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## 23-year-old loses money to online games, ends life in Hyderabad's Madhapur

Hyderabad: Upset over losing huge money to online games, a youth died by suicide at Khanamet in Madhapur on Sunday night. SM Aravind (23), a degree student at a private degree college, was staying with his parents and sibling in a rented house in Khanamet. According to the police, though the time when he started is unclear, Aravind started spending money on online games and also online betting. However, he could not earn anything in return and lost all the money. Upset over the losses, he recently informed the matter to his family who supported and comforted him. However, the youngster continued to remain isolated most of the time.

## In rare gesture, PM Modi receives Amir of Qatar at airport

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Extending a rare gesture of hospitality, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday (February 17, 2025) went to the airport to receive Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, who arrived in New Delhi on a two-day visit to India. The Amir is scheduled to meet President Droupadi Murmu and hold talks with Mr. Modi on Tuesday. His visit comes at the invitation of Prime Minister Modi. This would be the second state visit of the Amir of Qatar to India. He earlier visited India in March 2015, the MEA earlier said. India and Qatar have deep-rooted historical ties of friendship, trust and mutual respect. In recent years, the ties between the two countries, including in the areas of trade, investment, energy, technology, culture and people-to-people ties, have continued to strengthen.



## Family of 4 found dead in Mysuru; police suspect suicide



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

The deceased have been identified as Chethan, 45, his wife Rupali, 43, their son Kushan, 15, and Chethan's mother Priyamvada, 62. The deceased have been identified as Chethan, 45, his wife Rupali, 43, their son Kushan, 15, and Chethan's mother Priyamvada, 62. A family of four,

including a minor, was found dead in an apartment in Karnataka's Mysuru Monday, in what the police suspect is a case of suicide. The deceased have been identified as Chethan, 45, his wife Rupali, 43, their son Kushan, 15, and Chethan's mother Priyamvada, 62. Chethan, who was a businessman, lived in Vishweshwaraiah Nagar with his family.

Seema Latkar, Commissioner, Mysuru City police, who visited the spot along with S Jahnavi, DCP (Crime and traffic), said the family lived in two flats — Chethan's family in one and his mother in the other. A police officer said Chethan has left behind a death note. The police said Chethan, a mechanical engineer, worked in the Middle East and returned to India in 2019. "We suspect that Chethan fed his family members with poison and later killed himself. The reason behind the deaths is yet to be ascertained. On Sunday, they visited a temple in Gorur and while returning, they visited Rupali's house in Mysuru. They had dinner before returning home," a police officer said.

## Jittery over BRS protests, Govt resumes work on Sangameshwara, Basaveshwara projects

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Sangareddy: As the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) gears up to launch protests to expose the inordinate delay in taking up the twin lift irrigation projects, Sangameshwara Lift Irrigation Project (SLIP) and Basaveshwara Lift Irrigation Project (BLIP), the Congress government has resumed the works fearing opposition from the people. Former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao, who laid the foundation for these two lift irrigation projects on February 20, 2022, near Narayankhed, had asked former minister T Harish Rao to launch various protest programmes across Sangareddy district to expose the Congress government's neglect towards these two projects.



Chandrashekhara Rao gave directions to this effect while talking to a team of BRS leaders from Zaheerabad constituency who visited him at Erravalli on January 31. Following the directions of the former Chief Minister, Harish Rao also held a review meeting on February 14 with key BRS leaders of Sangareddy to chalk out a plan to carry out protests across the district. However, sensing that the BRS protests would expose the government's failure, officials have grounded earth works to build a pump house for BLIP at Borancha in Manoor mandal. The pump house will be built on 12 acres of land in the backwaters of Singur reservoir. Godavari water will be pumped in from Kondapochamma Sagar to Singur as part of Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme (KLIS). Later, the water will be lifted through SLIP and BLIP to meet the irrigation and drinking

needs of Sangareddy, Andole, Narayankhed and Zaheerabad assembly segments. Combinedly, the twin lift projects will provide irrigation water to 4 lakh acres across these four assembly segments. According to estimates made in 2022 by the Irrigation department, the government will have to spend Rs.2,653 crore on SLIP and Rs.1,774 crore on BLIP. SLIP will provide irrigation water to 2.19 lakh acres in 231 villages of Sangareddy, Andole and Zaheerabad assembly segments while BLIP will provide irrigation water to 1.81 lakh acres in Andole and Narayankhed assembly segments. Despite the government beginning the works, the BRS under the leadership of Harish Rao is preparing to organise protest programmes from February 24. The intention was to make the government complete these two projects within a short time and without further delay.

## Adani Foundation Pledges Education Temples Across India



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Ahmedabad: The Adani Foundation has partnered with GEMS Education to establish world-class, affordable schools across India. With an initial commitment of INR 2,000 Cr from the Adani family, this initiative aims to provide high-quality education across metropolitan and Tier II to IV cities. The partnership will launch 20 'Adani GEMS Schools of Excellence' in the K-12 segment over the next three years, with the first school opening in Lucknow in the 2025-26 academic year. These schools will follow a CBSE curriculum, with 30% of seats reserved

for underprivileged students at no cost. Leveraging Adani Group's infrastructure and GEMS' educational expertise, the initiative will create a scalable and sustainable model for quality education in India. "Inspired by our philosophy of service, this initiative reaffirms our commitment to accessible, world-class education," said Gautam Adani, Chairman of the Adani Group. "By integrating global best practices and digital learning with GEMS Education, we aim to nurture future leaders." Sunny Varkey, Founder & Chairman of GEMS Education, added, "Our mission is to make quality education accessible to every learner. This collaboration will expand our reach, bringing global educational expertise to diverse communities across India." "Beyond schools, the initiative will establish research institutions focused on teaching innovation and capability development. The partnership underscores a shared commitment to equipping India's youth with skills and values for the future. Since 1996, the Adani Foundation has driven social welfare and development, impacting 9.1 million lives across 6,769 villages in 19 states. Its efforts span education, health, sustainable livelihoods, climate action, and community development, aligning with national priorities and global sustainability goals. A global leader in private K-12 education for over 60 years, GEMS Education serves 170,000+ students from 176 nationalities across eight countries.

## StockGro, Zomato to empower delivery partners with financial literacy

Hyderabad: StockGro, the investment advisory and knowledge platform dedicated to enhancing financial literacy, has announced its collaboration with Zomato to help Zomato's delivery partners manage their finances better.

The initiative aims at empowering delivery partners with financial literacy through tailored education sessions, which will be available in multiple local languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Kannada, and more, allowing delivery partners from across the country to access the content easily. The sessions will cover essential topics such as budgeting, saving, investing and future planning.

## Revanth Reddy Orders Immediate Issuance of New Ration Cards in Telangana

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has directed officials to make immediate arrangements for the issuance of new ration cards across the state. The Chief Minister emphasized the need to expedite the review process of applications submitted through public administration requests, caste enumeration, village meetings, and Mee Seva centers. Despite multiple opportunities being provided for applications, the Chief Minister inquired about the congestion at Mee Seva centers regarding ration cards. Officials explained that repeated applications by the same families were contributing to the backlog. Reassuring that this issue would not arise if the cards were issued promptly, the Chief Minister instructed authorities to take immediate action to ensure new cards are distributed without delay. "Ration cards must be provided to all eligible families. However, awareness should be created to prevent families from reapplying after already submitting their requests," the Chief Minister advised. He further mentioned that in districts where the election code of conduct is not in effect, new cards should be issued first, with the distribution to be com-



pleted across all districts once the code expires. During the meeting, the Chief Minister also reviewed several design options prepared by the Department of Civil Supplies for the new ration cards. The meeting was attended by Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy, Chief Minister's Advisor V. Narendra Reddy, Government Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari, and senior officials from the concerned department.

## KCR celebrates birthday with Erravelli residents, BRS leaders, supporters

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Hyderabad: The birthday celebrations of former Chief Minister and BRS supremo K Chandrashekhara Rao were held on a grand scale at his Erravelli residence on Monday. Several hundreds of party workers, leaders and supporters from across the State thronged the venue to wish their leader. The surroundings of Erravelli were packed with hundreds of vehicles as slogans of 'KCR Zindabad' and 'CM KCR' echoed in the air. Chandrashekhara Rao personally greeted his supporters and well-wishers for four hours, accepting flower bouquets, shawls, books, and artwork specially made for him. BRS working president KT Rama Rao, along with former Ministers, MLAs, MLCs, and MPs, also extended their wishes. Praying for his healthy and long life, villagers in Erravelli performed special pujas and conducted a yagam, which was attended by the former Chief Minister and his wife, Shobha. In a heartwarming moment at the wedding ceremony of 'Namaste Telangana' editor Thigulla Krishna Murthy's son in Gajwel, Chandrashekhara Rao and Shobha exchanged garlands and rings, celebrating his birthday in the presence of guests. On the occasion, the BRS chief released a book titled 'Vandella Munduchoopu' edited by Juluru Gourishankar. Speaking on the occasion, Chandrashekhara Rao reflected on Telangana's progress under his leadership. He asserted that the BRS laid strong foundations in sectors such as water, funds, and employment, citing RBI reports validating Telangana's rapid growth.



former Chief Minister's birthday in a grand manner by organising cake-cutting and indulging in social services, several leaders from various political parties extended their greetings to the BRS chief. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Ministers Ponnann Prabhakar, D Sridhar Babu, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Minister Nara Lokesh, YSR Congress president YS Jaganmohan Reddy, Union Minister Bandi Sanjay and several others were among those who extended their birthday greetings and wished for his long and healthy life in public service. Common people of Telangana also showed their love for Chandrashekhara Rao through various activities. A farmer, Bhaskar from Kasma Thanda in Khammam rural mandal, used the freshly harvested Red Mirchi to write 'Happy Birthday KCR' on the drying platform in his agricultural field. Several farmers participated in the 'Vriksharchana' initiative by former MP J Santosh Kumar and planted saplings to showcase their love for Chandrashekhara Rao. Similarly, a Class 1 student Haithvi, daughter of Aleti Suresh and Soumya from Rangareddy Nagar in Jagadgirigutta, donated her savings amounting to Rs 5,000 to a nearby government school for the purchase of a water pump, to provide water to the students.

## Mahashivratri Brahmotsavams Set to Begin at Srisailem, CM Naidu invited



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

The much-anticipated Mahashivratri Brahmotsavams at the Srisailem Sri Bhramarambika Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple are set to commence from the 19th of this month and will run until March 1. Temple authorities have confirmed that all preparations for the grand celebrations are complete. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has been invited to attend the festivities, a gesture extended by the Executive Officer (EO) of the Bhramarambika Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple, M. Srinivasa Rao, alongside local scholars and Srisailem MLA Buddha Rajasekhara Reddy. During the invitation ceremony, temple scholars offered the CM prasada and a portrait of the deity, along with their blessings.

In a related development, State Roads & Buildings, Investments, and Infrastructure Minister BC Janardhan Reddy also received an invitation to the Brahmotsavams. Today, the Srisailem Devasthanam EO met with the minister at the Secretariat to formally deliver the invitation letter, during which temple priests and Vedic scholars presented Tirtha Prasada and offered their blessings. Minister Janardhan

Reddy took the opportunity to inquire about the arrangements being made for the Brahmotsavams, emphasizing the importance of ensuring smooth darshan experiences for devotees. He provided several suggestions for enhancing security measures and managing queue congestion at the temple, aiming to facilitate a comfortable and memorable experience for all visitors. As the temple gears up for the celebrations, devotees and visitors alike are looking forward to the sacred festivities honoring Lord Shiva.

## KCR Represents the Emotions of Four Crore People: Harish Rao

GNS News Agency, Feb

Hyderabad : Senior BRS leader and former minister T. Harish Rao has stated that K. Chandrashekhara Rao (KCR) is not just a political figure but an emotional symbol for Telangana's four crore people. He credited KCR's determination for the formation of Telangana and asserted that the people continue to look up to him.

Taking a dig at Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Harish Rao compared his leadership to a short-term "T20 match," alleging that he is playing only for money. "Revanth Reddy's game is all about money. Even he doesn't know how long he will remain in power," he remarked.

Contrasting KCR's leadership style, Harish Rao claimed that KCR is an all-rounder in politics. "KCR plays all formats—not just T20 but Test matches too. He knows how to lead in the long run," he said. Harish Rao's comments come as BRS continues to rally support for KCR's return to power in Telangana.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Another stampede

The cruel irony is not lost on anyone. Even as a special crowd management plan is being implemented for the safety of Maha Kumbh pilgrims following the Sangam stampede that claimed 30 lives on January 29, tragedy struck devotees hundreds of kilometres away at New Delhi railway station, where they had gathered in large numbers to board trains to Prayagraj. At least 18 people were killed in a stampede on Saturday night. A senior railway officer's claim that the incident occurred after some passengers slipped and fell on others while coming down a foot overbridge tells only half the story. The possible causes being cited are: Delays in train departures; a surge in ticket sale; wrong (or last-minute) announcement about change of platforms. The railway authorities should have anticipated the huge rush, considering that the mega festival is going to conclude in about 10 days' time. There was absolutely no margin for error.

Overcrowding is par for the course in the world's most populous country. However, crowd management is rarely a top priority for the Central and state governments as well as the district administration. The response is mostly reactive, not proactive. Stampedes can be averted or minimised if the basics are followed religiously. Adequate deployment of security personnel to regulate crowd movement and meticulous planning of the arrangements are prerequisites for ensuring that nothing untoward happens during events with mass participation. But who cares? A 'chalta hai' attitude is widely prevalent, marked by a lack of accountability and a brazen disregard for the value of human life. It was in 2014 that the National Disaster Management Authority came out with a guide on crowd management for state governments, local authorities, administrators and organisers. It laid stress on 'professionalisation' of the entire process with an integrated and structured approach.

## Mumbai police book GM of New India Cooperative Bank in Rs 122 crore fraud case days after RBI imposes curbs



Hitesh Mehta, the general manager of New India Cooperative Bank, has been accused of hatching a criminal conspiracy and embezzling about Rs 122 crore along with an accomplice.

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

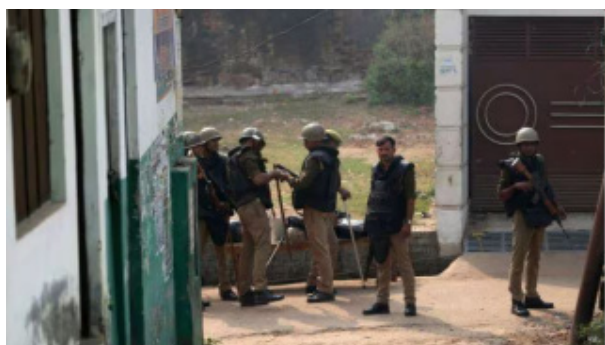
new india cooperative bank On Friday, thousands of panic-stricken depositors had queued up before the branches of the bank seeking to know if their money was safe and could be withdrawn. The Mumbai police on Saturday registered a Rs 122 crore fraud case against the general manager and head of accounts of city-based New India Cooperative Bank, two days after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed restrictions on the bank over alleged financial irregularities.

The case against Hitesh Mehta, the general manager and head of accounts of the bank, was lodged on the complaint of Devarshi Shishir Kumar Ghosh, 48, the bank's chief executive officer, the police said. In his police complaint, Ghosh said that Mehta and his accomplice were trusted employees of the bank and the cash in the bank's vaults at its Prabhadevi and Goregaon offices was in their safe custody. But the two allegedly hatched a criminal conspiracy and embezzled about Rs 122 crore.

According to the complaint, the alleged scam took place between 2020 and 2025. The Dadar police registered an FIR against Mehta under sections 316(5) (criminal breach of trust by a public servant or banker, merchant, broker, attorney or agent) and 61(2) (criminal conspiracy) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Ganesh Gawde, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone 5, said on Saturday that the case has been transferred to the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Mumbai police for further investigation. On Friday, thousands of panic-stricken depositors had queued up before the branches of the bank seeking to know if their money was safe and could be withdrawn.

The RBI's restrictions prevent the bank from issuing new loans, making investments, borrowing funds or allowing withdrawals for six months due to concerns over its financial stability. The RBI also superseded the bank's board of directors for 12 months, citing 'poor governance standards'. The RBI has appointed Shreekanth, a former chief general manager of the State Bank of India (SBI), as the administrator to manage the bank's affairs. Additionally, a committee of advisors has been formed to assist him, the RBI said. The RBI directed the loss-making bank not to grant or renew any loans and advances, make any investment, incur any liability including borrowing funds and acceptance of fresh deposits, disburse or agree to disburse any payment whether in discharge of its liabilities and obligations without prior approval of RBI in writing. The RBI restrictions came into effect after the close of business on February 13, and will be valid for six months. New India Cooperative Bank has a network of 30 branches and a deposit base of Rs 2,436 crore as of March 2024. The bank had posted losses of Rs 22.78 crore in 2023-24 and Rs 30.74 crore in 2022-23. This is the first major action against a cooperative bank in Maharashtra after the collapse of the Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank due to large-scale fraudulent loans.

## ASP, chairperson of Shahi Jama Masjid committee argue over posters of Sambhal violence suspects on mosque wall



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Heated arguments took place between a senior police officer in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal town and the chairperson of the Shahi Jama Masjid and others after the district police pasted posters of 74 suspects in the Sambhal violence case on the wall of the mosque Friday. The police move came hours after posters of an accused that they had put up at several places in Sambhal were torn off by unidentified people on Friday afternoon. The posters announced a reward for those sharing information about the suspects. Five people were killed and nearly 50 others, including a dozen policemen, were injured in the violence that broke out in Sambhal on November 24 last year in the wake of a court-ordered survey of the sixteenth-century mosque.

Jafar Ali, the chairperson of the Shahi Jama Masjid managing committee, and others accompanying him later told Shrish Chandra, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP), Sambhal North, that posters cannot be pasted on the walls of any religious place and they should be removed immediately. In a video of the incident, the ASP is seen saying, "Your people threw stones at the police from the roof of the mosque during last year's violence and indulged in arson. The posters contain photographs of the people who were involved that day. You are motivating your youth to

proceed on a path of destruction." He said that the steps taken by the district police were within the framework of existing laws. "We have identified nearly 74 suspects through various sources, which includes photographs taken by drone cameras that we used to monitor the crowd," the ASP added. Speaking to The Indian Express, Jafar Ali said, "I requested the officer that we have no objection in putting up posters of suspects but these should not appear at our religious place as it hurts our sentiments. I even suggested that if the police want such posters near the mosque, these should be put up on makeshift boards outside our place of worship."

"This is not the way one requests by standing on the road. You can't tell us what plan of action we should follow against the criminals. The poster has not only been put up here, but also in other parts of the town. Objections may be registered with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) as the mosque is a protected property," the ASP stated. On Friday, ASP Chandra told reporters, "The posters contain photographs of suspects carrying stone in their hands. The photos of suspects have been captured through CCTV footage from drone cameras, closed-circuit television (CCTV) and videos made on mobile phones were directly involved in the violence.

Their identity is yet to be confirmed, so posters have been put up to seek public assistance in identifying them." Superintendent of Police Krishna Kant Bishnoi said on Friday that no innocent people will be persecuted but "those we identified through footage from CCTVs, drones and mobile phones will face strict punitive action. The police registered eight FIRs against 150 suspects in the Sambhal violence case who were identified through various means and against nearly 2,500 unidentified people after the violence. Seventy-six accused, including four women, have been arrested so far for allegedly pelting stones at the police from the rooftops of their houses. They are yet to get bail.

## Bhupesh Baghel appointed Punjab in-charge, Congress gears up for 'Mission 2027' in state

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

The Congress has appointed former Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel as the AICC general secretary in charge of Punjab in what appears to be the launch of a firm bid by the party for the 2027 Assembly polls in the state. The appointment was announced on Friday night. Baghel replaces Devendra Anand who took over the charge in December 2023. The appointment comes in the wake of a reshuffle by the All India Congress Committee (AICC) that saw the in-charges of several states being changed. Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa has welcomed Baghel's appointment and said he looked forward to working as a team for Mission 2027.

There had been considerable discussion in Punjab Congress circles regarding the impending changes involving the appointment of the new general secretary in charge as well as the new Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president. Former state in-charge Harish Chaudhary was reportedly very keen to get his old job back. A revamp of the state Congress structure is also on the cards with new appointees being considered for all levels of PCC. There are speculations on whether former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi, the Lok Sabha MP from Jalandhar, will return to state politics as the PCC chief, being the party's Dalit face. Congress sources said he was slated to be appointed as an AICC general secretary in charge of a major state but requested a major role in Punjab. Congress insiders say Baghel's appointment as Punjab in-charge reflects the Congress leadership's serious intent to unify the party ranks in the state and wrest power from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the 2027 Assembly polls. It is believed that the AAP rose to power in Punjab mainly because the Congress ranks were fractured in 2021-22 which led to the removal of Captain Amarinder Singh as the chief minister. Bhupesh Baghel served as the chief minister of Chhattisgarh from 2018 to 2023. Born on August 23, 1960, in Durg district, he has had a long-standing association with the Congress. He is often referred to by the nickname "Kaka" which translates to uncle, reflecting his approachable public image. Baghel's political journey began in the 1980s with



the Indian Youth Congress. He represented Patan constituency in the Chhattisgarh Assembly, winning elections multiple times since 1993, with a brief hiatus after losing in 2008. Before Chhattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh in 2000, Baghel was the Cabinet minister for transport under Digvijaya Singh's government. After the state's formation, he served as the minister for revenue, public health engineering and relief works in the first Chhattisgarh government led by Ajit Jogi.

In 2018, Baghel became the chief minister after leading the Congress to a significant victory in the state elections, ending the BJP's 15-year rule. His tenure focused on social welfare, agriculture support and tribal rights, among other initiatives. Baghel introduced schemes like the Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana to provide financial assistance to farmers. He launched the Swami Atmanand English Medium School Scheme to improve educational infrastructure and accessibility. Known for his efforts to foster social equality, Baghel has also initiated low-cost marriage campaigns to make weddings less extravagant.

His term was not without controversies, including allegations of involvement in a liquor scam and scrutiny over the Mahadev betting app case, where he was named in the Enforcement Directorate's chargesheet. However, he has denied these allegations, framing them as political vendetta. After losing the 2023 Chhattisgarh Assembly elections, Baghel has continued his political activities, focusing on national Congress strategies and state politics.

## After CBI, now central vigilance body seeks probe into Kejriwal's 'Sheesh Mahal'

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Kejriwal Sheeshmahal The bungalow – the BJP refers to it as a "Sheesh Mahal" – in Civil Lines had been allotted to Kejriwal in 2015 and is owned by the Delhi government's Public Works Department. In mounting trouble for former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has asked the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) to conduct an inquiry into allegations of irregularities in the construction and renovation of his residence, 6, Flagstaff Road, during his tenure in office.

The bungalow – the BJP refers to it as a "Sheesh Mahal", and both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah have frequently raised the issue in their speeches – in Civil Lines had been allotted to Kejriwal in 2015 and is owned by the Delhi government's Public Works Department. On October 14, 2024, incoming Rohini BJP MLA Vijender Gupta, who was the Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly then, had filed a complaint with the CVC alleging illegal construction at the property. Gupta had alleged that Kejriwal had flouted building regulations to construct a "lavish mansion" covering eight acres and that other government properties on the adjacent Rajpur Road, which previously housed senior officers and judges in Type-V flats as well as two bungalows were demolished and merged into the new residence, violating ground coverage and floor area ratio (FAR) norms. It also lacked proper layout plan approvals, he further alleged.

A year ago, in September 2023, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had registered a preliminary enquiry on the matter months after the Ministry of Home Affairs asked the Comptroller & Auditor General of India to conduct a special audit into the alleged irregularities and violations in the reconstruction of the bungalow. On October 16 last year, the CVC had registered a complaint for further examination in the matter, forwarding it to the CPWD for further investigation. In December, a factual report based on Gupta's complaint was submitted to the CVC by the chief vigilance



The bungalow – the BJP refers to it as a "Sheesh Mahal" – in Civil Lines had been allotted to Kejriwal in 2015 and is owned by the Delhi government's Public Works Department.

officer, CPWD. Earlier this week, on Thursday, the CVC, Gupta said, apprised him that after examining the factual report, the CVO of CPWD has been "advised to conduct a detailed investigation into the matter", assuring him that "suitable action based on the findings of the investigation report" will be taken. As reported by The Indian Express on January 5, a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report in the case detailing the audit of the house's repair and renovation shows that from a preliminary estimate of Rs 7.91 crore in 2020, the total cost of the work at the property shot up to Rs 33.66 crore by the time it ended in 2022.

Kejriwal, who stepped down as Delhi chief minister after walking out on bail in a case related to the Delhi excise policy in September last year, vacated the house in October 2024. The AAP has consistently alleged that the issue was raked up by the BJP because it had nothing else to personally vilify Kejriwal over and that it is not Kejriwal's "personal" asset and, as the CM's residence, will be allotted to others in the future.

## Stalin accuses Palaniswami of 'voice dubbing' for BJP



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Saturday accused AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami of "voice dubbing" for the BJP and said he proved correct the DMK's allegation that there is a secret alliance between the two parties. Answering questions in his "Ungali Oruvan" series (One among you), the DMK president, when asked on opinions expressed by DMK's allies and if there had been any "contradictions," the CM said he considered their views only as advice. Difference of opinion is quite natural, be it a family, an office or other places and expression of opinion is an identity of democratic ties.

DMK's allies, the CPI(M) and VCK, had sought transfer of the Vengaiyaval case on the mixing of human faeces in an overhead water tank in Pudukkottai district to the CBI. The DMK chief described the Central government's decision on imposition of President's rule in Manipur as "very belated." Biren Singh had to quit as Chief Minister since he had no other choice. Asked on Palaniswami's comment that the Delhi Assembly election result has dealt a blow to the INDIA bloc, he said: "I have already answered; if you see Palaniswami's statements it would appear only as the BJP's statements." Further, Stalin claimed that the AIADMK top leader was providing "voice dubbing" for the BJP and he has been proving right the DMK's allegation of secret alliance between the AIADMK and the Saffron party. Before making comments, Palaniswami must ponder over his failures.

He listed a slew of schemes for supporting students and improving education. "We are implementing a lot of schemes. In particular, we are implementing a lot of education of women." The CM's Breakfast Scheme for school children, Education at your doorsteps (to address learning gap), Pudhumai Pen and Tamil Puthalvan (Rs 1,000 financial assistance to college students) were among the schemes mentioned by Stalin. On the Union Budget, he reiterated his allegation that Tamil Nadu was fully ignored and during the past few years, the state does not receive any funds.

## 'Lakhs of people die in hospitals... I too could have if Rupa had not donated her liver'



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

For Rupa Arora, Valentine's Day is an occasion to celebrate and express not only love but also cherish the moments of togetherness and the gift of life with her husband Praveen Rattan, a senior accounts officer, at the Engineering Department, Chandigarh. "In 2010, my husband, who was 41 then, suffered from severe jaundice and despite long treatments from private hospitals, his condition worsened. We went to PGI and were told that there was severe damage to the liver, and the only treatment that could save his life was a liver transplant. At that time, PGI did not have the facility, but the doctors here helped and guided us, and we went to Delhi to a very senior and renowned doctor, who is a national awardee for his work in the field," says Rupa, who teaches Hindi at a government school in Chandigarh. "In India, only eight out of every 10 lakh people donate organs. In such a situation, the possibility of him getting a liver from a brain-dead person was almost nil, and at that moment, it was a matter of life and death, and the chances of survival without a transplant were very few. We had a daughter who was eight years old, and I did not think of anything, but saving his life, and told the doctor that I would be the living donor for him."

The doctor, recalls Rupa, was confident that the liver would be a match, and the blood group of the couple was also the same, with the team of doctors supporting and giving them confidence at each step. Rupa says that not for a moment was she apprehensive or nervous, as there was no time to think, the only motivation was to give Praveen and their family a new lease of life. After several tests, scans, and check-ups, in July 2011, Rupa donated 65% of her liver and a major surgery saved Praveen's life and put him back on the road to recovery. "We were told not to have oily and spicy food, and there were regular follow-ups for Praveen. Thankfully, we were in good health and spirits. The liver is the only regenerative organ and so after three months, my liver was fully regrown," adds Rupa. The couple is leading a fulfilling life together, and the surgery, smiles Rupa, has given a new meaning to their love. In 2014, they were blessed with a son, with the couple is back to work, with a new passion guiding their lives. "After the surgery and recovery period of about three months, we decided to dedicate our life to the cause of organ donation, and creating awareness about the need. We did our post-graduation in social work and journalism after the surgery to counsel people. While doctors are another image of God, organ donors are angels, and Rupa is that angel for me. The Almighty has given us this direction, and we are involved with many camps organised by PGI for organ donation, and have motivated many to pledge their organs and we also have pledged ours. On Facebook, we have connected with several people working for this mission and even travelled to the USA for a meeting of living organ donors. There, February 14 is celebrated as National Donor Day and we are also involved in counselling people who are in the same situation," explains Praveen. Rupa says that their life has a new purpose, and as a teacher, she makes her students aware of the cause and dispel many superstitions surrounding the cause.

## How a chef in Worli is reviving his grandfather's legacy and GSB roots through Shenoy's



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

In an unassuming building in Worli's Municipal Industrial Estate, a new restaurant has opened its doors. While the signage reads 'Shenoy's' in crisp new letters, the name carries weight for longtime residents and old-time taxi drivers. This very spot once housed Shenoy's Canteen, started in 1967 by the late Venkatesh Shenoy—a Gaud Saraswat Brahmin (GSB) from Moodabidri, Karnataka. He arrived in Bombay as a 13-year-old in 1925 with nothing but an 'anna' in his pocket, later becoming part of India's freedom struggle, the Samyukta Maharashtra movement, and serving as both councillor and MLA. The chowk leading to the canteen is named after him. His canteen, originally catering to the area's textile mill workers, served upma, sheera, puri-bhaji, and other quick, hearty Maharashtrian meals before expanding to include the city's beloved 'Punjabi food.' Now, decades later, his grandson, chef Vikram Shenoy, has revived the family legacy at the same spot—a 40-seater restaurant called Shenoy's with a special focus on GSB cuisine.

"Shenoy's Canteen had a wonderful run from 1967 until 2008. It's always been a family-run establishment—my grandfather was a very giving man who always kept his door and galla (cash register) open for anyone in need. While he ran the kitchen, my grandmother manned the cash counter. When my father grew up, he joined the canteen, and when he married, my mother—who has a fine taste for cooking—took over the kitchen," shared chef Vikram. By 2008, his father Keshav Shenoy was transitioning to pursue yoga professionally, his grandmother needed rest after years of service, and Vikram was determined to pursue a degree in hotel management from IHM Mumbai, known as Dadar Catering College, and so the canteen closed for a while. After gaining experience at prestigious places like The Taj Mahal Palace in Colaba and Jumeirah, Dubai, Vikram decided to launch a delivery kitchen called 'Masala Kitchen' at the same spot in 2014. While the kitchen continued running, he found that the personal touch the family was known for was missing. A series of coincidences—like a friend visiting the delivery kitchen and hearing about Shenoy's Canteen from a taxi driver, and the response to his

Instagram posts of homemade GSB food—led Vikram to reconnect with his roots and conceptualise Shenoy's. Expect a tangy, incredibly soft chicken served on a Malabari paratha disk, paired with Gojju—a staple in GSB cuisine that can be made with both fruits and vegetables in many variations. The Gojju elevates the dish, while the juice from the chicken and goju melds together, making everything melt in your mouth. Kela Bhaji features lightly battered, deep-fried raw banana slices generously coated with peri peri spice, giving them a fiery kick, and is served with a dressing of hung yogurt, minced garlic, and herbs. We found ourselves returning to it throughout the meal.

Also on offer are Zunka Bhakar in the form of a seekh kebab, Pan Polo as a crispy crepe base, Kokum as a refreshing soda, and authentic preparations like Hooman (navy beans), Dalitoy (a simple dal dish with a light seasoning of curry leaves and rye), Ghassi, and his mother Sheela Shenoy's special Pomfret Fry. Other crowd-pleasers include Dahi Kebab, Palak Patta Chaat, Tandoori Paneer Tikka, Pulled Rogan Josh Tacos, Truffle Mushroom Cheddar Naan Bomb, Butter Chicken, and Goan Fish Curry but in an innovative form. "I noticed a gap in the market," said chef Vikram. "There are a few places that offer GSB cuisine, but they're mostly frequented by people from the community or those already familiar with the cuisine. I didn't want any entry barriers. I wanted to gently guide my customers and introduce them to GSB food. For example, some might not be keen on trying banana bhaji, so I add peri peri and complement it with yogurt dressing. Others may not know Gojju, so I incorporate it into various dishes, and once they try it, they're hooked," he said. What really stands out is that all preparations are made fresh daily, allowing the ingredients to truly shine. Take the Ghee Roast Chicken, for example—it's a must-try for ghee lovers, made in-house. Another standout is their Devasthan Saar, the only soup on the menu. It's inspired by a dish traditionally served in their temple, reimagined as a soup served in a French Press. The result is a thick, non-creamy, flavourful broth with identifiable notes of tomato, hing, roasted coconut, and a subtle aftertaste of jaggery.

Located just a stone's throw away from Palladium and within walking distance of several popular, higher-priced establishments, what made Vikram keep the prices so competitive? "I didn't want any entry barriers," he explained. "I consciously set the prices—not so low that it lacks value, but not so high that people would hesitate to try something new." Our only complaint? The dessert menu offered just four items, none of which gave us a taste of GSB cuisine. The chef assures us that this will be addressed within a month, and the dessert section will soon be updated. Our verdict? We'll definitely be returning to Shenoy's with friends and family for a hearty meal, eager to experience new flavors and combinations that will become favorites we'll hold on to.

## How a century-old Pune laundry started as a fight against untouchability

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

pearl washing company pune Pearl Washing Company is located at the gate of Raste Wada, which is almost 250 years old, and being a part of a heritage property means that the original structure of the shop is still unchanged. For more than a century, Pearl Washing Company in Pune has been dry cleaning, washing, and stitching huge piles of clothes for locals in Rasta Peth. A pioneer of the laundry business in the city, the shop at the gate of Raste Wada opened in 1914. But unknown to many, its origins can be traced back to a man's determination to fight against untouchability. "Bapusaheb Hariba Raut founded the company. Since then, my late grandfather, father, my son and I have been managing the shop. My son Vinayak represents the fifth generation of our family operating this business," says Sanjay Subash Raut, owner of Pearl Washing Company.

"Before establishing this shop, my family used to wash clothes for various accountants and Sardar families, delivering them either to their homes or in the middle of the road. Back then, we faced a lot of discrimination, and people would sprinkle rosewater or gomutra (cow urine) on the clothes we cleaned as we were considered untouchables at the time. It was then that my great-grandfather decided to start this shop so that people would bring their clothes to us willingly, and he would no longer have to endure such practices," he adds. His grandfather was involved in the freedom struggle during the British Raj, he says.

At the time, there was no concept of a laundry shop in Pune and dhobis were assigned to specific wadas and served only their designated territories. "Before the introduction of electric irons, clothes were dry cleaned using charcoal irons made of brass, and we even had a few at our shop when it started. Earlier, washermen would take the clothes to the Mula-Mutha River, which was clean. Each washerman had a dedicated stall for drying clothes, and later, they would bring the garments in large piles to be pressed using massive coal furnaces. This process was labour-intensive and time-consuming. Now, with the advances in technology, the cleaning process and steam work have been reduced to just half an hour," says Sanjay. Pearl washing company When Pearl Washing Company opened, there was no concept of a laundry shop in Pune. Dhobis



were assigned to specific wadas and served only their designated territories. (Photo: Raut family) The shop is located at the gate of Raste Wada, which is almost 250 years old, and being a part of a heritage property has its downsides. The laundry "cannot even alter a brick, as Raste Wada is under the jurisdiction of the central government". Any modifications require permission from Delhi. Therefore, the original structure of the shop remains intact from the Peshwa era.

"We have made minor adjustments by layering the floor with carpets and applying wood-patterned wallpaper on the walls. The pillars resonate with the sturdy wooden columns prominent in Peshwa architecture, and the floors and walls are constructed with hard-wearing mud and stonework. We have also updated the Sunmica here," says Vinayak. "Originally, the shop and the entire Raste Wada property were elevated from the main road, featuring five steps at the entrance. Due to continuous road widening over the years, the elevation has been reduced to two stairs. Even the walls here are quite thick, approximately 3 to 4 ft," he adds. Many customers continue to bring their clothes to the shop out of loyalty, having known the family for generations. "Some even travel long distances to come here. Despite the abundance of laundry services on nearly every corner of Pune, our shop retains a strong customer base. We also offer stitching services and have expanded offerings to include accessories and materials needed for pooja, like agarbattis and dhoop battis or incense sticks. We also have a branch in Hadapsar and a few others in the surrounding areas of Rasta Peth," says Sanjay.

## 'Mediation opens doors to creative solutions':

## CJI Sanjiv Khanna says not all disputes suited for litigation

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna said on Saturday that not all disputes are suited for courtroom litigation, and mediation is a "mode of redressal that opens doors to creative solutions" beyond "simple yes or no answers". CJI Khanna was speaking as a chief guest at the third convocation ceremony of the Maharashtra National Law University (MNLU) in Nagpur on Saturday morning. Emphasising the importance of choosing mediation, CJI Khanna said that it "not only resolves conflicts efficiently but also strengthens relationships between people and businesses". He urged the graduating students to "think beyond the convention" and broaden their horizons "to make justice delivery more cost-effective and time-bound". Just as the problems themselves cannot be fit into boxes, neither can their solutions, the CJI added, highlighting the need to find flexible solutions and ensure that "the road to justice cannot itself become a hurdle to achieve it". He also said that each client's unique circumstance demands a "tailored solution". "You will be faced not just with a legal issue, but a human story—a business dream threatened by regulatory

hurdles, a family grappling with property disputes, or a community or individuals fighting for their fundamental rights. This is where the true art of legal practice lies—in the ability to come up with creative solutions that address both the legal and human dimensions of the problem," CJI Khanna told the newly graduated students. He also said that the Indian legal aid structure "is perhaps the most robust in the world, where assistance is extended to all stakeholders—the accused, the victim, and even the families of both the accused and the victims". India's legal aid cover includes 80 per cent of our population, and a young workforce can help bring the objectives of the National Legal Aid Services Authority (NALSA)'s schemes to fruition. The combination of our robust legal aid framework with the energy of our young lawyers has the potential to make India a world leader in accessibility," CJI Khanna said. He appealed to the new law graduates to use their education for "social change and good" amidst contemporary challenges such as climate change that not just impacts the environment but also "threatens the very fabric of human rights and social justice". "The digital revolution raises unprecedented questions about privacy, security, and the nature of human interaction.

## 'Maratha community has been let down': Quota activist Jarange-Patil reacts to BJP MLA Dhas's meetings with NCP minister Dhananjay Munde



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil Saturday launched a scathing attack on BJP MLA Suresh Dhas for meeting NCP minister Dhananjay Munde. Jarange-Patil said Dhas has let down the Maratha community which had admired him for raising his voice against the killers of Beed sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh. "Dhas has been vocal against those behind the murder of Santosh Deshmukh. He vowed to destroy the political careers of those people. Now he has gone and seen the faces of those people. How can he meet a cruel man? How can he meet a man whose associates are responsible for the murder of Santosh Deshmukh? Now, whom should the Maratha community seek justice from?" Jarange-Patil told media persons at Antarwali-Saraati in the Jalna district. "He tried getting compliments from the Maratha

community and at the same, he is playing politics... If he wanted honour from the Maratha community, then he should have fought for the community till the end," the quota activist added.

On Friday, it emerged that Dhas, a vocal critic of Dhananjay Munde, had met the minister twice. Once, he had met Munde a fortnight ago at the residence of BJP state president Chandrashekhar Bawankule in Mumbai. The second meeting happened at Munde's residence in Mumbai on Wednesday. Dhas and Bawankule both confirmed that the meetings had taken place. The meeting at Bawankule's residence lasted more than four hours. "Both Dhas and Munde met at my residence in my presence. I told them to resolve their differences. Both have differences but there is no discord between them," Bawankule said. Asked about the meeting, Dhas said, "I went to Bawankule's residence because he had invited me for dinner. Munde had also come. Bawankule asked us to resolve our differences. However, I said I will not speak on the Deshmukh issue. I told him that I would continue to fight to secure justice for the Deshmukh family." After the murder of Beed sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh in December last year, it was Dhas who was at the forefront of the attack on Munde, holding his close associates responsible for the crime. Dhas and other political leaders had criticised Munde, saying he was shielding his associates in the case. Munde's close associate Walmik Karad has been arrested in connection with the case.

## From better prediction to understanding climate change effect, India and Italy plan to work together at Pune workshop

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

What is common about Pune and Rome's experience of climate change? Do heat islands and urban flooding in Rome hold lessons for Pune? These are some of the questions that scientists from the Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) and the Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (CMCC) would try to unravel through the first-of-its-kind collaboration. The first workshop in this regard, which saw the participation of scientists from Italy and India, took off in Pune on February 11. According to Paola Mercogliano, head of the Italian delegation, no country or city is immune to the global phenomenon called climate change. Mecogliano said the institute had worked with the city of Rome to understand the effect of climate change, especially in the form of urban heat islands and urban flooding.

"This involves downsizing data to a very localised level and to study the effect of climate change. We hope to simulate the same for the city of Pune and collaborate with the scientific community in Pune," she said. Urban heat islands and urban flooding are recent phenomena wherein parts of the cities receive torrential rainfall or report higher temperatures than the other parts. For Pune, areas of Koregaon Park, and Magarpatta are places where the recorded temperature is higher than the rest of the city. Increased precipitation has seen flash floods in Pune which has led to the loss of life and property in the past. Both these are linked to climate change with urban planners finding it difficult to find solutions. Mercogliano the crisis can be mitigated with the involvement of city planners and other stakeholders. The



two-day programme saw scientists discuss the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) in climate prediction. R Krishnan, IITM director, spoke about the institute's plan to use AI and ML applications in weather, climate, and ocean sciences.

"I am looking forward to a productive research partnership with our Italian colleagues in the coming years," he said. Principal scientist Giovanni Coppini who is the director of Global Coasts explained how Italy is collaborating with Indian institutions in terms of ocean studies and this collaboration would help in deepening their ties further. "Given the fact that we are from public institutions the work we do and results would be available freely," he said. Antonio Navarra, CMCC director, said AI and ML can help increase the accuracy of the traditional forecast. New technology can also reduce the cost of prediction as it eliminates the repetitive, mechanical work, Navarra said.

## Amid US deportations, Partap Singh Bajwa hits out at Bhagwant Mann: 'How many travel agents booked for human trafficking in 3 years?'

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

With a second US plane with 119 Indian deportees scheduled to land in Amritsar on Saturday, Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly, Partap Singh Bajwa, lashed out at Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led government for its failure to curb the human trafficking of Punjabis in the last three years. The senior Congress leader said that the Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act, 2012, regulates the profession of travel agents to check and curb illegal and fraudulent activities of people engaging in organised human smuggling in Punjab. "Can CM Bhagwant Mann, who also holds the Home portfolio, let Punjabis know how many travel agents have been booked under the same law in the last three years?" Bajwa asked.

Bajwa said that Mann has said that illegal immigration is not only a problem in Punjab but a national problem. "True, but is his government not responsible for acting if any illegality happens in the state? He seems to have been running away from his responsibilities. However, it was one of AAP's main election planks to stop the brain drain by motivating youngsters to explore careers in the home state," Bajwa pointed out. Bajwa said that it had been 10 days since the first flight carrying 104 deportees, including 30 Punjabis, arrived in Amritsar, and the Mann government failed miserably to provide a helping hand and announce any rehabilitation programme for them. "He has not announced compensation for them. The AAP government has not assured them



that the government would help them get their money refunded by the illegal travel agents. Mann says he is going to receive the 119 deportees arriving today in Amritsar. In the absence of a rehabilitation programme and compensation, this is nothing more than a publicity stunt.

He always has a lust for publicity," Bajwa said. Hitting out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bajwa said that inhuman treatment was meted out to Indian deportees in the previous flight. "They were handcuffed and shackled in the plane, and they were not even allowed to use the wash-room. However, during his recent US visit, PM Modi did not bother to raise the issue with US President Donald Trump. Is this how PM Modi would maintain the dignity of the sons and daughters of India?" he asked.

## Ex-Goa MLA dies shortly after physical altercation with auto driver in Belagavi

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Former Goa MLA Lavoo Suryaji Mamedar, who represented the Ponda constituency from 2012 to 2017, died shortly after a physical altercation with an autorickshaw driver in Karnataka's Belagavi on Saturday afternoon. According to the police, the 69-year-old was travelling to Belagavi and had booked a suite in a hotel in Khade Bazar. As his car navigated a narrow curve, it allegedly brushed against an autorickshaw, leading to an argument between Mamedar and the auto driver. The driver allegedly demanded compensation for the damage, which Mamedar refused to pay before proceeding towards his hotel, police said. However, the autorickshaw driver followed him to the hotel and allegedly struck him several times once he exited his car. Mamedar later collapsed on the hotel premises

and was rushed to the emergency section of the government civil hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Authorities are also probing the exact cause of death and whether he had underlying health conditions. Lavoo Mamedar, a retired police officer, was elected as an MLA from South Goa's Ponda constituency on a Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) ticket in the 2012 assembly elections. In the 2017 assembly polls, he contested from Ponda again on an MGP ticket but lost. A strong critic of MGP president Deepak Dhavalikar and his brother and incumbent Marcaim MLA Sudin Dhavalikar, Mamedar was later expelled for anti-party activities. In 2021, he joined the Trinamool Congress but quit the party after three months, accusing the party of being communal and trying to create a divide between Hindus and Christians in the state. In

## South Delhi Triple Murder Case: 'An angry teen, sibling rivalry or a property dispute'; What was behind the South Delhi triple murder?



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Delhi Triple Murder Case News: Devli in Delhi's Neb Sarai area is a slum, with houses packed together like sandwich loaves, but it meant the world to Rajesh Tanwar and his family. This unkempt urban village, after all, is where he built his home, putting down roots to raise a family after years in the Army. It wasn't much, this jungle of crammed dirty lanes, but it was enough for Rajesh, 51, and his wife, Komal, 46. They were married for 25 years and they seemed happy. They had their small dream of a home and two children on the cusp of starting promising careers and, hopefully, changing the family fortunes for the better. And they also had a close-knit community in Devli.

It was the evening of December 3 and Rajesh and Komal were preparing to mark their 25th wedding anniversary. Nothing too fancy, just a small family celebration with their son Arjun, 20, and daughter Kavita, 23. The next morning, police arrived at their home and took away Rajesh, Komal and Kavita — in body bags. The police had received a call at 6.53 am. It was Arjun. He had just returned from his morning workout and found his father, mother and sister lying on the blood-soaked floor, their throats slit.

Who could have murdered them? And in such a savage manner?

That's what Joint Commissioner of Police, Southern Range, S K Jain and Deputy Commissioner of Police, South, Ankit Chouhan wanted to ascertain. The two top Delhi Police officers had personally taken charge of the investigation. Rajesh, who grew up in Haryana's Mahendragarh and retired from the Army as naib subedar in 2007, worked security for a businessman in the nearby Sainik Farms, a posh neighbourhood where many people from Devli make livelihoods as security guards, gardeners, drivers, helpers, and the like. His wife was a homemaker. Kavita was equally good at studies and sports, earning a taekwondo black belt alongside her bachelor's degree, and was preparing for the UPSC examination. Arjun, Bunty to his folks, was training to be a national boxer after winning a silver medal at the Delhi Olympic Games. He was also studying for a graduate degree in political science at Delhi University's Motilal Nehru College, admitted under a quota for sports persons. He wasn't good at studies, however, and this police said invited tongue-lashings from his parents.

The police team was accompanying forensic investigators. They first tried to find out how the murderer managed to enter the house especially because Arjun had told them he had locked the gates before leaving. They didn't find any sign of a forced entry. The police team camped at the house for the next six hours. Arjun was questioned inside one of the rooms. The forensic team diligently scanned the place for any shred of evidence left behind by the murderers. By afternoon, when police officers reappeared from the crime scene, they had "solved" this triple murder. "He was the only surviving member of the family and the last person to see them alive, so we decided to question him," a police officer involved in the investigation said, referring to Arjun.

"During questioning, he (Arjun) began making contradictory statements about the chain of events. For example, he changed the time he left for his gym and when he returned to see his family lying murdered. First, he said he had gone to the gym... Then he said he hadn't gone to the gym but for a run in Sanjay Van. He also kept changing his statement about how he discovered the bodies." Then, the police officer claimed, "the forensic team found bloodstains on the house keys and his motorcycle key which he carried in his pocket." "Confronted with this, he was unable to dodge the investigators. He admitted to his role." The story Arjun allegedly told police was remarkably simple and straight: he was furious with his parents for berating him about neglecting his studies for boxing and resented them growing fonder of his sister merely because she was more studious and obedient. The trigger, police said, was another piece of information that Arjun allegedly gave them. "He claimed his parents had recently decided to transfer their property — the house in Devli and a plot in Harsaru village in Gurgaon — to Kavita and leave Arjun nothing," the police officer said.

"This had especially enraged Arjun. There was a lot of pent-up anger," the officer said, explaining the motive. "We don't even know who told him about such a plan," the officer said. "But he believed it was so." It was Kavita's birthday on December 1 and the family had gathered to celebrate. They ended up quarrelling instead, Arjun against the three of them, he told them during questioning, police claimed. "He (Arjun) also told us his father had also thrashed him in front of their relatives recently," the police officer claimed. That's when he allegedly planned to murder his family. "He had been angry for months and chose the night of his parent's anniversary for the murder."

Three days after the murder, on December 6, police supplied "further details" about Arjun's alleged motive. He also resented his father for scolding him in front of his girl-

friend, they claimed. "A week before the murder, Rajesh found Arjun with his girlfriend in a nearby market and asked who she was. When Arjun said she was his girlfriend and they planned to get married, Rajesh slapped him. He also scolded his girlfriend," the police officer said. Rajesh reminded Arjun he was not earning a living yet and, therefore, not equipped to get married and take the responsibility that came with it.

"He didn't like this," the police officer said. "He (Arjun) said he felt humiliated." The police officer also said Arjun claimed that one of his father's recent outbursts was overheard by labourers working at the building next door and they laughed at him. "This further infuriated him," the officer said. The crime happened in the early hours of December 3. "Around 5 am, Arjun took his father's service knife and allegedly slit the throat of his sister who was sleeping on the ground floor of the house," Joint Commissioner Jain said. She had apparently woken up and tried to fight back. "There is a small knife cut on Arjun's arm that was caused when his sister tried to push him away," the officer explained. Arjun went to the second floor where Rajesh was sleeping. "He put his hand on his father's mouth to stop him from making a noise and allegedly slit his throat," the officer said. "His mother had gone to the washroom. He then waited outside. As soon as she came out, he covered her mouth with a cloth and allegedly killed her as well."

The police officer said once Arjun needed an alibi and sticking to his daily routine of a morning workout appeared a solid bet. His questioning and the forensic evidence did him in, however. "Arjun first said he had gone to a gym run by a resident in the neighbourhood out of his house. Then he said he went to walk in Sanjay Van every morning," Jain said. The day after the murder, police recovered the knife and "a blood-soaked sweatshirt" from Sanjay Van, a sprawling forest about 8 km away from Arjun's house.

"He changed clothes after committing the murders and dumped the sweatshirt in bushes," the police officer claimed. "The knife is two-three inches bigger than a kitchen knife. We think it is a knife his father got while he was in the Army." The police's story, however, didn't have many takers in Devli. A neighbour of the Tanwars, who works as a driver in Sainik Farms, said he had known them for over a decade. "Rajesh was soft-spoken. His kids were also well-mannered. I never saw them argue in public. I never saw or heard that boy fight with anyone," he said. Rajesh's cousin Sube Singh, who came to Devli from Kapashera after learning about the murders, was also skeptical. "There were no problems between Rajesh and his son. He was very proud of his son winning a silver medal. He always said Arjun would play in the nationals one day," Sube said. He also questioned the property dispute theory. "Apart from the house, Rajesh did not have much. His piece of land in Mahendragarh is still in his mother's name," he said.

Rajesh's brother, Rakesh Tanwar, who works for the Haryana police, visited Arjun in jail the day after he was arrested, a police officer said. Rajesh and Rakesh spent their childhood in Mahendragarh. Their mother, Azad Devi, 75, still lives there and the family land is in her name. "Rajesh came to Delhi when he got posted here. He lived in Delhi Cantonment, where he was a PT teacher of new entrants in the Army. His son lived in the village for some time and then joined him in the cantonment," Sube Singh said. Arjun's arrest has also shocked his college teachers.

He failed his first semester at the college, skipped the exams for the second, and did not bother filling in the examination form for the third. "The student's records show he has not been performing academically," the college's officiating principal Vichitra said. "He was probably going through something since last year. We are unaware." He excelled at sports, though. He was awarded Rs 9,000 by the college for winning the silver medal at the Delhi Olympic Games. "It's surprising for us that a student like him may have committed a serious crime," the principal said. "We are unaware of the psychological pressures he may have faced at home. But we never had any complaints regarding his discipline."

Amit Tomar, his sports instructor at the college, described him as "well-behaved, very respectful, and quiet." "Usually, when a student is admitted under the sports quota, they don't attend college regularly as they are busy with practice and representing the institute in matches. That's why we didn't see enough of him attending classes or interacting with other students," Tomar said. "The last time I spoke to Arjun was in November when I signed his eligibility proforma to participate in the inter-college boxing trials. He also messaged me, sharing that he had participated in the trials and was awaiting the results." The college doesn't have a boxing ring, so Arjun trained with his coach, Manoj Kalosia, at the Bijaasan Boxing Academy in Saket. Kalosia too was shocked to learn of his arrest. "After Arjun lost a state competition, his father brought him to me. He asked me to train him because he saw potential in Arjun to be a great boxer," the coach said. "It didn't seem like his family discouraged him from pursuing boxing." Saurav, who is constructing a house next door in Devli, said he knew the family "very well." "I used to teach both Bunty (Arjun) and Kavita back when they were in school. Right now, I am preparing for UPSC and Kavita had recently come to ask me about the exam as she was also thinking of appearing," he said. Saurav said that he had a chat with Rajesh regarding the construction of his house recently. "We used to talk frequently. Even after retiring, uncle (Rajesh) used to work out a lot. Every morning, he and Arjun would work-out together on their roof," he said. Arjun's cousin Deepak said he uploaded a WhatsApp status message at 4 am that dreadful morning, wishing Rajesh and Komal on their 25th anniversary. At 6 am, Arjun replied 'Thanks'.

as the financial stability they enjoyed for over a decade in the past is on the wane. Life has turned nightmarish for them. Devrao's story is not an isolated case. The State witnessed three similar cases in just one day. Telangana has seen as many as 402 farmer suicides during the one year of Congress rule and another 200 unnatural deaths including cases of deaths due to electrocution. The tragic spike in the number of suicides in the State has started grabbing attention nationwide once again.

Financial burdens, coupled with unfulfilled promises and lack of support, have led to a spike in farmer suicides. The Congress government in Telangana is drawing heavy flak for its failure to fulfil key promises to the farming community.

## Two more mounds at Harappan site of Rakhigarhi declared protected



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

At a time when the excavation work is underway at the over 5,000-year-old Harappan site of Rakhigarhi in Haryana's Hisar district, the central government has declared two more mounds at the largest Harappan civilisation site at Rakhigarhi village in Hisar district protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958. Rakhigarhi is considered one of the two big Harappan sites in the country, with the other being Dholavira in Gujarat. In a notification issued on December 10 this year, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has declared the mound number 6 and 7 as protected. Four mounds had already been declared protected. There are a total of seven mounds at the site and only one mound (number 4) is yet to be declared protected as it is thickly populated.

## Audit flags CRRID flaws: Delayed release, non-receipt of grants; non-recovery of guest room charges



GNS News Agency, Feb 17 From non-recovery of guest room charges to delayed release in grants leading to loss worth lakhs in bank interest — the audit has flagged serious issues. The general examination of the accounts of the CRRID for the years 2021-24 was conducted by an audit team from May 27, 2024 to June 5, 2024. Delayed release of grants made CRRID to incur loss of Rs 68.92L

The CRRID is being supported by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) to the extent of 45% grant, with matching grant of 45% from Government of Punjab and the remaining 10% finances are to be arranged by this institute at its own level. During the test check of records, it was noticed by the audit department that CRRID paid funds from State Bank of India, Sector 7, Chandigarh Branch during the year 2021-22 in the shape of overdrafts of Rs 166.40 lakh for which interest amounting to Rs 68.92 lakh had been charged by the bank up to March 31, 2024.

"It was noticed that the outstanding balance on 01-04-2021 of overdraft was Rs 199.20 lakh, which reached Rs 385.03 lakh on 31.03.2024. As a result of huge overdraft, the bank had attached the earned interest of FDRs of five crore corpus funds provided by the Punjab Government to the overdraft account, the interest earned on these FDRs was being directly transferred to overdraft account by the bank which was the part of grant provided by Punjab government. Due to the huge amount of overdraft and interest, the liability as overdraft was increased speedily. The administration/management of CRRID did not make efforts to reduce the overdraft, which resulted in a huge loss of grant spending in the interest of overdraft," the audit observed. On being pointed out, CRRID stated that efforts would be made to reduce the liability, though final reply is awaited. Non-receipt of grant from ICSSR, Punjab

The CRRID is being supported by ICSSR to the extent of 45% grant, with matching grant of 45% from the Punjab government and the remaining 10% finances are to be arranged by this institute at its own level. During test check of records, it was noticed that grant of Rs 49.48 lakh had

ASI's Joint Director General Dr Sanjay Manjul told The Indian Express that the excavation had already taken place at mound number 7 in 2005-2006, 2015 and 2023, while the small-level excavation had started at mound number 6 in 2005-06 and 2015. "We have plans to launch excavations at mound number 7 again too. Currently, the excavation work is going on at mound number 3," said Manjul. "The newly declared protected area (40.26 acres) of mound number 6 and seven will be acquired by the government and compensation will be given to the farmers concerned. Vacation of the land would be required after its acquisition. Till the land is acquired, agriculture at the land will be allowed but cutting of the mound would be prohibited. The cultivation would be allowed at the soil but a penetration inside the earth will not be allowed. Nobody can disturb and cut the mound. The soil concerned cannot be sold," he added. Earlier, a three-month long excavation at three of the seven mounds at the Harappan site in 2022 had revealed the structure of some houses, lanes and drainage system, and what could possibly be a jewellery-making unit apart from pieces of copper and gold jewellery, terracotta toys, besides thousands of earthen pots and seals. The skeletons of two women found at mound number 7, were believed to be nearly 5,000 years old. Pots and other artefacts were found buried next to the remains, part of funerary rituals back, ASI officials had stated then. Former Haryana chief secretary DS Dhesi had earlier stated that the archaeological site in Hisar dates back to 2600- 1900 BC and areas where urban planning aspects have been discovered, were being excavated.

not been received by this department for the year 2023-24 so far. Non-recovery of guest room charges of Rs 1.32 lakh during test check of records, it was noticed that the department of animal husbandry, Punjab, had booked faculty guest rooms at CRRID from 22.01.2024 to 24.01.2024. It was further noticed that against the booking, bill for Rs 1,32,300 has been raised but the same had not been received by the department so far. Rule 9 of General Financial Rules, 2017, envisages that it is the duty of the department concerned to ensure that the receipts and dues are correctly and promptly assessed, collected and duly credited to the government/relevant accounts.

On being pointed out, CRRID stated that several telephonic and email requests have been made by the director and the department concerned of CRRID to the officials concerned of the animal husbandry department, Punjab, to release the amount to CRRID against the booking of the rooms. As per Rule-1 (V) Financial Regulations of Service Rules 2010 applicable to CRRID, the director is authorised to incur all necessary expenditure on projects as per the conditions and funds provided by the funding agencies and these powers can be further delegated to other employees. During test check of records, the audit team noticed that the department has incurred an excess expenditure of Rs 1,96,048 against the grant received for the projects. On being pointed out, CRRID stated that the excess amount incurred on the project was provided from the available sources at CRRID. Also, as to claim the balance amount from sponsoring agency, the statement of UC and progress report has to be sent. Once the balance amount is received, the excess amounts incurred are adjusted, they said. The CRRID, an autonomous research institute, was registered as a scientific and educational charitable society under the Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860, in the Union Territory of Chandigarh in July 1978. It is among the 27 research institutes in the country funded by the ICSSR, New Delhi. The CRRID was accorded the "national status" in 1984 by the ICSSR, Ministry of Education, Government of India, in recognition of its contribution to the cause of social science research in the broader national perspective. Since 1984, both the Government of India and the Government of Punjab have been supporting CRRID in its endeavours by providing financial grants on matching basis through the Indian Council of Social Science & Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, and the Department of Planning, Government of Punjab, Chandigarh. The Centre is also able to mobilise resources by way of project consulting services, sale of publication, subscriptions and advertisements in its quarterly journal "Man and Development" apart from obtaining donations for the purpose of society. The office is situated at Plot No. 2A, Sector 19A, Madhya Marg, Chandigarh.

## In the middle of a 'fowl storm'

At a time when politics in Himachal Pradesh is centred around "if a junglefowl or a desi murga" was served in a dinner attended by CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu at Tikkar village, junglefowls particularly Kalij pheasant (Black Junglefowls) and Red junglefowls, protected birds under the Wildlife (amendment) Protection Act, 2022, roam around freely at the Himalayan Bird Park in Shimla.

Both species of junglefowls are called 'jungle murga' in the local dialect. Himalayan Bird Park is the only open aviary covered by an iron mesh through which people can walk and enjoy the presence of birds of eight species in a close proximity. The aviary was constructed in 1972 but later dismantled between 1986-87. It was reconstructed on the directions of then Governor Gusher Ahmad Sahib in 1994. Elaborating on how the park is different, a staff member said that unlike in zoos, where birds are kept in small and big cages, here the birds are kept in the open. "We don't allow visitors to go beyond



their path inside the aviary. There are around 70 birds in the park but junglefowls dominate the space. Of 70, 47 birds are junglefowls, including 20 Black Junglefowls (8 males, 12 females) and 27 Red Jungle Fowls (10 males and 17 females). Other species of birds in the aviary are domestic goose, Indian peafowl, female Himalayan Monal, cheer pheasant, silver pheasants and Guinea fowl," he said.

Giving details on the diet of the birds, another staff member said, "Everyday these birds are given around

28 kg diet, including 10kg mixed grains and 18kg mixed vegetables, including 2kg fruits. Multiple perching platforms along with natural vegetation are present inside. During winters, we lay dry grass in small shelters for them." A DFO with the State Wildlife Wing requesting anonymity said, "Junglefowl is Scheduled-2 protected bird under Protection of Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2022, and IUCN classifies it as least concern. But we don't promote junglefowl breeding in the state. Himalayan Bird Park is the only open aviary in the state but

there is a proposal to make another large aviary in the under construction World Class Zoological Park at Bankhandi near Dehra in Kangra district. "While the entry fee of the park is Rs 25, it remains open from 10am to 5pm everyday except for Monday. On Sunday, the park received a footfall of around 110 people, including children." During summers the average daily footfall in the park is 1000 and these days merely 60-70 visitors are coming each day," a staff member added.

## One year, 402 farmer suicides: Resurgence of agrarian crisis feared in Telangana

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Hyderabad: A pall of gloom still floats over the serene Saidpur village in Bela mandal of Adilabad district. The suicide of Jadvav Devrao (48) on the very premises of the bank that lent him Rs 3.5 lakh came as a shocker for the farming community in the State. The farmer's dream of providing a comfortable life for his two sons and daughter died along with him. With his five-acre plot of land, Devrao had toiled day and night to cultivate crops, hoping for a harvest that would secure his family's future. But the reality of farming in Telangana was far harsher than he anticipated. The State has witnessed many such deaths during the last two weeks, with farmers feeling cornered by the circumstances,

as the financial stability they enjoyed for over a decade in the past is on the wane. Life has turned nightmarish for them. Devrao's story is not an isolated case. The State witnessed three similar cases in just one day. Telangana has seen as many as 402 farmer suicides during the one year of Congress rule and another 200 unnatural deaths including cases of deaths due to electrocution. The tragic spike in the number of suicides in the State has started grabbing attention nationwide once again.

Financial burdens, coupled with unfulfilled promises and lack of support, have led to a spike in farmer suicides. The Congress government in Telangana is drawing heavy flak for its failure to fulfil key promises to the farming community.

## Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says time has come for the creation of 'armed forces of Europe'



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Saturday (February 15, 2025) the time has come for the creation of an "armed forces of Europe" and says his country's fight against Russia has proved that a foundation for it already exists. The Ukrainian leader said Europe cannot rule out the possibility that "American might say no to Europe on issues that threaten it," and noted that many leaders have long spoken about how Europe needs its own military. "I really believe that time has come," Mr. Zelenskyy told the Munich Security Conference. "The armed forces of Europe must be created."

Earlier, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz shot back strongly in defense of his stance against the far-right and said his country won't accept people who "intervene in our democracy," a day after U.S. Vice President JD Vance scolded European leaders over their approach to democracy. The German leader spoke at the Munich Security Conference with just eight days before crucial elections in Germany, with polls showing the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party — whose co-leader met with Vance on Friday — currently in second, ahead of Scholz's own Social Democrats. Even while lashing out at alleged U.S. meddling in Germany's democracy, Scholz said he was "pleased" at what he called a shared commitment with the United States to the "preserving the sovereign independence of Ukraine," and agreed with comments by U.S. President Donald Trump that Russia's war in Ukraine must end.

But when it came to domestic politics, Scholz also alluded to Germany's Nazi past, and said the longstanding commitment to "Never Again" — a return to the extreme right — was not reconcilable with support for AfD. "We will not accept that people who look at Germany from the outside intervene in our democracy and our elections and in the democratic opinion-forming process in the interest of

this party," he said. "That's just not done, certainly not amongst friends and allies. We resolutely reject this." "Where our democracy goes from here is for us to decide," Scholz added. A day earlier, Vance that he fears free speech is "in retreat" across the continent. He said that many Americans saw in Europe "entrenched interests hiding behind ugly Soviet-era words like misinformation and disinformation, who simply don't like the idea that somebody with an alternative viewpoint might express a different opinion or, God forbid, vote a different way, or even worse, win an election."

Scholz, shooting back, said "free speech in Europe means that you are not attacking others in ways that are against legislation and laws we have in our country." He was alluding to rules in Germany that restrict hate speech. The exchanges came as European leaders have been trying to make sense of a tough new line from Washington on issues including democracy and Ukraine's future, as the Trump administration continues to upend transatlantic conventions that have been in place since after World War II. Trump held a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin this week in which he said the two leaders would likely meet soon to negotiate a peace deal to end the war that began with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine three years ago. Trump later assured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that he, too, would have a seat at the table. The Ukrainian leader said Friday that his country wants security guarantees before any talks with Russia. Shortly before meeting with Vance in Munich, Zelenskyy said he will only agree to meet in-person with Putin after a common plan is negotiated with Trump. After a 40-minute meeting with Zelenskyy, Vance said the Trump administration wants the war to end. Beforehand, Vance lectured European officials on free speech and illegal migration on the continent, warning that they risk losing public support if they don't quickly change course. "The threat that I worry the most about vis-à-vis Europe is not Russia. It's not China. It's not any other external actor," Vance said in a speech that drew a tepid response. "What I worry about is the threat from within — the retreat of Europe from some of its most fundamental values, values shared with the United States of America." On the sidelines of the event, Vance met with Alice Weidel, co-leader of AfD. Mainstream German parties say they won't work with the party, a longstanding stance to shun the extreme right in a country scarred by Nazism. Among other speakers set to take the dais in Munich on Saturday were NATO chief Mark Rutte and foreign ministers from countries including Canada, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia and from Syria's new interim government.

## International Criminal Court: Tribunal at the receiving end

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

On February 6, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court (ICC), warning of "tangible and significant consequences" for those behind investigations deemed a threat to U.S. national security and that of its allies, including Israel. This condemnation follows ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim A. Khan's decision to issue arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant over alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip. However, this is not the Trump administration's first offensive against the ICC. In June 2020, it sanctioned then-ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and a senior court official after she launched an investigation into alleged war crimes by U.S. troops in Afghanistan. The Biden administration later rescinded the sanctions. While the latest sanctions have prompted key member states such as the U.K., France, and Germany to reaffirm their "unwavering support" for the court, they have also reignited debate over its relevance in the international order amid sustained American repudiation.

The ICC has always had a contentious relationship with the U.S. While President Bill Clinton's administration played a pivotal role in the negotiations that led to the court's creation, it remained wary of the emergence of an independent tribunal that Washington could not control through the UN Security Council. Although Mr. Clinton signed the Rome Statute, he did not send it to the Senate to be ratified, fearing scrutiny of U.S. actions and those of its allies. When President George W. Bush took office, he launched a hostile campaign against the ICC. His administration pressured governments worldwide to sign bilateral agreements barring the surrender of U.S. nationals to the court. He also enacted the American Service Members' Protection Act of 2002, which restricted the ICC's jurisdiction over U.S. military personnel. The law even authorised military action against the court, earning it the nickname "The Hague Invasion Act."

The U.S. position on the ICC softened during Mr. Bush's second term when he recognised its potential to serve American interests, particularly in regions where U.S. nationals were unlikely to face prosecution, such as Africa. In 2005, his administration abstained from a UN Security Council vote granting the ICC jurisdiction over war crimes in Darfur, Sudan. This measured engagement continued under the Obama administration, with U.S. diplomats attending ICC conferences. However, cooperation remained conditional, as Washington made it clear that it would support only those investigations that aligned with American interests. Under the Biden administration, Washington's double standards in its purported commitment to the "rules-based international order" lay bare when it endorsed the ICC's arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin while denouncing as "outrageous" the one issued for Benjamin Netanyahu.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Allied powers established the Nuremberg Tribunal, the first international war crimes tribunal, to prosecute top Nazi officials. This gave birth to the idea of a permanent court to hold perpetrators accountable for the world's most egregious crimes. Although the UN later created ad hoc tribunals to prosecute war crimes in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, many international law experts considered them inadequate deterrents. In July 1998, the UN General Assembly adopted the ICC's founding treaty at a conference in Rome. Unlike the International Court of Justice, which adjudicates disputes between states, the ICC prosecutes individuals. It complements national courts and intervenes only when they are unwilling or unable to act. A major challenge to its enforcement is the absence of its own police force. Instead, it relies entirely on member states to apprehend suspects. It also cannot try individuals in absentia, requiring member states to arrest anyone under an ICC warrant found within their jurisdiction.

Despite its mandate, the ICC has struggled to gain the membership of major powers, including the U.S., China, and Russia. Some nations have even withdrawn. Burundi left in 2017 after the court decided to investigate its crack-



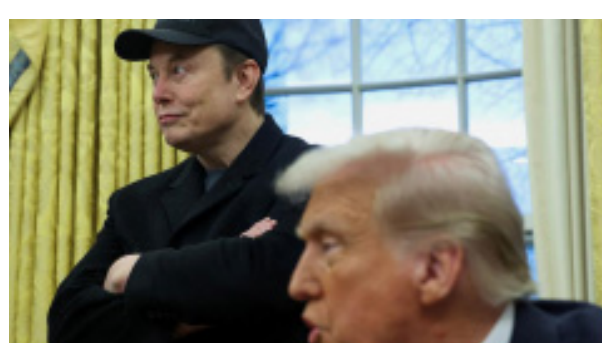
down on opposition protests. In 2019, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte pulled out, rejecting the ICC's inquiry into his war on drugs and insisting that domestic courts were sufficient to uphold the rule of law. African nations, in particular, have expressed discontent towards the court's tendency to disproportionately target the continent. It was not until 2016 that the court opened an investigation outside Africa — in Georgia — reinforcing perceptions of it being an instrument for advancing Western political interests. The ICC has also been criticised for focusing on "low-hanging fruit" crimes — prosecuting warlords and rebel leaders while failing to hold senior political figures accountable. This frustration was exemplified in 2018 when the court's appeals chamber overturned the conviction of Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, commander-in-chief of the Mouvement de Libération du Congo.

Perhaps the most damning criticism of the ICC is its perceived inability to hold the U.S. and its allies accountable. By refusing to ratify the Rome Statute, the U.S. has ensured that the court lacks jurisdiction over crimes committed on its territory or by its military personnel. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, it can also veto any attempt to initiate a referral through the Council. With the Trump administration in power, the court is staring down the barrel of four years of punitive measures from Washington. Whether it emerges as a meagre shadow of itself or a resilient international tribunal will depend on the resolve of its member states. They must act decisively to insulate the institution and its staff from America's coercive diplomacy. Beyond external pressures, the court faces internal challenges that undermine its standing. Chief among them is the sharp decline in trials. This year, apart from delivering two verdicts, the court will oversee only a single ongoing trial, with no other cases expected to reach the trial stage. Its workload has also diminished significantly, with just 80 hearing days scheduled — a steep drop from the average of 369 annual hearing days recorded over the past eight years (excluding the COVID-related shutdown in 2020). Further complicating matters is the cloud of sexual harassment allegations against the ICC's chief prosecutor. In November 2024, the court's governing body announced an external investigation into the claims, deepening concerns over the institution's credibility. To preserve its legitimacy and public trust, the ICC must address these internal issues with unwavering transparency and accountability.

## Fraudster poses as ACB official, swindles Tahsildar of Rs.3.3 lakh in Yadadri Bhongir

Bhongir: A fraudster posing as an Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) official, tricked a government official into believing that he would be arrested for corruption and fleeced him of Rs.3.3 lakh. Rajajpet Tahsildar Damodar, who fell victim to the fraudster, had received the call from the purported ACB official on Saturday, accusing him of involvement in corrupt practices and threatening him of action. The caller then demanded a hefty sum to avoid arresting Damodar. Fearing arrest, the Tahsildar promptly transferred Rs.3.30 lakh online to the fraudster.

## Nearly 10,000 fired as Trump, Musk step up assault on U.S. agencies



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

The campaign by President Donald Trump and his adviser Elon Musk to radically cut back the U.S. bureaucracy spread on Friday firing more than 9,500 workers who handled everything from managing federal lands to caring for military veterans. Workers at the departments of Interior, Energy, Veterans Affairs, Agriculture and Health and Human Services had their employment terminated in a drive that so far has largely — but not exclusively — targeted probationary employees in their first year on the job who have fewer employment protections. The firings, reported by Reuters and other major U.S. media outlets, are in addition to the roughly 75,000 workers who have taken a buyout that Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk have offered to get them to leave voluntarily, according to the White House. That equals about 3% of the 2.3 million person civilian workforce. Mr. Trump says the federal government is too bloated and too much money is lost to waste and fraud. The government has some \$36 trillion in debt and ran a \$1.8 trillion deficit last year, and there is bipartisan agreement on the need for reform. But congressional Democrats say Mr. Trump is encroaching on the legislature's constitutional authority over federal spending, even as his fellow Republicans who control majorities in both chambers of Congress have largely supported the moves.

## Elon Musk cuts based more on political ideology than real cost savings so far

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

The first phase of the rapid-fire effort by Tesla CEO Elon Musk and President Donald Trump to cut waste from government agencies appears driven more by an ideological assault on federal agencies long hated by conservatives than a good-faith effort to save taxpayer dollars, according to two veteran Republican budget experts. Since Mr. Trump's inauguration on January 20, Mr. Musk has dispatched members of his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to scrutinise sensitive personnel and payment information in government computer systems and led a successful drive to dismantle two agencies — one that provides a lifeline to the world's needy and another that protects Americans from unscrupulous lenders. "But Douglas Holtz-Eakin, a former Republican director of the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), said the agencies Mr. Musk and Mr. Trump have targeted to date account for a tiny fraction of the overall federal budget, which is projected to reach \$7 trillion this fiscal year," according to the CBO. "They are not going to go into agencies that are doing things they like. They are going into agencies they disagree with," Mr. Holtz-Eakin, who has participated in past tax and spending negotiations in Congress, told Reuters.

Mr. Trump, a Republican, says he is "very proud" of what he describes as a vital initiative to turn off the spigot of wasteful spending. With Mr. Musk standing behind him in the Oval Office, Mr. Trump signed an executive order on Tuesday (February 12, 2025) broadening DOGE's remit, telling government agencies to work with DOGE to cut staff and limit hiring. Speaking to reporters, Mr. Musk responded to critics who say he is an unelected official who has been granted unprecedented authority by the President to dismantle parts of the U.S. government. "You can't have an autonomous federal bureaucracy. You have to have one that's responsive to the people," Mr. Musk said. He pledged to find \$1 trillion in savings through his efforts to identify fraud and waste in the government.

An online DOGE "live tracker" claimed on Tuesday (February 12, 2025) that the department has saved taxpayers \$37.69 billion since it began work on January 20 but did not provide evidence of how that figure was reached. Of the 15 agencies Mr. Musk's team have targeted so far, nine were singled out for elimination or downsizing in Project 2025, a controversial 900-page blueprint compiled by conservative think tanks to remake the U.S. government. The document claims many federal government agencies have been taken over by a left-wing elite who use taxpayer dollars to push a liberal agenda that is "weaponised against conservative values". Mr. Trump distanced himself from the project during the 2024 election after an uproar over some of its more far-reaching proposals, but a number of the authors are now in his administration. Bill Hoagland, a former Republican staffer and director of the Senate Budget Committee for more than 20 years, said the cost-cutting efforts so far have been designed to play to Mr. Trump's base, and have been "low hanging fruit for ideological reasons." "The playbook has not been for the dollar savings, but more for the philosophical and ideological differences conservatives have with the work these agencies do," Mr. Hoagland said.

There is little disagreement in Washington on the need to cut waste and fraud and make the U.S. government more efficient. The complaint by federal workers and Democratic lawmakers is the blunt force approach favoured by Mr. Musk has upended the lives of thousands of public servants overnight.

Mr. Musk's team have taken over or sent DOGE workers into the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), charged with providing weather forecasting and climate data; the Department of Education, whose mandate includes prohibiting discrimination in schools and colleges; the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which protects consumers from exploitative lenders; the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the government's main foreign aid organisation; and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which responds to natural disasters. Many Republicans have long seen these agencies as pushing liberal agendas that are harmful to U.S. interests. Together they constitute a fraction of federal spending. USAID disbursed about \$72 billion in aid in fiscal year 2023, according to government figures, or around 1% of total federal outlays.

Conservatives have talked about closing the Education Department since Republican Ronald Reagan was president in the 1980s, in the belief that the federal government has no business being involved in schools and universities. More recently Mr. Trump and his allies have accused the department of foisting "woke" policies such as

The speed and breadth of Mr. Musk's effort has produced growing frustration among some of Mr. Trump's aides over a lack of coordination, including White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles, sources told Reuters. In addition to the job reductions, Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk have tried to gut civil-service protections for career employees, frozen most U.S. foreign aid and attempted to shutter some government agencies such as the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau CFPB almost entirely. Almost half of the probationary workers at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and others at the National Institutes of Health are being forced out, sources familiar with the job cuts told Reuters. The U.S. Forest Service is firing around 3,400 recent hires, while the National Park Service is terminating about 1,000, people familiar with the plans said on Friday.

The tax-collecting Internal Revenue Service is preparing to fire thousands of workers next week, two people familiar with the matter said, a move that could squeeze resources ahead of Americans' April 15 deadline to file income taxes. Other spending cuts have raised concerns that vital services were in danger. A month after wildfires devastated Los Angeles, federal programs have stopped hiring seasonal firefighters and halted removal of fire hazards such as dead wood from forests, according to organizations impacted by the reductions. Critics have questioned the blunt force approach of Mr. Musk, the world's richest person, who has amassed extraordinary influence in Mr. Trump's presidency. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Friday shrugged off those concerns, comparing Mr. Musk's Department of Government Efficiency to a financial audit. "These are serious people, and they're going from agency to agency, doing an audit, looking for best practices," he told Fox Business Network. Mr. Musk is relying on a coterie of young engineers with little government experience to manage his DOGE campaign, and their early cuts appear to be driven more by ideology than driving down costs, budget experts say.



advocating for transgender players on girls' sports teams. NOAA has been widely criticised by Republicans for what they say is an exaggeration of climate change threats, while USAID is accused of sending billions of dollars in aid each year to some countries not seen as American allies. Republicans have also railed against the CFPB since its creation in the wake of the 2008 financial crash, declaring it an example of liberal overreach. Last week as Mr. Musk's staff entered the agency, he posted "CFPB RIP" on his X social media account and on Monday (February 11, 2025) staff were sent home, and the agency was shuttered. Stephen Moore, a former economic adviser to Mr. Trump who welcomes DOGE's effort, said he opposes spending taxpayer dollars on government bureaucrats pushing liberal policy agendas. "If you walk down the halls of USAID or the Department of Education, you're not going to find any conservatives," Moore said. "It's really important they defund the left." Mr. Musk has also used his X social media platform to attack several agencies targeted by DOGE, according to a Reuters review of 1,120 of his posts between February 3 and February 10, a week in which DOGE staffers began expanding their reach.

He agreed with an X user that USAID was part of a system involved in "money laundering" taxpayer dollars "into far-left organisations", and repeated the baseless conspiracy theory that FEMA was helping people to enter the country illegally. The Government Accountability Office, a congressional watchdog agency, estimates that the U.S. government loses between \$233 billion and \$521 billion each year due to fraud and improper payments. The real test for Mr. Musk and Mr. Trump, Mr. Holtz-Eakin and Mr. Hoagland will be whether and when they tackle the huge drivers of government spending: Social Security, the government-run pension system; Medicare, a government-run health insurance program for seniors; and Medicaid, which provides health insurance for low-income families. Together they account for nearly half of the federal budget and are popular with Republican and Democratic voters. Mr. Trump said on the campaign trail that Social Security and Medicare are off the table. Yet members of DOGE recently accessed payment systems at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, suggesting Medicare may not be exempt from cuts. Mr. Hoagland agreed that any attempts to tackle the big entitlement programs will be politically treacherous. "That is where the rubber is going to hit the road," Mr. Hoagland said. "They will have a lot more difficulty ideologically and politically going after those."

## Elon Musk's \$97.4 billion proposal gets rejected by OpenAI board

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

San Francisco: OpenAI says its board of directors has unanimously rejected a \$97.4 billion takeover bid by Elon Musk. "OpenAI is not for sale, and the board has unanimously rejected Mr Musk's latest attempt to disrupt his competition," said Bret Taylor, chair of OpenAI's board, in a statement on Friday.

OpenAI attorney William Savitt in a letter to Musk's attorney on Friday said the proposal "is not in the best interests of OAI's mission and is rejected." Musk, an early OpenAI investor, began a legal offensive against the ChatGPT-maker nearly a year ago, suing for breach of contract over what he said was the betrayal of its founding aims as a nonprofit he helped found a decade ago.

Then on Monday, while that case was still awaiting a key ruling, Musk and his own AI startup, xAI, and a group of investment firms announced a bid to buy the nonprofit that controls OpenAI. Musk in a court filing on Wednesday expanded on the proposal to acquire the nonprofit's controlling stake in the for-profit OpenAI subsidiary.

## RBI clamps curbs on New India Co-operative Bank, depositors queue up outside branches



Panic-stricken depositors on Friday queued up before the branches of Mumbai-based New India Co-operative Bank after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) clamped severe restrictions on the bank in the wake of certain supervisory concerns. The RBI also superseded its Board of Directors for 12 months, citing "poor governance standards". The RBI has appointed Shreekanth, a former chief general manager of the State Bank of India (SBI), as the administrator to manage the bank's affairs. Additionally, a committee of advisors has been formed to assist him, the RBI said.

This is the first major action against a co-operative bank in Maharashtra after the collapse of Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative Bank due to large-scale fraudulent loans. The RBI directed the loss-making bank not to grant or renew any loans and advances, make any investment, incur any liability including borrowal of funds and acceptance of fresh deposits, disburse or agree to disburse any payment whether in discharge of its liabilities and obligations without prior approval of RBI in writing. The RBI restrictions came into effect after the close of business on February 13, and will be valid for six months. The bank has a network of 30 branches and a deposit base of Rs 2,436

crore as of March 2024. The bank had posted losses of Rs 22.78 crore in 2023-24 and Rs 30.74 crore in 2022-23. According to the RBI, the eligible depositors would be entitled to receive deposit insurance claim amount of their deposits up to a monetary ceiling of Rs 5 lakh from the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), as applicable under the provisions of the DICGC Act, 1961. It will be based on submission of willingness by the depositors concerned and after due verification, it said. This means a depositor who has an FD of Rs 10 lakh in the bank will get only Rs 5 lakh as insurance claim amount from the DICGC.

"These directions are necessitated due to supervisory concerns emanating from the recent material developments in the bank, and to protect the interest of depositors of the bank," the RBI said in its directions issued on Thursday evening. Most of the bank's branches are located in Mumbai and Thane areas. The RBI said the bank cannot enter into any compromise or arrangement and sell, transfer or otherwise dispose of any of its properties or assets except as notified in the RBI direction dated February 13, 2025. "Considering the bank's present liquidity position, the bank has been directed not to allow withdrawal of any amount from savings bank or current accounts or any other account of a depositor," the RBI said. However, it has allowed to set off loans against deposits subject to the conditions stated in the above RBI directions, it said. However, the bank may incur expenditure in respect of certain essential items such as salaries of employees, rent and electricity bills as specified in the said directions. The central bank said the issue of the directions by the RBI should not be construed as cancellation of banking licence by the RBI. The bank will continue to undertake banking business subject to restrictions specified in the said directions till its financial position improves, it said. "The RBI continues to monitor the position of the bank and will take necessary actions including modifications of these directions, as warranted, depending upon circumstances and in the interest of the depositors," it said.

## Milind Soman on navigating marriage despite 26-year age gap with wife Ankita: 'Her ideas are different and incredible'



Model and actor Milind Soman tied the knot with Ankita Konwar in 2018, and despite a 26-year age gap, the couple remains a testament to the idea that love and respect are the true foundations of a strong marriage. Rather than shying away from societal scrutiny, they have openly discussed their unique relationship, focusing on its positives. In an exclusive chat with Hindustan Times, Milind shared insights into their unconventional dynamic: "She's 26 years younger than me, so obviously there is a huge difference in the way she thinks, in her upbringing and the environment she grew up in. The ideas that she has are all different and incredible."

Shedding light on their differing cultural backgrounds, he said, "She's Assamese and I am Maharashtrian, and we are as different as anything can be. We come from different generations, different parts of the world, with different

languages and different food habits. Yet the fact that we have managed to find each other and find that space in which we merge our thoughts, emotions and our spirits, that is something very special. I can say that my life has only become better because of her." Ankita, too, reflected on their relationship's unique perspective on time and gratitude. "When you are young, you don't realise a lot of things and put plans on hold for the future. But when you are with a person with whom you have that age gap, you tend to realise that each moment is special. I can actually look at life from a point of view filled with only gratitude," she said.

Rima Bhandekar, psychologist, Mpower, Aditya Birla Education Trust, said that age-gap relationships come with differences in perspectives, experiences, and opportunities. She emphasises the importance of open communication to sustain the relationship. "Couples must ensure they are on the same page regarding important life decisions. Be understanding and supportive of your partner's journey as per their age bracket, whether it's their career, relationships, or finances," she said. According to her, successful couples often have aligned values, such as family, ethics, and future plans. Key discussions should focus on non-negotiable aspects that matter to both partners. Treat your partner on the same level as yours. "Refrain from making assumptions about their maturity levels or decision making capacity simply based on age. Connection is built on shared experiences so make sure to have quality time spent on activities and places that matter to both, and learn from each other's perspective on life," she said.

## Depression could hasten pace of developing physical conditions by over 30 pc, study finds

Adults with depression could develop chronic conditions, such as osteoarthritis and hypertension, 30 per cent faster as compared to those with no history of the mental disorder, according to a study that suggested physical effects of the mental condition. Researchers, led by those from the University of Edinburgh, UK, said that treating depression should, therefore, involve methods that help manage both mental and physical health.

The mental disorder, marked by a persistent low mood, is known to heighten one's chance of developing heart disease or diabetes, with previous studies having looked at a patient's risk of developing a small number of illnesses, according to the authors. However, the study, published in the journal PLOS Medicine, examined people with a history of depression for their risk of developing 69 physical conditions. Over 1.7 lakh people from the UK Biobank were followed for an average of about seven years. The team noted that those with depression had an average of three physical conditions, hypertension being the most common, compared with an average of two in those without. Over the study period, the participants with a history of depression developed an average of 0.2 additional physical conditions a year, while those without accrued 0.16. "The most common new conditions were osteoarthritis (15.7 per cent of those with depression at baseline vs 12.5 per cent without), hypertension (12.9 per cent vs 12 per cent) and gastroesophageal reflux disease (13.8 per cent vs 9.6 per cent)," the authors wrote. The results revealed that a history of depression could be a marker indicating a risk of developing physical conditions in the long-term. The results revealed that a



history of depression could be a marker indicating a risk of developing physical conditions in the long-term. The team added that while most healthcare systems are designed to treat conditions individually rather than individuals with multiple conditions, approaches combining methods to manage mental and physical health could improve outcomes. Risk factors, such as smoking, high body mass index and low physical activity, could also contribute to how quickly an individual with depression develops physical conditions in middle- and old-age, which present opportunities for improving future health, the authors said. About 18 per cent of the study group had a history of depression at the start of the study. Widespread pain in the body, sleeplessness, stressful life events, loneliness and obesity were more common among these participants, compared to those without depression.

## Is it safe for diabetics to start their morning with bullet coffee?

Bullet coffee has gained popularity among celebrities, often touted as a fantastic pre-workout drink. But is this morning energy boost safe for people with diabetes? Indianexpress.com spoke to experts to understand the potential risks and precautions diabetics should take before incorporating this trendy drink into their routine. "Bullet coffee, also known as butter coffee, is a high-fat, low-carb beverage. It is typically made by blending coffee with unsalted butter and medium-chain triglyceride (MCT) oil. Often consumed by those following ketogenic diets, bullet coffee provides a quick energy boost while keeping carbohydrate intake minimal," said Dr Kamaljit Singh Kainth, consultant physician, PGP (Diabetology) at Kamal Medical Care Physician & Aesthetic Clinic.

Dr Kainth said that it is not recommended for diabetes patients. "On one hand, the high-fat content might help stabilise blood sugar, especially if you're reducing carbs. However, the butter in bullet coffee contains saturated fats, which could raise cholesterol levels, posing a concern, particularly if you already have heart-related issues, a common problem for diabetics," Dr Kainth said. He also said that bullet coffee can exacerbate microvascular and macrovascular problems and increase the chances of blockages.

Dr Debojyoti Dhar, co-founder and director at Leucine Rich Bio, said that consuming high amounts of saturated



fats, a key ingredient in bullet coffee, could pose risks for diabetic patients, potentially impacting blood sugar levels and cardiovascular health. He warned against relying on such trends in the long term. Experts shared that the main risks of bullet coffee consumption for diabetics include weight gain, increased unhealthy cholesterol levels, and nutrient deficiencies if it replaces a balanced meal. They also said that the drink doesn't offer a complete breakfast, so it may leave the users lacking essential nutrients unless balanced with other foods. If you're diabetic and considering trying bullet coffee, Dr Dhar maintained that it's essential to consult your doctor or dietitian first. "Monitor your blood sugar levels, and ensure you're maintaining a well-rounded diet. It's always wise to start with small amounts and observe how your body responds," he said.

## Health essential to happy, natural living

Hyderabad: "Health is Wealth" is an old maxim that's relevant even today in this modern age. It's a fact that health is very essential to happy and natural living. And without good health, one does not have a feeling of stamina, suppleness and well-being. Today, nobody wants to be sick and physically distressed to spend their hard earned money on doctors & medicines and that is why people all over the world have become much health conscious then they were a few years back. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease. Since there is an intimate connection and interaction between mind and body, most of the times a physical disease causes some symptoms of ailment in the mind and vice versa.

And to treat it, there are many systems or 'pathies' as we call them. Usually, the doctors give medicine so that the symptoms of the disease disappear or, at most, the disease in its present form disappears. However, there are

only very few systems who feel really concerned with the eradication of the causes of the disease and with the restoration of health. In fact, various systems define 'disease' and its causes differently and their philosophy of health and disease is very different from that of the other systems.

For example, the Allopathic system of medicine is based on the philosophy that it is the virus which causes a disease and hence allopaths consider viruses as living microorganisms.

They also think that there are many diseases which are caused by bacteria if not by viruses. So, their system attempts to kill these viruses or bacteria in order to help the body to recover from their attack. But the hygienist school of thought or the nature curists say that viruses are not living entities and they consider viruses as the proteinaceous debris of spent cells that create a condition of intoxication, called toxemia or toxicosis. They say that which is called 'Virus' is always dead; it never shows any signs of life, such as metabolism or control mechanisms.

## In doubling bilateral trade to \$500 billion, Delhi will have to pick up threads from Trump 1.0

US PRESIDENT DONALD Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday announced plans to sign a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) by the end of this year and double total bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030. The India-US joint statement said Modi and Trump are committed to "designate senior representatives" to negotiate the "first tranche" of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector BTA by autumn 2025. The joint statement said the US welcomed India's recent measures [announced in the Union Budget] to lower tariffs on US products of interest, such as, motorcycles, agricultural products, and medical devices, among others. Ahead of Modi's visit, India on Thursday also slashed duty on bourbon whisky to 100 per cent from 150 per cent.

This is not the first time the two countries are discussing a trade deal. During Trump's first term in 2017-21 too, Washington had expressed its willingness to negotiate a broad trade agreement with India. India is part of the US-led 14-member Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), even though the crucial trade pillar — one of the four under the Framework — failed to take off as Washington did not offer tariff reductions or increased market access into the American market. India had initially indicated it would like to restrict itself to an observer status and not actively negotiate in the trade pillar, before the US eventually abandoned the trade pillar entirely. Also, during his first term, Trump ended the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programme, which had granted duty-free access to over \$5 billion worth of Indian goods into the US. Due to job losses in several sectors, particularly in the US industrial belt following China's entry into the WTO, sentiment among US lawmakers has turned against granting greater market access to foreign goods. Overall, US trade in both goods and services has reached \$1 trillion. In a recent article for the Council on Foreign Relations, Kenneth I. Juster, former US Department of Commerce official, who was appointed by Trump as Ambassador to India during his first term, wrote that early in Trump's presidency, the United States had expressed willingness to negotiate a broad trade agreement with India.

"While US officials thought that the Indian government had signalled general interest in such an agreement, there did not seem to be concrete follow-through in terms of the mutual concessions required to conclude any such large deal. Over time, the necessary trade-offs by each side did not materialise, and the two parties were not even able to negotiate a smaller deal that would maintain India's benefits under the US trade programme known as the Generalized System of Preferences," Juster said. While the joint statement provides little detail about the BTA, trade experts suggest the deal would likely involve India lowering tariffs to allow greater entry of American goods, rather than the US reciprocating, as US average tariffs are already among the lowest in the world. New Delhi-based think tank Global Trade Research Institute (GTRI) said this is also not the best time for a trade deal with the US, as it does not respect free trade agreements under the current administration. "An example is how the Trump administration imposed tariffs



on Mexico and Canada on steel and aluminium in violation of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) provisions," GTRI said. Given India's generally higher average tariff levels compared to competing nations, the trade margins secured by other countries in trade agreements are typically more favourable than those secured by India. Calling India's tariffs a "big problem", Trump said that tariffs as high as 70 per cent or more on American goods such as cars limit access to the Indian market. "The US trade deficit with India is almost \$100 billion, and Prime Minister Modi and I have agreed that we will be negotiating to address the long-running disparities," Trump said at the India-US briefing. In goods alone, India had a surplus of about \$35 billion in 2023-24, with the bilateral trade being \$120 billion during the year.

"We want a certain level playing field, which we really think we're entitled to, and he [Modi] does too, in fairness. So we're going to work on that very hard, and we can make up the difference very easily with the deficit, with the sale of oil and gas, liquefied natural gas (LNG), of which we have more than anybody in the world," Trump said. Even as India lowered its basic customs duty on a range of items in the Union Budget, a White House statement on reciprocal tariffs pointed out that Indian tariffs on agricultural goods and motorcycles remain significantly higher than those imposed by the US on Indian products. "The US average applied Most Favoured Nation (MFN) tariff on agricultural goods is 5 per cent, while India's average applied MFN tariff is 39 per cent. India also imposes a 100 per cent tariff on US motorcycles, whereas the US only charges a 2.4 per cent tariff on Indian motorcycles," the White House said. India's goods trade surplus with the US has been rising, particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic, doubling from \$17.3 billion in 2019-20 to \$35.33 billion in 2023-24, alongside a notable shift in the export basket. While exports of electronic and engineering goods surged, traditional exports such as gems and jewellery and garments remained largely unchanged. Meanwhile, India's imports from the US over the past five years have grown at a slower pace compared to its exports. US exports to India reached \$42.19 billion in 2023-24, up from \$35.81 billion in 2019-20, with the bulk concentrated in five categories: mineral fuels (the largest segment), followed by precious and semi-precious stones, nuclear reactors, electrical machinery, and aircraft and parts.

cal languages across sectors like healthcare, governance, finance, and education. Approximately 78 per cent of Indian businesses have lined up big investment plans in artificial intelligence. "However, that investment is focused on technology rather than people that will have to use it. This highlights the biggest challenge when it comes to unlocking the full potential of Gen AI," according to Accenture's Pulse of Change Survey-WEF 2025, which was released in Davos. "I strongly believe that India should see AI as a 'solution' rather than software. India is jumping on to AI mission with massive Nvidia GPU purchase plans. The Deepseek moment is a reminder that accepting the status quo is a wrong strategy. All of us will witness significantly power efficient, high performance, solution-centric chips in the next few years that will shake the likes of Nvidia," says Bhaskar Majumdar, Managing Partner, Unicorn India Ventures. Currently, the United States is the leader in AI infrastructure with nearly 45 per cent of the world's data centres, as of March 2024. India does not figure even in the top ten. The Centre last year approved an allocation of over Rs 10,000 crore for the IndiaAI Mission to be infused into building the AI ecosystem initiatives like funding startups and building large language models (LLMs), over the next five years. Nasscom predicts that AI could add \$500 billion to India's GDP by 2025. Recently,

## How Mukesh Ambani is readying for a DeepSeek moment

Hyderabad: DeepSeek has forced a global rethink on AI, but Mukesh Ambani is moving ahead sure-footed, ensuring India isn't left behind. As China's homegrown AI model challenges the biggies, including OpenAI's GPT-4 with unprecedented cost efficiency, and even as BigTech comes out with their plans for the country one by one, India's largest business house isn't rattled. Instead, Reliance Industries is doubling down on its own AI push with a calculated strategy, building the world's largest AI-driven data centre in Jamnagar, Gujarat, powered by Nvidia's advanced semi-conductors — high-end chips that come at a steep price but promises to deliver exceptional capability. "I can assure you that, like we did in data, in a few years from now, we will surprise the world with what India and Indians can achieve in the intelligence market," Ambani had said at the Nvidia AI Summit India last October. According to reports, Reliance Industries data centre in Jamnagar will have a capacity of 3 gigawatts. The facility would overshadow Microsoft's 600-megawatt data centre in Virginia, which is currently the largest data centre. The project could cost between \$20 billion and \$30 billion, according to a Bloomberg report. Besides, BharatGPT, which includes partnerships with IITs and Reliance Jio, last year showcased its AI language model, 'Hanooman', during a tech conference in Mumbai. Hanooman is expected to offer services in 11 lo-

## Kadhhal Enbadhu Podhu Udamai Movie Review: Lijomol Jose, Rohini anchor a poignant coming-out tale of allies



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Kadhhal Enbadhu Podhu Udamai Movie Review: In Anbe Sivam, Madhavan's Anbarasu, who coerces his friend Sivam, to become his brother figure of sorts, says, "Idhenna kaadhala, asingama sollitte irukkarthukku... (This isn't love. Why should we keep on announcing it to the world?)" It was a poignant scene about the importance of understanding love without putting it in words. But it was also a reminder that love for one another has to be expressed repeatedly. Why? It is not to just create a sense of acknowledgement about the relationship. It is also to create an example for many others who might think their love isn't right, or they are not destined for love, or they are not deserving of love. That is why all kinds of love need to be showcased for all to see. And that is why Jayaprakash Radhakrishnan's Kadhhal Enbadhu Podhu Udamai is an important film in Tamil cinema. The 108-minute film takes a solid 30 minutes to build up to a scene that almost everyone in the audience knows is coming. This isn't the sort of film that you would go watch without knowing what the film is about. It is a love story between two women — Sam (Lijomol Jose) and Nandhini (Anusha Prabhu) — and how the world around them comes to terms with their sexuality. Of course, there is a bigger question if the world should be bothered by their sexuality at all. But we will get there as a society later. The first 30 minutes of the film wonderfully sets up Sam, her mother Lakshmi (Rohini), their maid Mary (Deepa), in a beautifully dignified role, and the house which plays a nice part too.

So, Lakshmi is waiting for Sam to introduce the love of her life. She is this liberal mother who doesn't even ask the name, the caste, the status, and the religion of the person her daughter is planning to bring home. But what happens when the person she brings home is a woman. How will she react to it all? The various kinds of reactions to Sam and Nandhini form the base of the rest of the runtime. Interestingly, Jayaprakash isn't too focussed on their love story, although, it is one of the most wonderful portrayals of love onscreen. We see Sam getting attracted to Nandhini because of her ability to be carefree in a world that is constantly judging everyone. We see how solidarity turns into attraction, and attraction turns into a need for intimacy, and a need for intimacy turns into love. It is beautiful, organic, playful, and most importantly, all of it feels normal. There are no big announcements proclaiming that the film is pushing the envelope or trying to rattle the ecosystem. In fact, the normalisation of a lesbian romance makes the statement all the more powerful. Of course, Kadhhal Enbadhu Podhu Udamai is about queer romance, but this love is discussed among four other interesting characters. There is Lakshmi, her ex-husband Devaraj (a brilliant Vineeth) who has remarried someone else, Ravindra (a genial and wonderful Kalesh), who fell in love with Sam before knowing her sexual orientation, and fell in friendship with her after, and Mary. Once the 'secret' is out, at least two of these characters are constantly conversing about Sam and Nandhini's love, and their understanding of the same. Points to Jayaprakash for not painting any of them into extreme characters. In fact, he shows tremendous empathy for Lakshmi, and Devaraj, who were suddenly made to come to terms with their daughter's sexuality. Lakshmi lashes out with a lot of ferocity, and Devaraj is the one who reins her in. But

he is the one who is convinced that her sexuality is just a phase. There is a brilliant conversation between Devaraj and Ravindra, which explores the idea of being an ally, and how it isn't as easy as people perceive it to be.

The dialogues are terrific in Kadhhal Enbadhu Podhu Udamai because they are not grandiose statements. It is rather subtle, and ones that are said in a very conversational way between family members. Of course, there are a few exceptions, but that is par for the course in a film that is aimed at initiating an important conversation. It is also beautiful how intersectional the conversations are, especially a nonchalant line about a lesbian couple in Mary's neighbourhood. It also turns the concept of gossip-mongering on its head. These conversations point out how the queer community doesn't really have to answer every question irrespective of its intent. When Mary asks Sam and Nandhini about who will be the husband and wife in their relationship, the tone and words are in complete contrast to the silence and stares when Devaraj asks something similar. There is a terrific scene featuring Mary and Lakshmi that underscores the dignity given to both the characters, and the silent rebellion of the oppressed. And there is one featuring Ravindra coming to terms with his own love, and the slight light at the end of a dark tunnel. These scenes are reflections of how easy it can be to support something that we don't understand. These scenes are also a reflection of how tough it can be to support something that we don't want to understand. Probably why, certain missteps in Kadhhal Enbadhu Podhu Udamai feel out of place. For instance, the entire flashback scene for Nandhini feels like preaching to the choir. Of course, there is a lot of sensitivity and sensibility in showcasing that scene, and it is bolstered by Anusha's compelling acting, but the scene overstays its welcome, and it is one of the more generic scenes in a film that feels much more elevated. Similarly, there are a few scenes in the film that needed a sense of breathing space for the heavy dialogues to settle in, and the performances to register. This was more pronounced in the final few minutes where there isn't enough time given to come to terms with a momentous realisation.

Interestingly, even while being a film scoring heavily on content, Jayaprakash ensures it looks and feels like compelling cinema too. The film is aesthetically pleasing, and despite being set in a single location for most of its runtime, the visuals are on point. Sree Saravanan's frames are expansive and uses natural light to enhance the film, and the editing of Dani Charles ensures we never feel the pinch of repetitive conversations and limited locations. What truly anchors the film is the performance of Rohini, who plays a character that is conflicted not just with the feelings of her daughter, but also her own feelings. Should she call her ex-husband home to deal with this? What would her maid think of her, especially since she is an online motivational speaker? The writing doesn't vilify her at any moment. Soon after insulting her daughter's love, she is holding an umbrella to protect her from rain. Soon after beating her up out of frustration, she cries about the lack of freedom about her own physical needs. Lakshmi is a beautiful character because she is complex, like all of us. Similarly, a terrific Kalesh plays the good-hearted but confused Ravindra who is caught in the crosshairs of a family drama. He is a beautiful character because he is complex, like all of us. Then, we have the consistent Vineeth who is an absent father who has a secret. He is manipulative, he is coercive, he gaslights, and he protects. He is the first one to stop Lakshmi from beating Sam, and towards the end, he delivers one of the finest dialogues of the film, which is a complex one because it is as deep as it is farcical, and as true as it is a copout.

Anusha and Lijomol From Kadhhal Enbadhu Podhu Udamai Anusha and Lijomol play lovers in Jayaprakash Radhakrishnan's Kadhhal Enbadhu Podhu Udamai. With wonderful turns by Lijomol who is equal parts vulnerable and defiant, and Anusha Prabhu, who is equal parts empathetic and disgruntled, Kadhhal Enbadhu Podhu Udamai operates on the belief that love will always find a way. But as the credits roll, it ends up asking a rather simple but profound question... Why do people love to stop their loved ones from loving other people?

## Chhaava movie review: Vicky Kaushal is fully committed in Laxman Utekar's ultra-loud, ultra-violent, and exhausting film

At the end of 161 minutes of Chhaava, based on the high-points of the life of Sambhaji Maharaj, the son of Shivaji Maharaj, you are left with two chief thoughts. How do you pull off a film which talks up a historical figure not as well known as his illustrious parent, without us wondering: how much is fact, and how much fiction? And the other, which is the reason you manage to sit through this ultra-loud, ultra-violent re-creation of a slice of the 17th century Hindustan is the total commitment on display by its lead actor to the titular character: Vicky Kaushal becomes Chhaava ('son of a lion'), whose story the film adapts from the Marathi novel of the same name by Shivaji Sawant.

The film opens as it means to go on: an attack on a Mughal outpost by a band of brave Maratha warriors, led by Sambhaji, in which the latter are comprehensively victorious. The camera stays close to Kaushal's Sambhaji, who wades into battle as if it is his natural element, cleaving heads and chopping limbs, which we see in excruciatingly bloody detail. This sets the tone for the rest of it. The repeated attempts of the



Mughals, led by the shifty Aurangzeb (Akshaye Khanna), who for some reason is addressed as 'Aurang', to finish off the Marathas are kept at bay even as the hidden enemies within Sambhaji's ranks work to topple their own. In between the non-stop frantic set-pieces of soldiers-and-swords-and-horses, we get scenes of domesticity. The doe-eyed Rasmika Mandanna, who has become the go-to actor for the faithful-wife-of-strongmen whether it is in the South or North, welcomes her wounded valorous husband

home, even as plots are being hatched up by his scheming step-mother (Divya Dutta) and her collaborators, to supplant our hero. Chhaava's painting of Mughal invaders as black is of a piece with the current atmosphere, but we've got to the point where the film's attempt at balance have to be noted: Akbar (Neil Bhooopalam) may not have been shown as being as blood-thirsty as Aurangzeb, the evil emperor who smashed all opposition to his ascent, but at every point he, Akbar, is the supplicant,

and Sambhaji, with his constant 'ghaara' of 'swaraaj', is all powerful. When not hacking off body-parts, and sweet-talking his wife, Sambhaji is mainly in the company of his faithful cohorts, an uncle (a heavily-mustachioed Ashutosh Rana), and a poet-cum-best-friend (Vineeth Singh), both effective. Akshaye Khanna, practically unrecognizable under the prosthetic work as the white-haired, ageing Aurangzeb, obsessed with fashioning the end of the lion's cub, manages to create a few interesting moments for himself.

## Arm-twisting, blacklisting, and mud-slinging: The horrors of Bollywood's PR machinery unmasked



It is common for journalists working in entertainment-adjacent beats to receive text messages requesting them to depute photographers for "celebrity spotting" at airports and restaurants. The timings are specified, and the subjects range from teenage influencers to A-list stars. It is also common for disgruntled actors and filmmakers to demand that negative reviews be toned down, or, in certain cases, altered to show them in a more positive light. On-the-record statements are disowned; co-stars are maligned; and, if the situation is dire enough, spouses are thrown under the bus. But the dirty work is always done by someone else: the publicist. Their jobs can range from booking flights to ordering coffee, but the bulk of their time is spent massaging the egos of celebrities, satisfying their every whim, and also fielding their complaints. The Indian Express spoke to individuals on both sides of the media industry — journalism and publicity — about the pressures they've faced in their careers. They described a landscape dominated by jealousy, vindictiveness, and entitlement. Every journalist that participated in this report admitted that a disproportionate level of control rests in the hands of a few, and that false narratives are established and executed in plain sight. Questions perceived as "controversial" are discouraged during interviews; negative reviews are targeted; favours are requested but rarely repaid. But in this community, there are also pockets of resistance, and a vocal contingent willing to rock the boat.

A critic who worked at a digital platform said that he was asked to change "the last few lines" of his review of a streaming series produced by perhaps one of the biggest banners in the country. He described this as the worst case of PR pressure that he has ever faced. "You can still go and read it; nothing was changed. But they didn't want the show to reflect the brand. They were like, 'Keep your criticism to the show,'" he said.

The critic claimed that publicists working for a different streaming giant "fabricated lies" about him, which resulted in him being blacklisted. They stopped answering his calls or responding to emails; he was barred from attending junkets; screeners for shows and films, which are typically assigned to journalists prior to release, weren't sent to him. "They said that I broke a review embargo for one of their series, which I had absolutely not done. What advantage am I going to gain by publishing early? Eventually, a friend of mine started working in the PR team at the platform, and he revealed to me that they had increased the size of the lie. They'd told the international team that I had broken multiple embargoes," he said, adding that no proof was furnished by the platform to substantiate its claims. The critic eventually began to regain his footing, but only when his friend was involved in the title being promoted. "Nobody else would speak to me," he said, adding that platforms "selectively give access" only to critics prone to being positive. "They avoid the ones they know have a history of being more critical," he said. bollywood pr 4 An example of a 'spotting' request, sent by PR personnel to journalists and the paparazzi. A senior editor with experience in television, print, and digital, said that the industry wasn't as tightly controlled three decades ago as it is now. "When I started, there were precisely two channels, and there was print. The stars were very accessible. The PR game, as we know it, didn't exist," she said, adding that sometime during the early 2000s, "journalists started managing stars, and that's when the games started." The landscape changed entirely after the pandemic, the senior editor said. "Earlier, there were five or six players, but then, it exploded."

She said that there has always been a "give and take" dynamic between journalists and publicists, but in recent years, she has noticed a disinterest in maintaining relationships. Major celebrities were willing to make trips to newsrooms during publicity tours back in the day; they would even wait outside without complaining. A few decades before this, journalists could simply walk onto film sets and interview actors. This would never happen now. The senior editor recalled how a young actor personally requested that he be interviewed before the release of his indie film in 2012. He is now regarded as one of the finest talents of his generation, and recently appeared in one of the biggest Hindi-language hits of all time. "Today, the same actor, you can't get access to him," the senior editor said. "Nothing succeeds like success. Now, you have to go through his PR (to get in touch with him). He won't respond himself." She recalled a story about another young actor that "no one was interested" in speaking to before the release of an acclaimed 2015 film. "The same actor is inaccessible now. He won't respond. He will only respond when you message him, 'Good film'." Another star, she said, "really misbehaved and cancelled all the interviews at the last minute" after his latest remake flopped critically and commercially. He also canned an appearance at a recent fashion show, and a different actor had to be flown in at the last minute as his replacement. An A-list Bollywood director who has worked with one of the three Khans on multiple occasions once made a group of journalists wait for eight hours just to talk to him. When the journalists arrived to the designated venue at the given time, they were told after a bit of prodding that the man they had come to interview was, in fact, hundreds of miles away in Kashmir. Over the next few hours, infrequent updates about his travels were begrudgingly provided to the increasingly irate group. Many had picked spots on the floor of the venue, a landmark five-star hotel. When the filmmaker finally arrived, chaos erupted as the angry journalists began to demand immediate access. Any schedule that might have been drawn up earlier was torn to shreds; it was every man for himself. The filmmaker, on his part, seemed to be unaware of the mismanagement. Not once did he apologise for keeping at least 30 journalists and videographers from some of the country's most reputed publications waiting all evening. bollywood pr 3 An example of a social media caption template that is disseminated among journalists, requesting them to amplify narratives about certain actors. A PR agency that represented "all the nepo-babies" mentored by an industry veteran "became too powerful" some years ago, the senior editor further revealed. This agency would allegedly grant interview access to "only three journalists." She said that often times, requests for interviews don't even reach the star these days. The gatekeepers only inform "the talent" about opportunities that

would be favourable to them. "Now, with WhatsApp, they've discovered ghosting. They will ghost you," she said.

She praised a veteran actor, known for his youthful energy, for turning down an influencer's request to make a Reel, and said that many young stars, like the one who recently headlined a flop remake, take close interest in the marketing strategies of their films. "Some PR companies have started doing 'meet-and-greets' with stars. That's when interviewers became doomed. They'll fly people in to meet the star, take a few pictures, post them on their social media. It was done." Influencers, she said, are given strict deliverables by publicists, down to the number of posts they must share on their personal social media accounts. The senior editor wondered if influencer marketing, or cross-country "roadshows," actually translate into tangible revenue. Not too long ago, a group of journalists was stranded en-route to a Middle Eastern country for one such meet-and-greet with a big-budget film's struggling stars. One of the journalists, while passing time at the airport, posted a humorous video on social media, requesting the A-list star to "rescue" the group from their predicament. The star is known to play saviour roles. Within five minutes of the video being posted online, the journalist received frantic calls from publicists demanding that he take it down. The star had somehow seen it, and wasn't amused.

A publicist working with one of the big three streaming platforms said that the "pressures" of her job revolve around "managing high-profile clients' public images amid constant media scrutiny, handling crises like scandals or rumours, maintaining positive relationships with journalists, controlling negative narratives, and ensuring successful promotions." She said that "navigating dynamics between actors or filmmakers who aren't on the best terms can be particularly challenging during promotional campaigns," and that she has been tasked in the past with maintaining a "positive narrative despite any behind-the-scenes tension" between talent. She admitted that she has had to compromise on "personal values" to get the job done. "It's a tough balance, especially when you're tasked with managing narratives that may not sit right with your own sense of fairness. Over time, I've learned to develop a thicker skin, reminding myself that, at the end of the day, it's work. Every profession, in some form, asks you to make compromises or face challenges that push your boundaries. It's a part of the job, and finding ways to manage it without losing sight of your principles is something that comes with experience," she said.

bollywood pr 2 An example of a social media post that is disseminated among journalists, requesting them to amplify stories about certain actors. The senior editor said that actors have become "very wary" of getting in trouble. "So, now, they've started asking for questions in advance. They send you talking points. I have had fights with people saying, 'You don't need to send me talking points.'" She said that "all the questions" at a press conference for a mega-budget international streaming series "were planted." The lead star, an Indian, had just appeared on a podcast where she had made several controversial statements, and she wasn't going to let anybody question her about them. It is also common for publicists to essentially hold journalists hostage by taking control of their interview footage, and then tampering with it before handing it over. By doing this, they can avoid making "requests" later on. When one "omnipresent" actor had a mid-interview meltdown, she forced the publicists in charge to remove that portion of the footage before handing it over to the journalist. No polite request was made; it was an order. This actor is a repeat offender. In addition to berating journalists, she was also seen publicly screaming at a publicist for getting her sushi order wrong. A fan-favourite actor, known for his acclaimed performances across three decades, lost his cool with publicists while waiting for an interview to be set up. Despite arriving late, he said that he should've been given more time to get ready. The actor, who often projects himself as a son of the soil, had an entourage of over half-a-dozen men. And even though he often talks about going hungry early in his career, he now finds himself in a position where he can complain about the size of his hotel suite.

The critic recalled being pressured into altering his reviews during the early stages of his career. "Multiple times, the big three platforms have called and asked why a review was written in a negative tone, or why a certain angle was taken. In the first two years of my career, they were slightly more pushy. I would tell them to speak to my editor. They would ask me to make the headlines of my reviews less negative. But they don't decide my headlines; my editor and I decide my headlines." A reporter working at a prominent publication said that entertainment journalism spiralled into a decline partially because top editors began to cave under pressure. He highlighted the importance of strong editors standing by their reporters, and said that he was able to write incisive stories only because of the support he had. He admitted that certain journalists are labeled as problematic, and aren't allowed to participate in press conferences. Most industry events are tightly controlled, he said, and journalists are vetted before being invited to them. Microphones are withheld from them, and given only to the most amenable reporters. He also admitted that behaviour considered out of line in the recent past, like being interrupted by publicists while conducting interviews, has now been normalised to the point that it isn't even surprising. The senior editor, meanwhile, said that "the ones who are losing out are those who are actually passionate about what they do." She said that the media industry is harming itself. "Who do you trust? You have to keep watching your back. It's very toxic, and you're not enjoying cinema for what it is... You can't trust anyone... It's all about the money."

## Ranveer-Samay controversy: Vidyut Jammwal says 'we have the ability to forgive him'

Mumbai: Action hero Vidyut Jammwal has expressed his thoughts in the much talked about Samay Raina and Ranveer Allahbadia after they landed in hot waters over insensitive comments on the streaming show "India's Got Latent". Vidyut took to Instagram, where he shared a video expressing his opinion, where he mentioned "vinaash kal vipreet buddhi". "This message is for my Jammwalions. I am back from the Kumbh. I will upload all the pictures and videos tomorrow. They were fabulous," said the actor, who took a holy dip in the Maha Kumbh. "I heard the controversies of Ranveer Allahbadia and my first thought was vinaash kal vipreet buddhi. It was foolish (of them). But since this afternoon, I have been thinking that he has made a big mistake and people are trolling him a lot. People want his career to end. People are laughing.

"People are saying that one mistake can make a person regret for the rest of his life. All that is fine," said Vidyut, who has been on Ranveer's podcast.

## Smriti Mandhana believes there is always room for learning in terms of captaincy



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Vadodara: Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru skipper Smriti Mandhana believes there is always room for learning in terms of captaincy and she has evolved as a cricketer while leading the side in the last two editions of the Women's Premier League. Under Mandhana's captaincy, RCB won the second edition of WPL, beating Delhi Capitals by eight wickets last year. In the third edition of the tournament, RCB will play Gujarat Giants in the opening match here on Friday.

"Captaincy is one thing which at any moment you can think that you know it all, cricket teaches you a lot of things that you think you knew but every day is a new

experience. So, from the first year to the second year, there was a big shift in how I am." More than being captain there are a lot of changes as a person in the last 2-3 years in terms of my journey with RCB in WPL and the Indian team. So a lot of things that I learned and still a lot to learn. At any point anyone can't think that they are a complete player," Mandhana said in the pre-match press conference on Thursday. Despite being troubled by a few injuries, Mandhana is happy with the squad at her disposal. "Really looking forward, had a good camp in Bengaluru. The girls are looking all prepped up, a lot of young ones have come in and got a lot of energy and the overseas players have also joined us in the last 2-3 days so looks like a complete squad and looking forward to the third edition," she said. "Injuries have been a big impact in the last one-and-a-half months for us post the auctions but injuries are something which are not in our hands.

We had a good auction, we got really good youngsters and our overseas replacements are also quality players." Mandhana was full of praise for Gujarat Giants, which will be led by a new captain Ashleigh Gardner of Australia this year. "They look different, had a good auction. T20-wise all the five teams are balanced. It's all about going there and trying to play the best brand of cricket and whoever plays the best cricket on that particular day will win." Mandhana also said he has high regard for Gardner.

## Why US Open's \$1 million prize money can't make Mixed Doubles great again

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

There was once a time when tennis stadia wouldn't empty out after the singles programme. Doubles too had stars and ardent followers. And then there was the uniquely vibrant mixed doubles circuit where greats on either side of the gender divide came together. The US Open, by offering a million dollar incentive, Las Vegas-style fanfare and a new diet-format to woo the singles champions, is trying to make mixed doubles great again. But then, if money had the power to turn back the clock, that dreamy feeling of nostalgia would have been the most popular product on Amazon. Back in the day, when tennis truly qualified as a team sport, hardcore tennis reporters would have for company entertainment hacks and gossip columnists to watch the stars in mixed company. This was a battle of sexes. At times, even the sexes. In the early 1970s, the two best players in the world, Jimmy Connors and Chris Evert, were America's 'boy and girl next door'. The world wanted them to get married and they did get engaged while pairing up on the court too.

It was a classic doubles tag-team. Evert took the deuce side, the left flank, hitting her pin-perfect angular forehands. Connors on the ad court, the right flank, driving opponents on the backfoot with his famous forceful double-handed backhand. Evert, the queen of women's tennis' moonball era, would toss up measured lobs that would make the rival pair at the net look ridiculously helpless. And Connors, bending double like only he can, grinding those groundstrokes across the net with impeccable perfection. This glorious mixed doubles harmony would turn tennis beat reporters poetic. Away from the court, things weren't smooth and soon they had on their trail the paparazzi and tabloids. In 1974, they would both win Wimbledon titles and pose for pictures on the All-England lawns like a love-smitten couple at Hyde Park. They would even pick a trippy name for their management company - Love Double. That same year, they would split but the tennis partnership continued. They would continue to play together and win Slams.

Once at the World Mixed Doubles event, sitting in the crowd together were their respective partners - Playboy model Patti McGuire and top British pro John Lloyd. That day, body language experts would have had a busy day - interpreting every smile, lip-reading every on-court exchange. They had to do all this while keeping an eye on their partners in the stands. Mixed doubles has also thrown up 'lived happily ever-after' endings. Like the one that started at the 2000 Sydney Games. Roger Federer was 18, his Swiss teammate Miroslava 'Mirka' Vavrinec was 21. He would lie about his age and the two would start to date. The



same year, they would play mixed doubles at the Hopman Cup in Australia. There is an old clip of the two being interviewed by an old anchor with the persistence of a matchmaker. A career-ending injury would see Mirka quit the sport that year and become Federer's manager. Later, she would be his wife and mother of two sets of twins.

In 2007, tennis would be the backdrop of a quirky tale of fling and flirtation that unfolded in the true English setting of Wimbledon. How a modest British player called Jamie Murray and Serbian star Jelena Jankovic accidentally met and went on to win the most coveted title deserves a rom-com. The charmingly mumbling Hugh Grant and the straight-from-the-pages-of-a-Jane-Austen-book Emma Thompson could well be the perfect lead pair. Jamie and Jelena seemed to be having a blast on court. They laughed and pulled each other's legs. The press kept calling it a love match. Jelena too played along. Britain took time to understand Serbian humour as the two went their separate ways after the win. They never played together again but they will always have Wimbledon. There is one mixed doubles yarn with a cruel twist in the tale and a typical John McEnroe punchline. It's straight from the Angry American's book 'You cannot be serious'. In 1999, McEnroe, 40, was making a comeback. He was to play with German great Steffi Graf. They were on a roll, their games had fans lining up. In the quarters, they would beat Venus Williams and Justin Gimelstob, the double Slam winners the previous year. Steffi-Mac mania had hit England. And then Graf pulled out from mixed doubles since she needed energy for her singles games. McEnroe would have certainly said 'You can't be serious' but Graf was. McEnroe sat in the locker room with two other Americans for company. The tennis great narrates the episode in his book. "I turned to them and said, 'Can you believe what this b\*\*\*h did to me?' The two people were Andre Agassi and his coach Brad Gilbert. It turned out there was a lot I didn't know at that moment," he wrote.

use of the powerplay, that suits us more," Javed said at the post-match press conference after Pakistan's five-wicket defeat. "So, I think, in these conditions, Babar should open and I am hopeful that he will play a big innings in important matches," he added. Former Pakistan cricketer Basit Ali had criticised team's decision to elevate Babar as an opener. "If you had won the tri-nation series, then your confidence level would have been high, every boy's confidence level would have been high," Ali said on his YouTube channel. "Who is the one who told Babar Azam to open? I am surprised who he is. What crazy people are they? He was performing well at number three, scoring 50-70 against South Africa, but they stopped that too," Ali lamented.

## Perry, Richa fifties power RCB to 6-wicket win over Gujarat Giants

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Babar Azam looked in pristine touch during the Tri-Series final against New Zealand at the National Stadium in Karachi on Friday before tossing away his start. Batting on 29, Babar offered a regulation caught-and-bowled opportunity to seamer Nathan Smith before Pakistan's innings progressively collapsed and ended at 242 all out. The hosts suffered a second successive defeat to the Black Caps to concede the Tri-Series title ahead of their Champions Trophy opener at the same venue next week. Babar, who slotted into the opener's role alongside Fakhar Zaman in the absence of the injured Saim Ayub, finished the series with 62 runs in three innings. His last ODI century dates back to 21 innings ago in the Asia Cup in 2023 against Nepal. His struggles without an international hundred across formats has extended to over 60 innings. However, interim Pakistan head coach Aaqib Javed has backed Babar to adapt to his new ODI role ahead of the Champions Trophy. "Our rationale behind the change was that if you look at the away series against South Africa, Babar Azam had to bat in the first over in all games. Then Saim got injured, and he had to open in Tests too. These pitches are not troubling the batters at the start, we wanted our best batter to make good

Vadodara: Richa Ghosh and Ellyse Perry smashed forceful fifties as Royal Challengers Bengaluru pulled off the highest run chase in the history of Women's Premier League to register a thrilling six-wicket win over Gujarat Giants here on Friday. Perry (57, 34b, 6x4, 2x6) and Ghosh (64 not out, 27b, 7x4, 4x6) were in sublime touch as defending champions RCB scaled down the target of 202 with ease in the tournament opener. It was a remarkable turnaround for RCB as they were tottering at 14 for two after second over, as Ashleigh Gardner ousted openers Smriti Mandhana (9) and Danny Wyatt (4) in the space of four balls. But from thereon, Perry and Raghavi Bist (25, 27b) added 86 runs for the third wicket to steady the ship, before the latter fell to pacer Deandra Dottin. Perry, who was dropped on 19, made full use of that chance to punish Giants bowlers.

## Rohit Sharma is one of the most selfless cricketer: R Ashwin



GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli India's captain Rohit Sharma (right), and Virat Kohli celebrate after winning the third one day international cricket match and series against England in Ahmedabad, India. R Ashwin has showered praise on captain Rohit Sharma for transforming India's approach in the ODIs and called him one of the most "selfless cricketer," he has ever played with. Under Rohit's captaincy, India have reached final of the ODI World Cup and won the T20I World Cup. "One thing that I admire the most about Rohit Sharma is that he is not selfish at all. He is one of the most selfless cricketer," said on his Hindi YouTube channel, "Ash Ki Baat." "If he would have been selfish, he would never have batted the way he is batting in the ODIs. He wouldn't go after everything in the powerplay. "So many times he has let go the landmarks to score runs.

Rohit Sharma, India vs England India's captain Rohit Sharma plays a shot during the second one day international cricket match between India and England in Cuttack, India. (AP) "I have massive respect for Rohit Sharma. I am also very happy for Rohit and I'm doubly glad that he is showing that this is the way forward. "He is like I have scored

runs but its business as usual. My one-day form was good. Let's talk about other players, who has made an impact. I love that quality of Rohit Sharma." Ashwin also credited Rohit Sharma for realising that how game has evolved over the years. In the 2019 ODI World Cup, Rohit played as an accumulator, scored five centuries but in the 2023 ODI World Cup, he became a dasher.

"The thing is that game has changed and evolved. It is important to realise that the game is bigger than all of us," said Ashwin. I was watching an interview of Sachin Tendulkar where he spoke about the runout mishap between him and VVS Laxman. He spoke how his brother taught him an important lesson about the way he responded after getting out. Ajit Tendulkar scolded him for his reaction and told him how he should be a team man. Rohit Sharma six hitting Rohit Sharma Captain of India during the 2nd ODI match between India and England held at the Barabati Stadium, Cuttack, India on the 9th February 2025. (Sportspics) "It is the same thing here too. Rohit has showed the way for you. "In India, we have often seen players looking out for their averages, stay not out, look at your scores etc.. to keep an eye on their career records, average and strike rate to cement their place in the teams "But we forget, why we all start playing cricket? we wanted to wear the jersey and play for India.

And Rohit has showed the way forward, and had said that he is putting the team ahead of himself. "Plus the game has changed too. England changed the ODIs from 2015 to 2019. "India was actually late to the party. And who showed the way ahead for the Indian team? It was Rohit Sharma. It took us eight years to change our style of play, Maybe if we had changed in six, we might have won one more ICC trophy. "Rohit was the burning light of the candle that changed and transformed this team," he said.

## R Ashwin: 'We are not actors, we must not encourage this superstar culture within the Indian cricket team'

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Former India spinner R Ashwin has urged the Indian cricketers to not encourage the "superstar culture" within the team as they are not actors or superstars, but they are just sportspersons. "It is important to normalise things in Indian cricket. We must not encourage this superstardom and super celebrities within the Indian cricket team," Ashwin said on his Hindi YouTube channel, "Ash Ki Baat." "We must normalise all these things going forward. "We are cricketers. We are not actors or superstars. "We are sportspersons, and we must be someone that the common people should resonate with, and can compare themselves with. "For example if you are a Rohit Sharma or a Virat Kohli, who have achieved so much. When you hit one more century, it is not just about your achievement anymore. It should be the business as usual, and our goals should be bigger than these achievements," he added.

R Ashwin has also raised concerns over Indian team management naming five spinners in the form of Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ravindra Jadeja and Varun Chakravarthy in the final updated squad for



Champion Trophy. "Five spinners in Dubai? I don't know. I think we are one spinner too many if not two," he said. "The two left-arm spinners are your best all-rounders alongside Hardik Pandya. So both Axar Patel and Ravindra Jadeja are going to play.

Hardik will also play and Kuldeep will play. "If you want Varun Chakravarthy in the team, then you will have to make a pacer sit out and use Hardik as your second pacer. Else you will have to drop a spinner to bring in a third seamer," Ashwin said.

## 'This is not T20 mate': Former England coach warns Arshdeep Singh in Jasprit Bumrah's absence at ICC Champions Trophy 2025

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

As India prepare for a situation without their seam spearhead Jasprit Bumrah heading into another ICC tournament at the Champions Trophy in Dubai, former England cricketer and coach David Lloyd has urged opposition teams to seize the opportunity and target whoever replaces the India pacer in the XI. With left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh touted to be a potential replacement for Bumrah in the XI, Lloyd has said the Punjab pacer will have to adapt quickly to the 50-overs format to make a difference. While Arshdeep recently became India's highest T20I wicket-taker with 99 scalps during the recent series against England, the 26-year-old has only played a handful of ODIs. In nine appearances, Arshdeep has managed 14 wickets at a 23.00 average. "It's a great opportunity for someone to come in, someone who wouldn't make the team. But you can't get away from the fact that he (Bumrah) is the best bowler in the world, and if he isn't playing for you, you've got a problem" said Lloyd on TalkSport Cricket. Lloyd said Arshdeep will have to make a huge leap from dominating T20 bowling and adjust the requirements of 50-over cricket.

"Massive difference - four overs to 10. If you're the opposition, test him out; really get into him," Lloyd said. "This



is not T20 mate, this is not a little party, you've got to come back and come back again", that will be something he won't be used to," he added. Arshdeep was the leading wicket-taker of the domestic Vijay Hazare Trophy with 20 wickets. He also picked up two wickets in his only appearance in the ODI series against England in Ahmedabad. Besides Arshdeep, Mohammad Shami and Harshit Rana are the other specialist pacers in India's squad. The Men in Blue open their campaign against Bangladesh on February 19 at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium.

## R Ashwin slams Ben Duckett for his comments on England's ODI series loss against India and Ben Stokes' WTC points system rant

GNS News Agency, Feb 17

Former India off-spinner R Ashwin has criticized England's approach in the recently concluded white-ball series against India, in which England lost the T20Is 1-4 and the ODIs 0-3. "To see such a talented England side perform in such a way was disappointing and sad," Ashwin said on his Hindi YouTube channel, "Ash Ki Baat." Ashwin still feels that England can turn their fortunes around in the Champions Trophy. "It is not that they don't have the ability. I am sticking my neck out and will again that this is a top-class England side, but they have taken this ODI series against India very lightly. And England might look a completely different side in Pakistan during the Champions Trophy. If they don't look a better team, I'd be very disappointed," he said. After the loss in the second ODI, England opener Ben Duckett had said he did not care if England endured a series whitewash in India, so long as he and his teammates beat the same opponents in the final of the Champions Trophy. "If we lose 3-0 to India, I don't care as long as

we beat them in the final in the Champions Trophy. No one will probably look back on this series if we go and do the business in that competition," he told reporters in Cuttack. Ben Duckett Kevin Pietersen IND ENG Ben Duckett of England reacting during the 2nd ODI match between India and England held at the Barabati Stadium, Cuttack, India on the 9th February 2025. Ashwin slammed Duckett for hiding England's poor performance behind a joke. Ashwin also recollected Duckett's comment on Yashasvi Jaiswal during the Test series in 2024, where they were hammered 1-4 by India. After day three of the third Test where Jaiswal slammed his third century, Duckett said: "When you see players from the opposition playing like that, it almost feels like we should take some credit that they're playing differently than how other people play Test cricket." Ashwin said: "No matter what Ben Duckett says but going into the Champions Trophy This series loss will create a big dent to their confidence." Ben Duckett has said similar things in the past too, saying Yashasvi Jaiswal has learnt playing