. In fact, this issue was first raised by one of lead actor Aamir Khan's assistants, who directly confronted Hirani about it. His remarks not only took the director by shock but ultimately made him realise his oversight.

"After the movie was released, Aamir Khan's team also watched it, including a boy (assistant) who works with him, named Sachin. Then, Sachin came to me and said, 'Sir, I liked the film, but I did not like one thing. Aapne hum gareebo ka mazak udaya hai' (you have made fun of us poor people)," Hirani recalled during a recent appearance on a podcast by the Game Changers YouTube channel. Sachin was referring to a scene set in the house of Raju Rastogi (Sharman Joshi), which was presented in monochrome with an extra focus on their poor living conditions. The scene also included elements that 'humorously' suggested that poor people were unhygienic, further fueling the criticism. Hirani shared, "While filming, it did not strike me; it was only when he pointed it out that I realised it. I was actually talking about cinema and that there was a time when black-and-white films often showed an ill father, an unmarried sister and a mother struggling for survival. So, we wrote that scene keeping those visuals in mind. It did not strike me back then that the scene could be interpreted differently and might affect someone."

He continued, "It made me understand that one should be a little more careful. Someone once said, 'Comedy comes from the misfortunes of others.' When we create comedy in cinema, we are often going to end up making fun of someone. So, if we continue making films and comedies, we have to be a little conscious about it. But at the same time, people should take it in a sporting spirit."

Priyanka Chopra says dad discouraged her from learning cooking, she is 'not helpful in kitchen': 'I am intimidated by it'



Actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas calls herself a foodie who loves to talk food and discuss dinner at lunch table. However, she says that while she is a big time foodie, she is not very helpful in kitchen. She said it was her father who didn't want her to learn cooking. Speaking to Harper Bazaar, Priyanka Chopra said, "I eat, but I am not very helpful in the kitchen. It feels intimidating to me. My father wasn't a big fan of me learning how to cook. Growing up in India, he always saw the women in his family in the kitchen while the men were eating. So he was very clear that I wouldn't do that." Priyanka, who credits her father Ashok Chopra for her success, has a tattoo inked in her right wrist that reads, "Daddy's Lil Girl". Being born to an army couple, Priyanka often moved to multiple places. She said, "My dad made it a game. He would say, 'You get to transform and be whoever you want to be at the new place.' That was such a powerful concept to me." Priyanka often speaks about her father at various events and interviews. Previously, speaking to Vogue India, the actress told, "My dad was my biggest cheerleader. Any awards show, he would be my date. Every time I won anything, he'd be like, 'Yeah!' as if he'd won. I was like, 'Dad, just turn it down by 10. He enjoyed my

achievements more than I did." In another interview with the publication, Priyanka said, "After dad passed, me, my brother and my mother decided consciously to do it, but I still had a lot of negative feelings. I felt abandoned, I was angry and there were a lot of feelings that I had and didn't know what to do with them."

Madhuri Dixit 'insisted' on Salman Khan wearing a nighty in Hum Aapke Hain Koun song, recalls Sooraj Barjatya: 'She did his makeup'

Salman Khan and Madhuri Dixit's Hum Aapke Hain Koun remains one of the most beloved films in Hindi cinema history. Recently, the film's director, Sooraj R. Barjatya, appeared on Indian Idol, where contestant Ritika performed the iconic song "Didi Tera Devar Deewana." The performance brought back a flood of memories for Sooraj, who shared an interesting anecdote about how Madhuri convinced the makers to have Salman wear a nighty by the end of the song.

Speaking on the show, Sooraj revealed that they shot the song over 16 days. "This was a long and elaborate song that required 16 days of rehearsals and 9 days of filming. We wanted to end it on a high note, with a fun and victorious celebration," he said, adding, "I suggested to my father that Salman should wear a nighty for the final scene. While Salman instantly agreed, my father rejected the idea, finding it inappropriate."

Sooraj, however, wanted to check with his cast and crew before finalising the decision to have Salman wear a nighty. To his surprise, Madhuri loved the idea and strongly supported it. "But the entire team was so enthusiastic about it that we decided to put it to a vote among the ladies on set. All the dancers, including Madhuri, found the idea hilarious



and insisted we go ahead with it. In the end, Madhuri herself did Salman's makeup for the scene. Thank you for bringing back these wonderful memories!" Sooraj Barjatya recalled. Hum Aapke Hain Koun featured a 14-song soundtrack, an anomaly even for the 90s. The film became the highest-grossing Indian film of 1994, breaking box office records at the time. It remains one of the most influential films in Indian cinema.

Parvathy Thiruvothu opens up about losing a 'wonderful person' she dated due to her mental health struggles: 'Years later, I apologised'

Mentioning that she has been single for the past three years, Parvathy Thiruvothu clarified that she has, however, never been romantically involved with actors or directors. Parvathy Thiruvothu recently spoke about her past battles with mental health and how they impacted some of her relationships.

Parvathy Thiruvothu never shies away from speaking her mind and that trait has earned her both a devoted fan base and a fair share of haters; yet, she remains unapologetically herself. The National Award-winning actor recently opened up about her personal life, particularly her past relationships and journey searching for love. She also spoke about losing a "wonderful person" due to her struggles with mental health, which she was unable to manage effectively at the time. Parvathy also revealed that while she is on a few dating apps, she has yet to fully embrace the

concept. In an interview with Filmfare, she spoke about her past battles with mental health and how they significantly affected her eating habits, which in turn impacted some of her relationships. "During that time, I was dating a wonderful person, but I was short-tempered, and even my hunger made me angry, which ruined the relationship. After many years, I met him and apologised. That experience taught me to be more cautious before entering into a relationship," she said, Mathrubhumi reported. The actor further stated that she maintains cordial relationships with her ex-boyfriends while also ensuring clear boundaries. Mentioning that she has been single for the past three years, Parvathy clarified that she has, however, never been romantically involved with actors or directors. Nevertheless, she did share that she has dated people from the technical side of the film industry. Reflecting on her experience with dating apps, she admitted,

How a determined Manush and his diligent coach Gosain plotted their way to the top



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On the evening of the Republic Day in Surat, a bespectacled Manush Shah — having opted for a time-out after losing his first championship point — did his reverse-spin forehand serve, Payas Jain returned it to the southpaw's backhand, Manush turned around and sealed the issue with a trademark down-the-line forehand top-spin winner. As the paddler let out a loud scream along with a fist-pump, another bespectacled veteran sitting in the gallery rushed close to the arena. Shailesh Gosain, donning a light blue T-shirt, had driven down from Vadodara a couple of days earlier hoping that his ward would go all the way.

While coach Gosain leaned forward to hug Manush, the new men's senior National table tennis king, the protegee touched his feet before falling into his arms. "Mera kaam ho gaya (my task has been achieved)," said Gosain with a sense of pride and fulfilment. That moment underlined how much the National championship triumph meant for the two. After all, for well over a decade, they have been putting in the hard yards in the princely town of Vadodara, mostly famous for cricket.

"We have been thinking about this day ever since he won the sub-junior National championship in 2015 in Kolkata. Table tennis means the world to him, and he means as much to me as the game," Gosain told The Hindu minutes after clicking a picture of Manush with the coveted trophy. "When his father brought him to me, the family was considering relocating overseas due to Manush's health issues. But once he started improving and winning at district and State levels with ease even before entering his teens, there was no way he was going anywhere," the coach recalled. Manush echoed Gosain's views, but he was a tad disappointed though not really surprised to know that his guru had started the drive back home. "The first time I dreamt of becoming the National champion was in 2015 when I stood on top of the podium in Kolkata. I am delighted to achieve this feat in my home State in front of my well-wishers," said Manush. During his primary school days, Manush fell off a jungle gym and suffered internal bleeding. He spent almost a year in hospital and couldn't even walk. He got hooked to table tennis during a family vacation soon after his recovery. Dreaming is one thing, realising it is another. Only a few, like Manush, who plan and execute meticulously find themselves on top of the podium. "The preparation started six months back," revealed Manush. He sat down with mentor A. Sharath Kamal and finalised his itinerary for the

gruelling season in consultation with Gosain, focusing on the busy "second, third and fourth weeks of January." "I wanted to be at my peak for the challenges in Muscat, the Nationals and Singapore Smash. I am very happy I have done well in Muscat and the Nationals," said Manush.

After winning six matches on the trot and entering the quarterfinals of the WTT Contender in Muscat, Manush continued in the same vein in the Surat Nationals. Seeded third, he had a challenging draw as he was pitted against childhood friend and sparring partner-cum-doubles partner Manav Thakkar in the quarterfinal. Having breached Thakkar's defence, he executed his plans to perfection against the in-form second seed Ankur Bhattacharjee in his next match. The manner in which Manush exposed Ankur's forehand corner — he was the only player to outpace him during the week — was exemplary.

"Usually it's me and my coach who plan for a match. Nowadays, if required, I scan a few videos of an opponent during the short window ahead of the contest. I have become so confident about my own ability that I just focus on executing my gameplan rather than worrying about my opponent," Manush disclosed. It was odd to see Gosain sitting in the stands and leaving the coach's chair empty, resisting the temptation to cheer for the 24-year-old. Though the paddler didn't delve deep on the subject, he acknowledged the contribution of his camp. "Team Manush is big — coach Shailesh sir, mental trainer Gayatri Vartak-Madkekar (Samiksha Sports), mentor Sharath Kamal, dietician Uma Kale, physio and fitness team Sports Dynamix under the guidance of Ramji Srinivasan and personal physio Venkatesh Kumar," said Manush, reeling off the list of names in his dugout. "With the help of India head coach Massimo Costantini, I feel I am doing a good job. It's a team effort and the success means as much to everyone." Ever since he started working with Gayatri, an international shuttler-turned-sports psychologist, Manush learnt to look at problems as a challenge, including the health issues Gosain was referring to. During his primary school days, Manush fell off a jungle gym and suffered internal bleeding. This meant that he had to spend almost a year in hospital and couldn't even walk. When he got hooked to table tennis during a family vacation after his recovery, he was given the green light by the doctors to pursue the indoor sport. When Gosain realised that Manush was "a kid with a natural ball-sense" and had the advantage of being a left-hander, they began putting in the extra hours at his academy. On January 26 this year, all the hours and hours of toil bore fruit. Though it's his mission accomplished for his coach, Manush, despite calling the Nationals triumph "one of the most important moments of my career," has set his eyes on bigger goals. "I am ranked 78th in the world. By the end of the first half of 2025, I want to be in the top-60 and by the end of the year in the 50 bracket," Manush said. "Manav and I are on the verge of breaking into the top eight (world doubles ranking) and want to reach the top-4. Diya (Chitale) and I aim to make it to the top-10 (mixed doubles)." It will not be a surprise if Manush Shah, known to overcome challenges and achieve his goals, continues to break new ground.

National Games shooting: Confident Suruchi Phogat jolts top stars; strikes gold

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Forever crazy about wrestling, Inder Singh wanted his little daughter Suruchi Phogat to be in the sport too. The ex-Armyman came from Sasroli Village in Haryana's Jajjar District, one of country's leading wrestling belts, but with the little girl suffering a collar-bone injury after a fall she had had to quit the sport after training for about six months. But Inder wanted his daughter to do some sport. "One day in 2019, my father and I entered a shooting range. And I was very interested to see the shooters there," said Suruchi, in a chat with The Hindu, at the Trishul Shooting Range in Dehradun on Wednesday (February 5, 2025.) That journey brought the 18-year-old her maiden National Games gold in the women's 10m air pistol event (245.7 points) today. She had announced her arrival in December while winning the senior, junior and youth 10m air pistol golds at the New Delhi Nationals in December. There were some big names in the event, like Paris Olympian Rhythm Sangwan, another seasoned Olympian Rahi Sarnobat and Asian Games gold medalist Palak Gulia. But Suruchi was not perturbed. "I was confident of winning gold because I topped yesterday's qualification too. Nobody is my challenger, I'm my own challenger," she said. Haryana's Palak (243.6) and Punjab's Simranpreet Kaur



Brar (218.8) took the silver and bronze while Rahi was fourth. Incidentally, double Olympic bronze medalist Manu Bhaker also comes from Jhajjar and it's wonderful to see another young talent popping up from the district. And she was very clear about the people who keep inspiring her. "My parents, my coach Suresh Singh and myself... and my big goal in the LA 2028 Olympics," said Suruchi. Suruchi travels more than 100km every day by train to Bhiwani to train for shooting. "The journey takes about one and half hours," she said. The long journey and the hard work are now bringing her rich rewards.

Ash Gardner replaces Beth Mooney as Gujarat Giants captain



Over the last two seasons in the WPL, Ash Gardner has scored 324 runs and bagged 17 wickets for Gujarat.

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Gardner takes over from her compatriot Beth Mooney who led the side in the first two seasons of the

WPL. In both editions, Gujarat finished bottom of the five-team league, winning only two games apiece in 2023 and 2024. Gardner is a two-time Belinda Clark Award winner and she played a significant role in Australia's 2022 Commonwealth Games gold medal success. She was the Player of the Tournament at the T20 World Cup in South Africa in 2023. Over the last two seasons in the WPL, she has scored 324 runs and bagged 17 wickets for Gujarat. "It is an absolute honour for me to be named the captain of Gujarat Giants. I have loved being a part of this team and I am excited to lead this fantastic group in the upcoming season. We have a great mix of young and experienced players and plenty of Indian talent in our squad. I am looking forward to working with the team and making our fans proud," Gardner said. "She is a fierce competitor. Her game awareness, tactical acumen, and ability to inspire players make her the ideal choice to captain Gujarat Giants. We believe she will lead from the front and guide the team towards a successful campaign," Gujarat head coach Michael Klinger said. "I would like to thank Mooney for her highly valued leadership. Now, she will be able to focus on wicketkeeping and opening the batting lineup. She continues to be a major leader of our group," Klinger added. Gujarat Giants WPL 2025 squad: Ashleigh Gardner (c), Beth Mooney, Dayalan Hemalatha, Harleen Deol, Laura Wolvaardt, Shabnam Shakil, Tanuja Kanwer, Phoebe Litchfield, Meghna Singh, Kashvee Gautam, Priya Mishra, Mannat Kashyap, Bharti Fulmali, Sayali Satghare, Deandra Dottin, Simran Shaikh, Danielle Gibson, Prakashika Naik

Royal Challengers Bengaluru COO believes there '4-5 leaders' in squad who can take over captaincy



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Faf du Plessis has led Royal Challengers Bengaluru for the last three years. However, in the recently concluded auction in November, the franchise has not exercised the Right To Match option after not retaining him. Going into the 2025 season RCB has not named their leader yet. There have been rumours about Virat Kohli leading the side yet again which RCB's COO Rajesh Menon mentioned.

'Shami is far from ready': India should have picked four pacers in Champions Trophy squad, feels Aakash Chopra

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Former India opener Aakash Chopra has expressed concerns over senior pacer Mohammad Shami's readiness and Jasprit Bumrah's fitness ahead of this month's Champions Trophy. While Shami has been on the comeback trail from the domestic season since October, the 34-year-old pacer featured in two matches of the recent five-match T20I series against England. Meanwhile, the BCCI has yet to provide an update on Bumrah's condition after he suffered a back injury during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia after chief selector Ajit Agarkar recently informed that he was advised five weeks' rest.

Chopra urged that given the tentativeness on the condition of India's two senior bowling pros, the team should have roped in four pacers in the 15-member Champions Trophy squad. In the provisionally announced roster, Bumrah, Shami and Arshdeep Singh have been named alongside all-rounder Hardik Pandya and five spinners. "I am not hearing great news about Bumrah's fitness. However, I won't believe in hearsay, and won't share what I heard either," Chopra said, speaking on his YouTube channel. "Four fast bowlers should have 100 per cent been there (in the Champions Trophy squad) because whatever we have seen



of Mohammed Shami, he did take three wickets in the last match for sure and bowled decently, but he is far from ready," Chopra said. In Bumrah's absence, the BCCI had added Harshit Rana as his replacement for three ODIs against England with pacer Mohammed Siraj not finding himself in contention for both series.

Chopra, however, reckons the Hyderabad bowler could be back in the squad. "I feel a fast bowler will get added. In whose place he will be, we shall find out. I feel Siraj will go to the Champions Trophy," Chopra said.

Jos Buttler on future of ODI cricket: 'It has been pushed towards the margins'

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Over the past few years, there is a growing consensus that ODIs are nearing the end and England captain Jos Buttler agrees with it. Buttler, an ODI World Cup winner himself feels the format has been pushed to its margin and he is unsure about its relevance and future. "I'm unsure, to be honest," he told reporters on the eve of the first ODI against India in Nagpur. "I think I've actually really enjoyed 50 over cricket, it's always been one of my favourite formats actually, but it's certainly been pushed a little bit towards the margins, in the recent years," he said. As it stands, the men's Cricket World Cup is likely to live on, with broadcast rights sold in India until the 2027 edition being hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, and 2031 is to be staged by India and Bangladesh. But the question is for how long will it survive? At a time when attention spans appear to be diminishing and T20 cricket continues on its inexorable domination of the sport's calendar, the future of ODI is under the hammer. Buttler also blames the packed schedule and the rise of the T20 leagues around the cricketing circuit. "The way scheduling is, and obviously the rise of T20 and franchise cricket," he said. Story continues below this



ad Buttler says for him winning the 50-over World Cup is still ahead than winning the World T20. "I still believe if you talk to guys about winning a World Cup, they'd probably say a 50 over World Cup ahead of a T20 World Cup at the moment," he said. "Whether that continues to be the case moving forward I don't know, but the schedules are always the thing. If you can get the best players on the park, playing against each other in whatever the format, I think people are always going to be excited to watch it," he said.

No. 40 to No. 2! Abhishek Sharma gets massive ICC T20I rankings boost after India vs England series



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After his spellbinding performance to wrap up the T20I series over England 4-1 in Mumbai last Sunday, India opener Abhishek Sharma witnessed a massive jump in the ICC T20I batting rankings update on Wednesday. The dashing left-hander smashed a heap of records with his 54-ball 135 while chipping in with 2/3 with the ball as India secured a massive 150-run victory. Abhishek recorded the highest individual score by an Indian man in T20Is while smashing 13 sixes during the 37-ball ton, the second-fastest by an Indian bat in T20Is.

The 24-year-old thereby jumped 38 spots from No. 40 to No. 2 in the latest ICC rankings, headed by Travis Head with 855 rating points. Abhishek moving up to a career-best 829, piped his teammate Tilak Varma who fell a spot to No. 3. India skipper Suryakumar Yadav stands fifth and teammates Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube (up 38 spots to 58th) also made big moves up the rankings for T20I batters following some good scores against England. On the bowling front, spinner Varun

Chakravarthy moved up three places to equal second on the back of his 14 wickets and Player of the Series award. His brilliant form was also rewarded with an ODI call-up for the upcoming three-match series against England on Tuesday.

Australia's World Cup-winning captain Pat Cummins unlikely for ICC Champions Trophy

Hyderabad: Australia's 2023 World Cup-winning captain Pat Cummins is "hugely unlikely" to be fit for selection for the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy, according to the team's head coach Andrew McDonald.

The coach also said that there were doubts over availability of another star bowler, Josh Hazlewood. Both the quick bowlers including the team captain Cummins were named without riders in Australia's provisional list of the 15-member squad. However, injury concerns to them both put the selectors in a spot of bother. Pat Cummins was not a part of the team travelling to Sri Lanka due to the birth of his second child. Meanwhile, he was also nursing an ankle injury sustained during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India. Hazlewood, on the other hand was ruled out of the entire series, after he suffered a side strain during the BGT. Mitchell Marsh, who has previously led the Australian