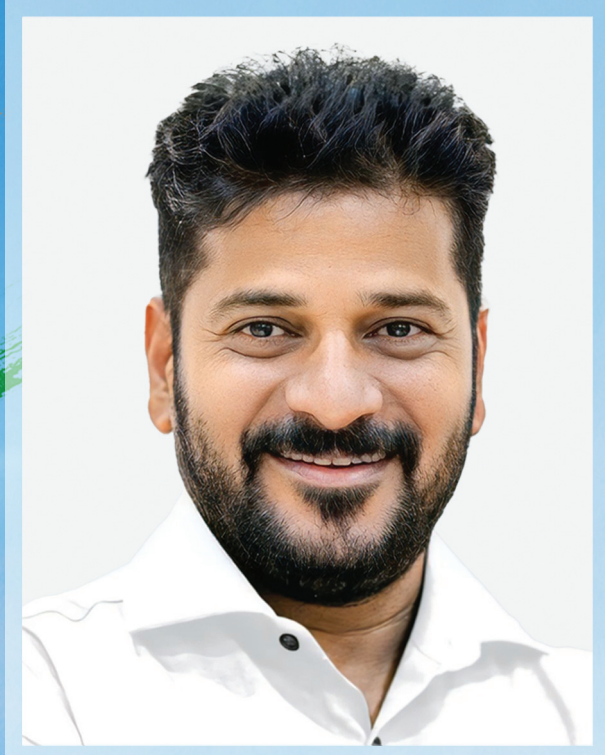


# INDIAN CHRONICLE

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**People's Governance**  
with the blessings of Telangana Talli,  
on its mission to create  
one crore millionaire women

# INDIRA Mahila Shakti

Wishing all the women in Telangana, a very  
**Happy Women's Day**

8<sup>th</sup> March, 2025 at 6:00 PM | Venue: Parade Ground, Secunderabad.



### Better Living Standards

- LPG Cylinder for just Rs.500
- Free electricity up to 200 units
- Rs. 10 Lakh worth accident insurance

### Women as entrepreneurs

- 1000 MW solar power plants
- 5% plots in industrial parks
- One petrol bunk per district
- Indira Mahila Shakti Bazaar with 106 shops

### Self employment

- 196 Indira Mahila Shakti canteens
- Making of student uniforms
- 22 Indira Mahila Shakti buildings
- Arranging Mee Seva centres

### The ladder of opportunities

- Free rides in RTC buses
- Training for 40,000 members of the dairy cooperative
- Training in event management
- Partners in Amma Adarsha Pathashala Development

### Economic Independence

- Rs. 1 lakh crore loan in 5 years for women groups
- Rs. 350 crore interest dispersed
- 600 RTC buses on lease

# Indian Chronicle

## English Daily

### Tariff tangle

India is racing against time to stop or at least slow down Donald Trump's tariff juggernaut. In line with his America First policy, the US President has announced a for-tat action from April 2 against India and other nations that have been imposing higher levies on imports from the US. New Delhi is looking to find an amicable solution to the vexing problem under the framework of a mega trade deal with Washington. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal is already in the US, holding negotiations regarding the deal, which is expected to be finalised by the year-end. The million-dollar question is: Can India delay the inevitable, and for how long?

After their meeting last month, Trump had lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "better, tougher negotiator", but he also made it clear that India would not be exempted from reciprocal tariffs. His clinching argument was that "nobody can argue with me" on this issue. However, Delhi continues to hope that Team Modi will pull a rabbit out of the hat in the form of a mutually beneficial outcome.

India's diplomatic approach is to play it safe and not infuriate Trump, unlike the belligerent stand adopted by countries like Canada and China. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has called American tariffs "very dumb" and accused the US President of appeasing Russia, while Beijing has warned that it is ready to "fight till the end" if the US is hell-bent on waging a tariff or trade war. Ukrainian President Zelenskyy's nightmarish experience at the Oval Office has taught India that things can easily go from bad to worse if you are in Trump's bad books. The US was India's largest trading partner in 2022-23, with the bilateral trade amounting to \$190 billion; the two sides are keen to raise it to \$500 billion by 2030. The long-term picture might prompt Delhi to bite the tariff bullet.

### What is the Beed sarpanch murder case over which Maharashtra minister Dhananjay Munde has resigned?

GNS News Agency, March 7

After being the centre of controversy for three months in connection with the murder of Massajog village sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh, Maharashtra Food and Civil Supplies Minister and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Dhananjay Munde submitted his resignation Tuesday to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis. Munde's close aide Walmik Karad was earlier arrested in a case related to the murder, leading the Opposition to demand the minister's resignation to ensure an impartial inquiry. Munde's look at the case and how Dhananjay Munde got embroiled in it. Murder of Santosh Deshmukh Santosh Deshmukh, 45, BJP supporter and sarpanch of Massajog village in Kaiz tehsil was allegedly kidnapped in broad daylight on December 9 last year, shoved into a black Scorpio, and assaulted for around three hours before he succumbed. The body was dumped on a road near his village. Post-mortem indicated that Deshmukh died "due to haemorrhage and shock due to multiple injuries". He is survived by his elderly parents, wife, and two children, aged 13 and 17.

What led to the murder?

Police investigation so far suggests that the murder was allegedly committed after a brawl between Deshmukh and four people on December 6 at the site of a windmill energy project executed by Avada Energy in Massajog village. According to the police, on December 6, four people, including accused Sudarshan and Pratik Ghule, went to the project site and allegedly abused and assaulted a security guard and the project manager after they were stopped from entering. The security guard, who belongs to Massajog village, alerted Deshmukh since he was the sarpanch. Deshmukh rushed to the site along with a few villagers and the two groups engaged in a brief clash, his family members, villagers and the police told. Later that evening, the project manager lodged an extortion complaint with the police, based on which an FIR was filed. Vishnu Chate, Karad and another person were accused of demanding Rs 2 crore from the firm that is installing a windmill in the district. Chate was the chief of NCP's Beed district unit. The accused were arrested and released on bail. According to the FIR registered at Kaiz police station by Deshmukh's cousin Shivraj, he was heading to the village in a vehicle along with the sarpanch on December 9 when they were intercepted by a black Scorpio near Dongaon toll plaza around 3.15 pm. Six persons with rods, stones and beer bottles exited the SUV, assaulted both of them and forced Deshmukh into their vehicle, the FIR said. Shivraj said he alerted Deshmukh's brother Dhananjay over the phone and asked him to reach the police station to lodge a complaint. Around 6.30 pm, the police found Deshmukh's body dumped in the area. "As soon as we got to know about the abduction, I rushed to the police station. The police team started looking, but they could not trace him. Meanwhile, since Shivraj had recognised the accused as supporters of Vishnu Chate, I called him directly. He initially said he would look into it and later called me saying my brother would return in some time," Dhananjay claimed. "In two hours, we spoke 36 times over the phone but my brother did not return. During this time, I kept requesting the police to trace my brother, but they took it lightly. They said I should continue to be in touch with Chate and inform the police once he returns. After four hours, we received information that my brother's body had been found. It was only then that the police took the official complaint," Dhananjay alleged. However, a senior police officer has denied the family's claims of laxity in police action.

How is this connected to Dhananjay Munde?

According to the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of Maharashtra Police, which is probing the murder, Deshmukh was abducted and killed for trying to thwart an extortion attempt by the accused from a windmill company in Beed. Eight persons, including Karad, were arrested and charged in connection with the murder. The others are Sudarshan Ghule, Vishnu Chate, Jayram Chate, Mahesh Kedar, Sudhir Sangle, Prateek Ghule and Siddharth Sonawane. All are currently in judicial custody. One more accused, Krishna Andhale, remains at large. The police said a supplementary chargesheet will be filed against him after his arrest. Meanwhile, local residents have raised allegations that Andhale too may have been killed. A total of three cases have been registered in all – a case of extortion in which Karad,

### DPCC plans lab network expansion amid pending accreditation and tech-driven solutions



GNS News Agency, March 7

Filing pollution-related complaints with the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) may soon become as easy as using a WhatsApp chatbot. The DPCC has plans to implement online inspection modules for officers, a digital helpdesk to assist citizens, and drone surveillance to monitor industrial areas and drains. Within three months, the organisation is expected to launch an app or software that will analyse real-time pollution data from various state-recognised laboratories. The decisions were made during the 74th board meeting on February 13, where the DPCC reviewed necessary actions. The board members noted that using technology for pollution monitoring will be a prominent priority. In addition, there were important discussions about the labs available to the DPCC for environmental sampling.

In a previous board meeting, it was decided to include the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and government college laboratories, recognising them as state labs, to expand the lab network. Currently, the DPCC operates a lab in the ISBT building, where wastewater, water, air, and noise parameters are analysed. "Public notice is being issued for obtaining the willingness of colleges and DJB for their laboratory facility," stated the minutes of the meeting (MoM), and emphasis was put on timelines. However, the DPCC's only laboratory has not yet received accreditation from the Na-

tional Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL). Additionally, the lab has not been recognised under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. In the previous meeting, the board was informed that the DPCC is following the protocol of testing of samples as per standard methods and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) protocol. The board directed that the accreditation of the labs, both NABL and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF), be completed in a time-bound manner. According to officials, the administration is hiring an expert consultant to help get the lab recognised. As a result, the board has determined that the hiring process must be completed within a month. In the meantime, NABL and MoEF labs were included for sampling.

The DPCC is facing challenges with tight timelines in various matters. For example, in August 2024, the Supreme Court issued a directive stating that all vacant positions must be filled by April 30, 2025. This decision was made in response to ongoing concerns about staffing shortages that could impact pollution control efforts in Delhi. To meet the April 30 deadline, the DPCC is accelerating its recruitment efforts by using the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), hiring from CPCB waitlists, and bringing in contracted staff. Regarding technology, online continuous monitoring systems (OCMS) sensors are being installed at 32 locations along the Yamuna River. Although no specific deadline has been set, the board has directed that the tendering process be expedited, as only two bidders have applied. Similarly, the mobile air quality monitoring van, managed by IIT Kanpur and the SuperSite for real-time source apportionment at ITO, is currently under review. The board has requested that the process be expedited for its operation. The DPCC has rejected the current methodology, deeming it unsuitable. They have engaged the Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) to develop a more effective approach. Additionally, the board has decided to shut down the Smog Tower located on Baba Kharak Singh Marg, considering it a waste of public funds. This tower will be closed like the Anand Vihar smog tower, as determined by the CPCB.

### Opposition condemns Punjab farm union leaders' detention ahead of agitation: 'talk to farmers, respect their struggle'

GNS News Agency, March 7

Opposition parties in Punjab Tuesday condemned the detention of several farm union leaders by the Punjab Police ahead of their week-long protests, and hit out at Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann for "pure dictatorship" as they demanded their release. The Punjab chapter of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), a coalition of 37 farmers' unions, has planned protests and a 'Chandigarh Chalo' march from Wednesday to press for their 18-point charter of demands, including minimum support prices or MSPs to ownership rights. Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leaders were unanimous in hitting out at Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann for walking out of the meeting with SKM leaders Monday evening in Chandigarh and then ordering the Punjab Police to detain the farmers leaders ahead of their agitation. Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring said the state's farmers are not opponents of the chief minister but are the backbone of the economy. In a social media post on X, Warring also accused Mann of ignoring the farmers and weakening Punjab's future.

"When farmers prosper, Punjab thrives—our markets flourish, small shopkeepers earn, and every household benefits. Yet, for over a year, they have been protesting, and one leader has even put his life at stake. The least you could do is listen. If they can't talk to their own CM, where will they go? Ignoring them weakens Punjab's future. Instead of addressing their concerns, why are you arresting farmers? Is this how you treat those who feed the nation? Talk to the farmers—respect their struggle!" he said. Referring to the meeting of the Punjab CM with SKM leaders Monday evening, Leader of Opposition Partap Bajwa said Bhagwant Mann exhibited "utterly arrogant and aggressive behaviour". "Instead of paying heed to farmers's issues and reaching a consensus, CM suddenly left the meeting inconclusive. This isn't the first time, CM Mann has behaved nastily. He has apparently got drunk with power and the people of Punjab will certainly teach him a lesson," he said. Bajwa also strongly condemned Mann for walking out of the meeting. "Thereafter he has let loose a reign of terror on farmer leaders across Punjab resorting to midnight raids and arrests of different



leaders," he said.

Addressing AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal, Bajwa said Bhagwant Mann needs Vipassana and yoga more than Kejriwal. "Farmers are protesting for their legitimate demands, instead of arresting farmers, take action against corrupt ministers, MLAs and officers... I demand the immediate release of the farmer leaders," he said. Congress MLA Pargat Singh also criticised Mann for his actions. "Chief minister first invites farmers for talks, then misbehaves, runs away from the meeting, and later incites hatred against them through tweets! Now, he's ordering their arrests—this is pure dictatorship. This isn't just an insult to Punjab's farmers but a clear execution of BJP's divisive agenda in the state. Punjab won't tolerate this," he said on X. Accusing the AAP Government of turning Punjab into a police state, Congress MLA Sukhpal Khaira said the arrest of farmers leaders means people of Punjab have now lost their right to peaceful protest. SAD former President Sukhbir Singh Badal said, "Such dictatorial methods can never stifle the voice of the Annadata. The Akali Dal expresses solidarity with the protesting farmers and their cause and will do its utmost to ensure all their demands are accepted by this corrupt and arrogant AAP government". Senior SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia demanded that the farmers should be released immediately and Bhagwant Mann should apologise for their mistreatment and illegal arrest.

### Infosys Foundation with Nirmaan NGO Organize HR Conclave 2025 on Impact Hiring in Hyd



GNS News Agency, March 7

Hyderabad: In a strategic effort to prioritize inclusive employment opportunities for the youth, Infosys Foundation, in partnership with Hyderabad-based NGO Nirmaan Organization, successfully conducted the first-ever Nirmaan HR Conclave 2025 on Impact Hiring at Hitec Radisson Hotel, Hyderabad. The conclave

brought together 150 participants, including 90 HR professionals from over 80 companies, along with industry leaders and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) representatives from various organizations. Mr. Mayur Pattna, Founder and Global CEO of Nirmaan Organization, set the context for the conclave, expressing gratitude to Infosys Foundation and participating corpo-

rate organizations for their support in driving meaningful employment opportunities across the nation.

The event was graced by Mr. Shrikant Sinha, CEO of the Telangana Academy for Skill and Knowledge (TASK), as the chief guest. Addressing the participants, he emphasized the significance of Impact Hiring and highlighted TASK's initiative, which focuses on actively

reaching out, skilling, evaluating, and providing employment opportunities to individuals from marginalized communities. The conclave also featured inspiring testimonials from youth from underserved communities who, after undergoing skill development training through Nirmaan, have successfully secured employment in various companies. They shared their professional journeys and the transformative impact of Nirmaan's initiatives, made possible with corporate support. This landmark conclave marks the beginning of a series of HR Conclaves that Nirmaan plans to host in major cities across India, with the mission of contributing to an inclusive workforce and expanding Impact Hiring practices nationwide. It is learnt that Impact Hiring is an initiative by Nirmaan Organization aimed at bridging the gap between skilled individuals from underprivileged backgrounds and job opportunities through 56 skill centers across 20 locations in 9 states Hyderabad

### Escalators, lifts, GPS clocks: Central Railway enhances passenger amenities across Mumbai division

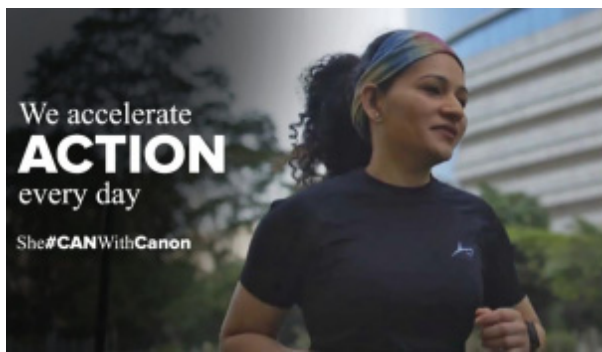


GNS News Agency, March 7

The latest additions include escalators, lifts, improved passenger information systems, upgraded ticketing facilities, and provisions for passengers with disabilities. (File Image) The latest additions include escalators, lifts, improved passenger information systems, upgraded ticketing facilities, and provisions for passengers with disabilities. (File Image) The Central Railway's Mumbai division has introduced several new amenities across its network to enhance travel safety, accessibility, and convenience for commuters. The latest additions include escalators, lifts, improved passenger information systems, upgraded ticketing facilities, and provisions for passengers with disabilities.

Two new escalators have been installed at the Karjat station on platform 1 near the Kalyan-end foot overbridge. Additionally, a new lift has been commissioned at Shelu station on platform 1 at the Karjat-end foot overbridge. These facilities aim to provide easier access for senior citizens, passengers with disabilities, pregnant women and passengers with medical conditions. Four new GPS clocks have been installed at the Sandhurst Road station to improve real-time travel information. Old suburban train indicators have been replaced with new, clearer displays at the Ghansoli, Rabale, and Airoli stations. At the Ulhasnagar, Vangani, and Neral stations, new all-in-one video display indicators have been installed to assist passengers with better visibility of train schedules. The public announcement system at Ulhasnagar station has also been upgraded with new speakers to improve communication and ensure timely updates. To make ticketing more efficient, 575 new automatic ticket vending machines (ATVMs) have been installed at 86 stations in the Mumbai division. The railway has also initiated the procurement of 226 additional ATVMs. These machines are expected to ease passenger movement by reducing queues at ticket counters. For passengers with disabilities, 170 new buzzers have been installed at various stations on the Main and Harbour lines. These buzzers will assist visually challenged passengers in locating designated areas meant for their use, ensuring a more accessible travel experience.

### Canon India Unveils She #CANwithCanon Campaign Championing Every Day Action for Women's Empowerment



Hyderabad: This International Women's Day, Canon India is not just celebrating women, it is spotlighting the importance of taking action to accelerate change, through its 'She #CANwithCanon' campaign. Aligned with the international Women's Day theme of 'Accelerate Action', the campaign aims to highlight that women empowerment shouldn't be a momentary commitment but instead focused on creating systematic, sustainable opportunities that enable women to thrive personally and professionally.

The campaign features a powerful video showcasing the challenges women face every day and reinforces Canon India's commitment to taking concrete steps that ensure gender equality and inclusive progress. It celebrates women as inspiring ambassadors and key pillars of success, emphasizing that inclusivity is not just a policy, but a practice. With a long-standing commitment to fueling growth, the campaign spotlights progressive initiatives such as Leadership & Mentorship programs that pair women leaders with newcomers to foster their professional development. The De-Light initiative ensures office lights are turned off at 5:30PM to promote work-life balance, while dedicated cab services enable safe commutes for women employees.

With hybrid working options and flexible working hours implemented since 2002, and a 'Health 1st' philosophy, Canon India has created an environment where women can grow professionally without compromising personal responsibilities and wellbeing. A two-month walkathon has been introduced to inspire a lifetime of wellbeing among employees, partners, and the community at large, while symbolizing the collective steps taken towards long-lasting change.

Speaking on the campaign, Mr. C. Sukumaran, Senior Director, Product & Communication, Canon India said, "At Canon, empowering women goes beyond celebrating achievements – it's about fostering an environment where our workforce can succeed, both personally and professionally. Through 'She #CANwithCanon,' we are stressing on the importance of real change, ensuring that equality is not an aspiration but a lived reality. By mentoring, supporting, and investing in women, every single day, we pave the way for stronger, more diverse leadership and success."

Building upon the momentum of the '#CANwithCanon' campaign, which showcased how Canon's solutions have empowered individuals and businesses, 'She #CANwithCanon' reaffirms the organization's dedication to fostering a culture where women are empowered to thrive. By continuing to champion positive attitudes and equal opportunities, we aim to inspire a future where every woman can confidently say, "I CAN."

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₹ 3

## India's first allergen forensics laboratory to come up in Hyderabad's Nanakramguda

Hyderabad: Like a scene straight from a crime novel, for the first time in India, senior allergy specialists from Hyderabad have launched an Allergen Forensics Laboratory, aimed at arming investigators with evidence to unlock mysteries through pollen deposits. The groundbreaking allergen laboratory, coming up at Nanakramguda, has the potential to open a new chapter in crime investigations by identifying minute pollen deposits from crime scenes, a science that is also known as forensic palynology. In a step towards establishing forensic allergy as a research subject and Forensics Allergen Laboratory, founder of World Allergy Foundation Dr Vyakarnam Nageshwar on Friday entered into an MoU with his counterparts at Centurian University in Hyderabad.

## Kavikrut appointed as the new T-Hub CEO

Hyderabad: The State government has appointed Hyderabad Kavikrut as the new T-Hub Chief Executive Officer, effective from March 10. Kavikrut was most recently the Chief Growth Officer at OYO.

T-Hub is one of the world's leading startup incubators and is dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship and scaling startups. So far, it has supported over 2000 startups.

Speaking on his appointment, Kavikrut said "Telangana's commitment to startups has been truly inspiring to me, and I am honoured to have the opportunity to build upon the pioneering work that T-Hub has been doing for the past decade." Kavikrut started his career as a healthcare startup founder and later worked with leading companies such as Amazon and Piramal Group.

## KT Rama Rao raises alarm over Centre's new Income Tax Act posing threat to digital privacy



GNS News Agency, March 7

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao raised an alarm against the Centre's proposed new

Income Tax Bill, calling it a serious threat to digital privacy. He demanded answers from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

on the sweeping powers being granted to I-T officials. "The new bill allows unchecked access to citizens' social media, emails, and online trading accounts under the guise of tax scrutiny. This is nothing but mass surveillance," he said. He warned that the unprecedented intrusion into virtual digital spaces could lead to harassment and misuse. With financial data already under multiple reporting mechanisms, he said the draconian intrusion tramples on fundamental rights and digital privacy of citizens. "Who will hold officials accountable if there is any misuse of this overreaching provision?" he asked.

## TGSRTC announces 2.5 per cent Dearness Allowance to employees



GNS News Agency, March 7

Hyderabad: Transport Minister Ponnabhai Prabhakar said that 2.5 per cent Dearness Allowance (DA) is being announced for RTC employees after discussing it with the RTC management. Prabhakar said the 2.5 per cent DA will cost the RTC Rs 3.6 crore every month. Since the launch of the Mahalaxmi scheme, 150 crore women have travelled free of cost so far, he said. This DA will be calculated on the basic salary after the wage revision and paid as part of the salary. "After the launch of the Mahalaxmi scheme, the number of women passengers has increased by 14 lakh women every day. So many have been travelling free of cost each day," the minister said.

## Naxalism vanishing from jungles, but taking root in urban centres: PM Modi

GNS News Agency, March 7

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday (March 6, 2025) said Naxalism was being wiped out from the jungles, but expressed concern that it was fast spreading roots in urban areas with some political parties also echoing their ideology. Addressing the Republic Plenary Summit organised by the news channel here, Mr. Modi also targeted the Congress saying it had crushed the aspirations of people, who also stopped expecting much from the party.

He said things have now changed and the people's aspirations were rising in the past decade since his government came to power. "Today's India thinks big, sets big targets and delivers big results. It is because the mentality of the country has changed. The country is moving ahead with big aspirations," Mr. Modi said. "In the past decade, we have transformed impact-less administration into impactful governance," he asserted. Mr. Modi said



the youth are the X-factor of today's India, adding that the 'X' stands for experimentation, excellence, and expansion. The Prime Minister said the government has worked hard on the security front and terror attacks and sleeper cells of terrorists have disappeared from television headlines as well as the country. "Naxalism in the country is also on its last legs. In the past, over 100 districts were severely affected by this menace. However, this number has drastically reduced to just around two dozen districts today," Mr. Modi said. He said this was made possible after the government focused on delivering governance at the grassroots level. "While

Naxalism is steadily being eradicated from jungles due to decisive actions, it is beginning to spread its roots into urban centres, presenting a new challenge," Mr. Modi said.

"Urban Naxals have cast their net so fast that a political party that opposed urban Naxals, was inspired by the thoughts of Gandhiji and had its pulse on the people, was now echoing their views," he said. "Urban Naxals have entrenched themselves in such political parties. Today, we can hear the voice of urban Naxals in these political parties. We can imagine how deep their roots go," Mr. Modi said in an apparent reference to the Congress party.

## Siddaramaiah presents Rs 4.09 lakh crore Karnataka budget, focuses on welfare, education

GNS News Agency, March 7

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah presented his record 16th budget on Friday, with a total expenditure outlay of Rs 4.09 lakh crore. The education sector received around 10 per cent of the total budget outlay at Rs 45,286 crore, followed by the women and child development department, for which the state government will spend around 8 per cent or Rs 34,955 crore in the 2024-25 fiscal. Siddaramaiah set aside Rs 51,034 crore for the government's five guarantee schemes, down from the Rs 56,000 crore allocated for the schemes in the 2024-25 fiscal. As per the budget, Rs 28,068 crore was provided to 1.22 crore households in 2024-25 under a scheme which provides Rs 2,000 per month to women heads of a family. For Gruha Jyothi, the state government's free power scheme, the outlay for the year has been enhanced to Rs 10,100 crore, compared to the Rs 9,657 crore allocated in the previous fiscal. The Shakthi scheme, which provides free bus rides for women, was provided Rs 5,500 crore for the 2025-26 fiscal, compared to the Rs 5,015 crore allocated in the previous fiscal.

The commercial taxes department is the main revenue generator for the government, with a Rs 1.2 lakh crore target being set for it. "Karnataka is the second highest GST revenue collecting state in the country in 2024-25. A total revenue of Rs 1,05,000 crore is estimated from commercial tax in revised estimates for 2024-25," Siddaramaiah said in his budget speech. Among the revenue generation measures proposed by the government was to auction unused liquor licences in the state. Apart from the funds generated from this, the Karnataka government also set a revenue collection target of Rs 40,000 crore for the excise de-



partment. The revenue generated for the 2024-25 fiscal is Rs 36,500 crore. The stamps and registration department, which generated 17 per cent additional revenue until December, has been set a target of Rs 28,000 crore. The department has been able to shore up additional revenue due to an increase in stamp duty last year, during which the target set for the department was Rs 24,000 crore. "A total revenue of Rs 12,500 crore is estimated from motor vehicle tax in revised estimates for 2024-25. The revenue collection target for the transport Department for the year 2025-26 is Rs 15,000 crore," Siddaramaiah said. For the mines and geology department, revenue collection is estimated to be Rs 7,250 crore as per revised estimates for 2024-25. The royalty collection for the year 2025-26 is estimated at Rs 9,000 crore. The government is also looking to generate additional revenue by levying tax on major minerals based on a Supreme Court order. A legislation was passed by the government over the same, which is expected to generate an additional revenue of Rs 3,000 crore.

## KT Rama Rao rebukes Congress for losing major investments to other States

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao rebuked the Congress government over its failure to retain investments that Telangana had previously secured. He pointed out how major companies — Keynes, Corning, and now Premier Energies — have moved to Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh respectively, under Congress rule. "These Congress fellows cannot even hold on to the investments we had already bagged a few years ago. What a shame, Rahul Gandhi," he posted on X. He pointed out how Telangana successfully attracted firms like KITECH under BRS rule, securing investments worth over Rs 3,000 crore. Blow to Telangana's industrial sector: Solar cell manufacturer Premier Energies to move to Andhra Pradesh. Rama Rao also criticised the State's financial mismanagement, stating that the Congress promised to abolish LRS before elections, but was now using it for revenue generation.

"Hyderabad is suffering under HYDRAA and RR tax (Rahul Gandhi and Revanth Reddy), resulting in collapse of real estate," he said.

## Ruckus at Telangana Secretariat as contractors reach Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka's chambers over pending bills

GNS News Agency, March 7

Hyderabad: Vexed with the Telangana government's apathy in addressing their issues, contractors from different districts assembled at Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka's chambers in the Secretariat on Friday and demanded that their pending bills be cleared.

They charged that their bills had been pending for long and that the government was delaying the payments. Most of them were small and medium contractors, and claimed that their bills — ranging from Rs 5 crore to Rs 7 crore — were kept pending for the last few months. When they wanted to meet the Deputy Chief Minister and submit a representation, the Special Protection Force denied them



permission. As a result, they entered into argument with the security personnel.

Videos of the contractors arguing with security personnel at the Secretariat have gone viral on social media. Unconfirmed reports said the Deputy Chief Minister left the Secretariat without meeting the contractors. Contractors, who had executed works in different departments, in-

cluding the Roads and Buildings, Municipal Administration and others, have been complaining that their bills were not being cleared and the payments were being delayed for months. On January 10, contractors working for the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) had staged a protest at the head office demanding that their bills be cleared immediately.

## Konidela Nagababu Files Nomination for MLA Quota MLC Elections



GNS News Agency, March 7

Konidela Nagababu has officially submitted his nomination papers to contest as a candidate for the MLA quota MLC elections. The submission took place today in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly, where he presented his documents to Election Returning Officer Vanitarani. Nagababu's candidacy is bolstered by significant support from prominent political figures, including Minister Nara Lokesh. The nomination ceremony was attended by several notable leaders, such as Ministers Nara Lokesh, Nadendla Manohar, and Anapalle MLA Konathala Ramakrishna, along with BJP leader Vishnu Kumar Raju, Tadepalligudem MLA Bolisetty Srinivas, and Palla Srinivasa Rao.

During the event, Nagababu expressed his gratitude towards Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan for the opportunity to contest as an MLC candidate. He also thanked Lokesh and Manohar for their support throughout the nomination process. Sources reveal that Nagababu is among the five candidates finalized for the MLA quota MLC elections, with his name selected by party president Pawan Kalyan. As the state general secretary of the Jana Sena Party, Nagababu was in-

structed to file his nomination for the upcoming elections and signed his nomination papers yesterday.

## New Income Tax Bill serious threat to digital privacy: KT Rama Rao

GNS News Agency, March 7

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao raised an alarm over the Centre's proposed new Income Tax Bill, calling it a serious threat to digital privacy. He demanded answers from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on the sweeping powers being granted to I-T officials. In a strongly worded statement, Rama Rao condemned the provisions of the new Bill, which indicate an alarming overreach by the government under the pretext of tax enforcement. "The new Bill allows unchecked access to citizens' social media, emails, and online trading accounts under the guise of tax scrutiny. This is nothing but mass surveillance," he said. He warned that the unprecedented intrusion into virtual digital spaces could lead to harassment and misuse. With financial data already under multiple reporting mechanisms, he said the draconian intrusion tramples on fundamental rights and digital privacy of citizens. "Who will hold officials accountable if there is any misuse of this overreaching provision?" he asked, demanding accountability from the Prime Minister and the Union Finance Minister, on regulating these powers. He called it a blatant assault on digital privacy and urged citizens and opposition to oppose the Bill, seeking amendments to balance tax enforcement with privacy protection.

## Former minister shares picture of plight of tribals in fetching drinking water in Adilabad



ews Agency, March 7

Adilabad: Tribal women were forced to fetch drinking water from an agriculture borewell at Chintakarra village in Bazarhathoor mandal on Thursday. Their plight was shared by former finance minister T Harish Rao on his X handle on Friday. While posting about the women's ordeal, Rao said that people of Telangana were witnessing woes of drinking used to be a common scene during erstwhile Andhra Pradesh in the rule of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. "Failure of the government in management of Mission Bhagiratha has become a bane to the people who are

left with no option but to gather water from agriculture bore wells, streams and streams, facing odds," he remarked.

The former finance minister alleged that the government failed not only in implementation of schemes, but also in administration and providing drinking water through the ambitious Mission Bhagiratha scheme. He attached a photograph in which tribal women were seen carrying drinking water, drawn from an agriculture well, in pots to their homes, indicating the severity of the drinking water crisis prevailing in the district.

## Three killed, 20 injured in accident involving Hyderabad Kakinada bus near Eluru

GNS News Agency, March 7

Eluru: Three persons were killed and twenty others were injured when a private bus rammed into a cement-laden truck on the highway near Chodimella village in the early hours of Thursday.

# BC sentiment did not work in just concluded MLC polls

# Congress's double standards: publicity blitz while exposing citizens' private details



GNS News Agency, March 7

Karimnagar: BC sentiment seems to have not worked out in the recent MLC elections. Despite BC organizations' strong decision to win the community candidates, other community aspirants won two of the three MLC seats. While Chinnamile Anji Reddy won Karimnagar-Medak-Nizamabad-Adilabad Teachers constituency. Though he is from BC community contested on BJP ticket, no other political party fielded their candidates for teachers segment. Never before in the past, political parties took MLC polls as a

challenge this time around and gave top priority to victory. Some of the candidates started campaigning two to three months before the polls. However, the campaign, which was going smoothly until then, took a different turn with the release of caste census which showed a decline in the BC population. BC organizations, which were already unhappy with none of the political parties fielding community leaders in the elections, expressed anger over the decline of the BC population. Enraged over parties' negligence attitude towards the community, various BC organizations gave a call to the community voters to teach a befitting lesson to political parties by electing BC leaders in the fray. Congress party's own

MLC Teenmar Mallanna (Chinthapandu Naveen), who had burnt the copy of caste census, challenged Reddy MLC candidates to "Say no to BC votes and win MLC polls without community votes". He appealed to the BC electorates to vote for only BC candidates. Enraged over Mallanna's comments against their community, Reddy associations lodged complaints against him in different police stations. On the other hand, BC organizations, during their campaign, highlighted that Reddys, who constitute only five percent of the state's population, have 43 MLAs and 10 MPs. Even if the community leaders are representing a majority of MLA and MP seats, the political parties again gave MLC tickets to Reddy leaders. Though it was not

clear how far BC electors exercised their votes to their community candidates, Reddy voters were reportedly polarized. Irrespective of political affiliations, Reddys had internally decided that both first and second priority votes should be cast in favor of community candidates only. Political analysts say that Mallanna's comments against the Reddy community seemed to have damaged the winning prospects of BSP candidate Prasanna Harikrishna in Karimnagar graduates constituency. Political leaders and contestant candidates at the counting center believed that Harikrishna, who got 60,419 votes in the first priority votes, might win the poll with second priority votes. However, he was also eliminated in the counting of second priority votes.

GNS News Agency, March 7

Hyderabad: The Congress government in Telangana has come under fire for its contradictory stance on citizen data privacy and reckless public spending. While refusing to disclose the caste census details citing legal constraints, the government has now ordered the public display of beneficiaries' personal information under the Crop Loan Waiver 2024 and Rythu Bharosa schemes.

The Agriculture Department issued orders on March 5 to display lists in all gram panchayats, revealing names, bank branch details, and credited amounts - raising serious privacy concerns. "How is it legal to publicly disclose citizens' personal details without consent? The Supreme Court has ruled against such practices multiple times," questioned a netizen and BRS supporter Nayini Anurag Reddy on social media.



Adding to the controversy, the Congress government released Rs 30 crore for flex banners to be displayed in three places of every village to publicise its schemes, benefiting private vendors at taxpayers' expense. They stated that instead of putting the list on notice boards of every gram panchayat following increasing demand from farmers

and the opposition parties to verify genuineness of beneficiaries, it would be unfair to spend such huge amount which could only benefit private vendors. Several netizens questioned the irony of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's refusal to share the caste census report in the Assembly due to legal restrictions, while his government freely publishes beneficiary details. Revanth Reddy, who once opposed the BRS government's publicity spending as TPCC president

# Anti-Drug Drive continues: More properties bulldozed, Minister says 'as per law'

# Police complaint filed after human organs from PGI museum found in residential area

# Tragedy strikes wedding procession, woman dies as car ploughs through in Karimnagar

GNS News Agency, March 7

As part of its ongoing drive against the drug menace, Punjab Police Thursday demolished houses and shops in Amritsar and six properties in Khanna even as it conducted raids at 501 locations, leading to the arrest of 75 drug smugglers after registration of 53 First Information Reports (FIRs). With this, the number of total drug smugglers arrested has reached 622 in just six days. Meanwhile, the Amritsar Corporation with the support of the police, demolished two-storied houses and shops constructed by drug traffickers. Amritsar Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar said the demolished properties belonged to two notorious drug traffickers, Gurmeet Singh and Sandeep Singh alias Sonu.



Three cases have been registered against Gurmeet Singh, with 325 grams of smack and 350 grams of heroin recovered. Sandeep has four cases registered against him, including three at Sarai Amanat Khan and cases of Anti-Narcotics Force Mohali. Bhullar and Amritsar East MLA Jeewan Jot Maur were present when the house was demolished. Sources in Municipal corporation said that the demolished properties were in violation of building norms. The authorities also demolished six structures in Khanna on Thursday. These properties, built on encroached municipal land, belonged to six smugglers - Aslam, Sunil, Shindil, Mohendro, Pappu, and Gulshan - who are facing multiple cases related to drug trafficking and illegal liquor trade, police said. Khanna Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Jyoti Yadav said the authorities undertook the demolition after the Khanna municipal council reported these en-

GNS News Agency, March 7

Chandigarh, residents of the PGIMER campus mentioned that a group of unidentified people came in different vehicles and an ambulance and kept human organs and other items. Chandigarh, residents of the area mentioned that a group of unidentified people came in different vehicles and an ambulance and kept human organs and other items.



Residents of Sector 12 filed a police complaint after human organs and other items were kept outside various houses on the PGIMER campus. The complaint, submitted to the incharge of the police post, Sector 12, PGIMER, Chandigarh, residents of the area mentioned that a group of unidentified people came in different vehicles and an ambulance and kept human organs and other items in the house numbers 1, 2 and 15 of Type C quarters on the campus. The residents said that the act is harmful to the residents living near these vacant houses and must be investigated. Claiming that

the foul smell is unbearable, the complainants called for a solution as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the PGIMER clarified that temporary relocation of museum samples outside the Research Block perimeters was done to facilitate the renovation of the Anatomy Museum here. During this time, the non-hazardous study material, which is regularly utilised by students for educational purposes, has been safely and securely stored in accordance with proper protocols, the institute said, in a statement. However, in response to the concerns raised by residents in the area, a decision has been taken to relocate all speci-

mens to another alternate place, keeping in view the safety and security and ensuring the integrity of these study materials vital for student learning. The complaint has been signed by Ranjitha Kumari, Kiran Kumari and Pinki Sinha, who were walking around this area in the afternoon and noticed the ambulance and vehicles stop near these houses, with people wearing PPP kits with masks, and carrying glass cases with what appeared to be a human organs.

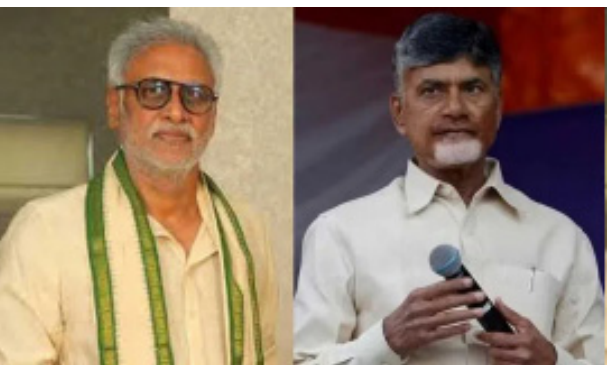
According to another resident, the foul smell could be that of a liquid, formalin gas in which the anatomy parts are stored, and the chemical could lead to irritation in the eyes, respiratory issues, cough etc.

GNS News Agency, March 7

Karimnagar: The celebratory mood of a wedding was shattered and wails rippled through the village after a car in the procession ploughed through the dancing crowds. At least two dozen revellers were injured and a woman died in the incident that shocked Metpalli village in Shankarpatnam mandal. Reports said a procession was being taken out in Metpalli village after the wedding on Thursday night. The driver of a car in the procession apparently lost control and the vehicle ploughed through the dancing crowd. Bakarapu Uma, who was dancing in the marriage procession, sustained serious injuries. All the injured persons were shifted to Huzurabad area hospital. As the condition of Uma turned serious, she was referred to hospital in Hyderabad. However, she died on her way.

# Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu, co-brother Daggubati Venkateswara Rao hug and make up

# Andhra Pradesh Budget a bundle of lies, says YSRCP leader Jagan Mohan Reddy



GNS News Agency, March 7

When Venkateswara Rao returned to his seat after his speech, Chandrababu Naidu stood up to hug him, amid thunderous applause by the audience. Chandrababu Naidu, in his speech, praised Venkateswara Rao for writing the book and said he didn't know that Venkateswara Rao had so much depth. The conflict between the co-brothers dates back to the 1990s when Chandrababu Naidu had led a revolt against NTR to become chief minister of then united Andhra Pradesh. Venkateswara Rao, who had initially backed Chandrababu Naidu, later came back to NTR. After NTR's death, a few months after the revolt, he remained with NTRTDP (LP), headed by NTR's second wife Lakshmi Parvathi. In 1999, he joined Anna TDP floated by NTR's son Harikrishna. After the party's humiliating defeat, he stayed away from politics for a few years. In 2004, he, along with his wife, joined the Congress at the invitation of YS Rajasekhara Reddy.

Though Purandeswari, who was elected to the Lok Sabha twice on a Congress ticket and even became a Minister in the UPA government, switched loyalty to the BJP in 2014 following the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, Venkateswara Rao joined YSR Congress Party. A former Rajya Sabha member, Venkateswara Rao was elected to the Andhra Pradesh Assembly on a Congress ticket from Parichur in 2004 and 2009. He had been staying away from active politics after his defeat in 2019 from the same constituency as the YSR Congress candidate. Though Chandrababu Naidu and Venkateswara Rao had differences and were never seen together for three decades, Purandeswari and her sister Bhuvanewari (Naidu's wife) maintained the family ties.

GNS News Agency, March 7

Amaravati: YSR Congress President and former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday termed the state budget 2025-26 as a bundle of lies with no proper allocations. Alleging that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu deceived all sections of people, Jagan Mohan Reddy announced that on March 12, the party would organise protests at all district Collectors' offices on behalf of students and their parents for the raw deal meted out to them. Addressing a press conference, he asserted that to implement all the Super Six schemes promised by Chandrababu Naidu during electioneering, the government needs to allocate Rs 79,867 crore but there was no trace of such a figure in the budget or in the budget speech. He said Chandrababu Naidu had been resorting to the rhetoric of over Rs 10 lakh crore loan taken by the previous government though the budget documents presented by his government shows the much lesser figure and, in this budget,

the public debt was tucked away deep under. "The lies being spread by the TDP are only to cover up its inability to fulfil the election promises and people are now repenting for once again believing the lies of TDP and are of the opinion that Jagan used to deliver and keep up promises," said the YSRCP leader. Citing data and quoting from various documents, Jagan Mohan Reddy sought to highlight anomalies in the budget, saying they do not match with the poll promises leaving farmers, women, students, youth and other sections in the lurch.

While the coalition promised Rs 3,000 monthly stipend to unemployed youth, there was no mention of it in this budget like the previous budget, he said, adding that for two years, the Naidu government owes Rs 72,000 to each youth of the state. "In the Governor's speech, it was claimed that Rs 6.5 lakh crore investment has already come and four lakh jobs were already given. ing employees," he said.

# Fisheries Startup Conclave 2.0 to be held on 8th March 2025 in Hyderabad, Telangana

# HEALTH CHECK-UP CAMP FOR DETECTION OF SILICOSIS BY DGMS SCZ, Hyd



A Silicosis Health Checkup camp for early detection of silicosis among workmen employed in small unorganised mines under the jurisdiction of Directorate General of Mines Safety, South Central Zone, Hyderabad, Ministry of Labour and Employment, at ESIC Hospital, Sanath Nagar, Hyderabad from 5th to 7th March, 2025. About 155 workmen were examined. The workmen from Ranga Reddy District, Medchal-Malkajigiri District, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District and Sanga Reddy District of Telangana State participated in the Silicosis Health Checkup camp. Dr. K. Surendar Reddy, Professor & HOD (Pulmonary Medicine), ESIC, Dr J. Suneet, Asst. Professor (Radiodiagnosis), ESIC and Dr P Ramesh Babu, SCCL examined the workmen to detect the silicosis. Dr. Devidas T, Professor and Head of Department at ESIC (Community Medicine), coordinated with DGMS to organize the camp. The vision of DGMS is to attain risk and hazard-free conditions of work and welfare of persons employed in mines. Let us all strive to achieve it.

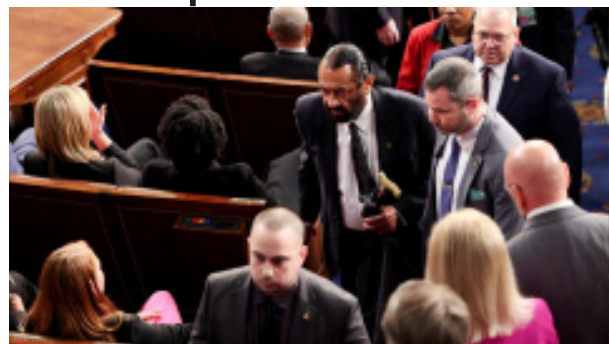
Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh, along with MoS Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel & Shri George Kurian to grace the occasion. The Department of Fisheries, under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (MoFAH&D) is organizing a Fisheries Startup Conclave 2.0 on 8th March 2025 in Hyderabad, Telangana. The event will be graced by Union Minister, Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh, MoFAH&D and Ministry of Panchayati Raj, along with Minister of State, Shri George Kurian, MoFAH&D and Ministry of Minority Affairs and Minister of State, Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel, MoFAH&D and Ministry of Panchayati Raj. The event will also witness participation from government officials, Fisheries Startups and Entrepreneurs.

The Startup Conclave 2.0 will bring together key stakeholders to discuss and promote innovation in the fisheries sector. Deliberations on startup opportunities in fisheries/aquaculture along with e-commerce prospects in the sector will also be held. Startup conclave 2.0 will also witness the launch of the National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDP) Mobile App, a transformative initiative aimed at streamlining digital access to fisheries-related services and resources. The Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge 2.0 will also be unveiled, reinforcing the government's commitment to fostering entrepreneurship and technological advance-



ments in the sector. Additionally, the distribution of Entrepreneur Model approvals to fisheries startups will recognize and support emerging enterprises, further strengthening the fisheries startup ecosystem. The technical feedback & interaction session will provide a platform for in-depth discussions on the fisheries ecosystem in India and key initiatives undertaken by National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) along with experience sharing by fisheries startups.

## U.S. lawmaker censured for protest at Trump speech



GNS News Agency, March 7

The U.S. House of Representatives censured Texas Democrat Al Green on Thursday (March 6, 2025) after he was thrown out of the chamber for repeatedly interrupting President Donald Trump's address to Congress. Mr. Green, 77, stood up and waved his cane as he heckled the Republican leader during Tuesday's (March 4, 2025) speech, refusing to sit down despite being warned that he risked removal. Republican congressman Dan Newhouse — a moderate who voted to impeach Mr. Trump in 2021 — had introduced the resolution to subject Mr. Green to a formal reprimand in front of his colleagues.

"Decorum and order are the institutional grounds for the way we do business in the United States Congress, and the sheer disregard for that standard during U.S. President Trump's ad-

dress by the gentleman from Texas is unacceptable," Newhouse said in a statement. Mr. Green's disruption was just one part of a broader Democratic protest during the address, with lawmakers walking out, yelling at Trump and brandishing signs. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt accused Democrats of being the "party of insanity and hate," although she did not acknowledge the Republicans' own past transgressions during addresses by Democratic presidents. There were few statements of unequivocal support for Mr. Green from his colleagues. Although the Democrats tried unsuccessfully to get the censure vote canceled, a handful voted for it when it came to the floor. For critics of the Democratic response to Trump's first weeks in office, the episode demonstrated the party's lack of discipline and a clear strategy to oppose his plans to massively

shrink federal spending. Democratic Senator John Fetterman called Tuesday's (March 4, 2025) protests a "sad cavalcade of self-owns and unhinged petulance." "It only makes Trump look more presidential and restrained. We're becoming the metaphorical car alarms that nobody pays attention to — and it may not be the winning message," he posted on X. Censure votes used to be rare, but have been used by both parties more frequently in recent years.

The resolution itself — a formal reprimand by a lawmaker's peers — is seen as the punishment, and does not entail any further denial of privileges. Mr. Green and some of his colleagues sang civil rights gospel anthem "We Shall Overcome" as House Speaker Mike Johnson read out the censure resolution. Before the vote, Mr. Green told reporters he was happy to "suffer the consequences" of his actions, which he said were to highlight Republican plans to cut health insurance programs and welfare. "I stood up for those who need Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security," he posted on X. "Democrats will never abandon the fight to make sure every American has a safe, healthy, and financially secure life."

## Karnataka budget outlay crosses 4 lakh crore for the first time

GNS News Agency, March 7

Karnataka's budget outlay has for the first time crossed 4 lakh crore. In his 16th budget Chief Minister Siddaramaiah presented on Friday (March 7, 2025) for the fiscal year 2025-26, the total budget outlay has been estimated to be ₹9,549 crore. However, this budget has also been a revenue deficit budget, like the previous year's budget. The revenue deficit has been pegged at 19,262 crore — down from 27,354 crore in 2024-25. The total revenue receipts is estimated to be 2,92,477 crore, of which ₹2,08,100 is the State's own tax revenues, 16,500 crore non-tax revenues and Government of India receipts is 67,877 crore. The gross borrowings is pegged at 1,16,000 crore. The budget outlay includes revenue expenditure of 3,11,739 crore, capital expenditure of 71,336 crore — up from 55,877 crore in 2024-25 — and loan repayment of ₹26,474 crore. This essentially shows that the loans being raised are not only being used for capital expenditure, but also for loan re-



payment and revenue expenditure.

Saying that the State has been facing fiscal challenges due to cut in tax devolution to Karnataka from the Centre, Mr. Siddaramaiah said that his government had allocated ₹51,034 crore for implementation of the five guarantee schemes this year and managed the guarantees 'within the prudent fiscal deficit norm of 3% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) and debt-GSDP ratio of 25% for the last two budgets'. For the financial year 2025-26, revenue deficit of ₹19,262 crore is 0.63% of GSDP, fiscal deficit of 90,262 crore is 2.95% of GSDP and total liabilities of the State at the end of 2025-26 is estimated to be

7,64,655 crore, which is 24.91% of GSDP. Thus, the budget has remained within permissible limits of the Karnataka Fiscal Responsibility Act, 2002. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah arrives to present the state Budget 2025-26, in Bengaluru on March 7, 2025. The economy of Karnataka (GSDP) grew at 7.4% in 2024-25, outpacing the national growth rate of 6.4%. Mr. Siddaramaiah said in his budget speech. Karnataka has contributed 8.4% to the national GDP in the same year. Following a year of drought in 2023-24 when the agriculture sector shrunk by 4.9%, the agriculture sector in the State has recorded a growth rate of 4% outpacing the national growth rate of 3.8%. While

the State Government had allocated 44,000 crore to various departments for farmer welfare schemes, this year it has gone up to 51,339 crore.

The industrial sector has registered a growth rate of 5.8% in 2024-25. Through the new Industrial Policy 2025-30, the State aims to achieve a 12% industrial growth rate and creation of 20 lakh jobs by 2030, the Chief Minister said. In order to attract large investments, the government has committed to financial assistance and subsidies totalling ₹13,692 crore in 2025-26. The services sector, which has a whopping 66% share of Karnataka's economy, has achieved a growth rate of 8.9%, outpacing the national growth rate of 7.2%. The government has implemented several new policies in various service sectors, like Information Technology, Biotechnology, Tourism and others, to promote economic growth. These policies are expected to generate ₹1 lakh crore investments, and the government has committed to ₹3,500 crore subsidies and financial assistance for 2025-26.

## Amish Tripathi defends stance on Sati: 'Where are the widows in Indian epics?'

GNS News Agency, March 7

"I am deeply, crazily passionate about Lord Shiva," declares 50-year-old Indian author Amish Tripathi at the launch event of the 'Legends of Shiva' series. Narrating his experience travelling to different Shiva temples across India, he says, "Most Indians think they know Shiva, but as you discover through this documentary, actually may be we don't know him as well". The banker-turned-author, who has written eleven books, including the highly-acclaimed 'Meluha' series, revealed that he re-married his wife Shivani at two temples during the course of shooting the documentary. "There is an Ardhanareeshwara temple in Tamil Nadu where the deity is half man, half woman and it is very auspicious to get married there. So me and Shivani got remarried there," shares Amish. The duo also got re-hitched in an Uttarakhand temple (Triyuganarayan) where Lord Shiva is believed to have married his consort Parvati.

In a free-wheeling conversation with The Hindu, Amish Tripathi spoke about the 'Legends of Shiva' series, his thoughts on India's caste system and his take on Sati. 'Legends of Shiva' is your second collaboration with Discovery Plus after 'Legends of Ramayan'. What aspects of Shiva are you discovering throughout the series, and where and all have you travelled? We have travelled to all ends of the subcontinent. From Kedarnath ji in North to Pashupatinath ji and Kalin Chowk in Nepal and Varanasi. In the West, we went to Kailash temple, Mahakaleswar temple, Khandoba in Central Maharashtra and in the East to Unakoti in Tripura. In Tamil Nadu, we went to Chidambaram, Arunachaleswara, the Ardhanareeshwara temple. We saw Lord Shiva in various forms including the Isha Ashram in Coimbatore which is a modern approach to the Mahadev. We spoke to people across all social classes and age groups; not just temples which follow the Shastra approach but also those who follow the folklore. There are many transgender persons who are Shiva devotees and many local temples which have strong traditions.

What aspects of your books (the Meluha series) will be reflected in the show?

Lord Shiva in many ways is an inclusive God. On the surface, it appears that there are a lot of contradictions but my book series was in a linear story. What we are doing here is approaching him through his various forms — as the Lord of Time, as the Lord of Elements, the Panchbhoothas, in Tamil Nadu temples, as the Lord of animals in Pashupatinath. It is approaching the same subject (as the books) but in a more non-fictional way. Recently, you were involved in a debate about Sati as you said it was not widespread in the subcontinent and it doesn't have a basis in Hinduism. Sanjay Leela Bhansali also faced similar criticism when he portrayed the Jauhara scene as a brave act in Padmaavat. It does diminish the helplessness and the fear of social banishment which these women faced. Let's approach it from different perspectives. The concept of Sati itself, if you look at our ancient scriptures, you don't find that word. You make a list of widows in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the truth stares us in the face. In Mahabharata itself it is said, why she did it. She believed that she was the cause of her husband's death. She felt guilty and even at that time, the sages who were around were telling her don't do this because who will take care of your children. The term used for this ritual suicide was not Sati but Sagamana or Anugamana. It is worth asking when the British wrote their interpretation of this and why didn't they use the term Sagamana or Anugamana, which is a gender neutral term.

Are you saying that husbands killed themselves after their wives' death?

In Raj Tarangini, when the Queen died, her male attendants and bodyguards also died on fire because they felt that they didn't do their duty. Even when Arjun felt he could not protect Abhimanyu, he was ready to enter the fire. This is Sagamana or Anugamana. But that is mixing historical fiction with historical document...

Madri and Arjuna are the same example from Mahabharat. In Ramayana, Lord Rama left the mortal body via Jal Samadhi in the Sarayu river. Point is, like today, you have euthanasia in the West which both men and women do it. Does that mean all Westerners are monsters killing their elderly?

But that is by a court order and by choice. Sati, by historical fact, was a norm in pre-independence India.

I would like to have this debate and I sense the emotion, which is completely fair. I am not saying India was perfect. One of our biggest problems was the caste system, which I speak strongly against. But it almost feels like



the white masters have done their job. When the slaves believe the lies they told us, they are victors. The entire history is written by them; that we were a barbaric people. Look at our epics themselves, where are the widows? In Abrahamic cultures, suicide was considered as a crime against God but in Dharmic cultures not so much. But it was actively discouraged. Since you mention the caste system, in your books, you have suggested its source as an occupation-based categorisation system. In 'Meluha', the newborns are adopted by the state and then categorised based on merit, occupation, skill later on. However, this system got corrupted. Do you think this actually happened? In Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says that he created four varnas, but does not mention birth. In Dr. Ambedkar's book 'Who are the Shudras?', published in 1946, he posits a theory. Remember genetic study was not available at that time. So based on scriptural evidence, he shows that Shudras used to be rulers and over time the statuses of various ruling tribes fell. Like the Mauryas who ruled north India, but are now Scheduled Caste. He also posited that there was heavy intermingling i.e. inter-caste marriages among different groups till 1500 years ago. Then, for some reason, it stopped. Why did that happen? I think this hasn't received enough research. Genetic evidence and Dr. Ambedkar's theory prove that caste system was not as rigid but became rigid about 1,500 years ago. 'Legends of Shiva with Amish' premiered on 3rd March at 9pm on Discovery Channel and discovery+ app, with fresh episodes dropping every Monday.

## T.N. BJP launches signature campaign in favour of three-language formula



GNS News Agency, March 7

The Tamil Nadu BJP on Wednesday (March 5, 2025) launched a signature campaign 'Samakalvi engal urimai' (equal education is our right) in favour of implementing the three-language formula, proposed by the National Education Policy 2020, in Tamil Nadu. Former Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and former Union Minister Pon. Radhakrishnan launched the campaign and a website to get digital signatures, respectively, in Chennai. BJP State president K.

Annamalai told journalists the party would hold a series of public meetings in various places across the State and BJP members would go door-to-door to get the signature of people who support implementation of three-language policy in the State. He said after getting one crore signature by end of May month, the party would submit it to the President of India. He justified his party's stance on boycotting the all-party meeting convened by Mr. Stalin on Wednesday and said there was no reason to call for an all-party meeting on delimitation

## Skeleton of missing 18-year-old found in backyard of his house in Bengaluru

The Hindu Bureau 2-3 minutes

Office of the Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru city. Police suspect the involvement of family members in the crime. They are waiting for the last rites to question them. Office of the Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru city. Police suspect the involvement of family members in the crime. They are waiting for the last rites to question them. Photo Credit: K. Murali Kumar

The body of an 18-year-old caretaker of a plant nursery at Haralur in Bengaluru, who was reported missing in December 2024, was found in the backyard of his house on March 5. The deceased, Amit Kumar, got married in February 2024. He was working at the plant nursery owned by his relative Kamlesh Kumar and was living in the same place with two of his relatives, who were working as food delivery boys. In a complaint filed by Amit's father Tek Chand, 54, who is a resident of Unnao district in U.P., he has stated that his son went missing mysteriously and his mobile phone was switched off.

The family and his relatives searched for him and decided to wait for a few days thinking he would come back, but in vain. After waiting for a few days, his family members filed a missing complaint with the Bellandur police in December 2024. In March, Tek Chand came to Bengaluru. With the help of Kamlesh and his relatives, he started searching for his son in the backyard of the house. They discovered a skeleton draped in a pull over and trouser. Tek Chand identified skeleton as that of Amit Kumar on the basis of the clothes. He filed a complaint with the police. In his complaint, he expressed suspicion that Amit Kumar was murdered and his body was buried in the backyard to conceal the crime.

The Bellandur police shifted the skeletal remains of Amit Kumar for post-mortem after conducting a spot inspection with the FSL team. The police have registered a case of murder and destroying evidence under BNS. The family members alleged that the police failed to search for Amit Kumar despite the missing complaint. Police suspect the involvement of family members in the crime. They are waiting for the last rites to question them.

## Slowing down vitiligo



GNS News Agency, March 7

The current decade will probably be known as the decade of the gut, given the incredible number of significant biological connections we are making between the gut and human well-being. However, this is not about the gut per se; this is about the role of gut-friendly bacteria in the process of re-pigmentation, particularly in persons with vitiligo. Vitiligo is a chronic autoimmune disorder where the body's defence system begins to attack the pigment-producing cells and causes depigmented white patches on the skin. While usually the condition is only cosmetic, these patches on the skin can be stigmatising for the patient, particularly if they are present on the face or arms, and thus obvious to others. New research from Northwestern University from a pre-clinical trial in mice has shown that a natural compound derived from gut-friendly bacteria significantly slows down the progression of vitiligo and may restore pigmentation. The findings, if substantiated through rigorous double blind random control clinical trials, could offer hope to millions affected by the autoimmune disease.

It is estimated that vitiligo affects 0.5% to 2% of the global population and is linked to other health challenges, including for some persons, higher risks of cardiovascular disease, psychological distress, and endocrine disorders. The prevalence of vitiligo in India has been invariably reported to be between 0.25% and 4% of dermatology outpatients across studies in the country, and up to 8.8% in Gujarat and Rajasthan, as per a paper in the Indian Dermatology Online Journal. Studies and observations have recorded an erosion of self-confidence among those with vitiligo, resulting in an impact on the mental health of the individual. Significant suppression of disease progression

"The results in our model were astonishing,"

says I. Caroline Le Poole, professor of dermatology and microbiology-immunology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. "We found that administering a microbial compound weekly to vitiligo-prone mice significantly suppressed disease progression. It made a spectacular difference in an aggressive model of the disease." The results of the study were recently published in the Journal of Investigative Dermatology. "We are trying to understand the pigment cell and how it works. Vitiligo patches can be a big deal for patients, particularly during adolescence and youth," Dr. Le Poole explains in a video call. While acknowledging the renewed global interest in what microbiomes can do for health, she adds that she was interested first in the effect of the gut microbiome on antibody-mediated autoimmune disease, here in the development of vitiligo patches. Dr. Le Poole and her colleagues administered a microbial product weekly to vitiligo-prone mice over an 18-week period. By the end, pigment loss on the mice's backs was reduced by 74%. The product reduced killer T cells that attack the skin's pigment and increased protective regulatory T cells, which are typically scarce in vitiligo pa-

tients. "This simple microbial compound could work as a standalone therapy or in synergy with existing treatments," Dr. Le Poole says.

However, she adds that it is necessary to intervene as early as possible and that the effects might not be as dramatic or efficient in advanced disease. There are typically two peaks in persons with vitiligo — in adolescence, and then, again, during the 40s and 50s. Dr. Le Poole adds that the disease has been found to be more severe in people with darker skin tones, as found in the Indian population. Naturally, the visibility of the discoloration in people with darker skin can also amplify stigma and emotional distress. "Patients often feel powerless as they watch their disease progress, unsure how they will look next month. For many, stabilising the disease would be life changing," she explains.

The next challenge would be to adapt the microbial product for human use. "Weekly injections could work, but we need to explore simpler options, like a food additive or ointment," according to Dr. Le Poole. "We also need to understand how long the effects last and the best timing for treatment." She adds that the same microbial compound injected in mice could potentially treat other autoimmune conditions, particularly those involving killer T cells in the skin. The next step would be to collaborate with scientists from several institutions to refine the compound, understand its mechanisms, and determine whether it works alongside existing treatments for auto-immune disease."

## Jagan Mohan Reddy slams CM Chandrababu Naidu's unfulfilled promises

Amaravati: YSRCP chief Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday accused the TDP-led government in Andhra Pradesh of "deceiving" the people, claiming that the budgets for 2024-25 and 2025-26 reflect the same tactics used by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to "mislead" the public. Addressing a press conference at his residence in Tadepalli in Guntur district, the former CM mocked Naidu for his pre-election slogan, "Babu Surety Bavishattu (Future Guarantee)," which he said has turned into "Babu Surety Mosam (Cheating) Guarantee." "When you observe Naidu's budgets (for FY25 and FY26), it is clear how he cheated people in all ways... What about the promises during the polls? What are they saying about them now? That Super Six and Super Seven," said Reddy. He emphasised that the NDA manifesto had made 143 promises during the election campaign, but the ruling alliance of TDP, Janasena, and BJP had no answers when questioned about the status of these commitments.

# 'Major powers should not bully the weak', China foreign minister says



GNS News Agency, March 7

BEIJING, March 7 (Reuters) - Beijing will "resolutely counter" U.S. pressure on tariffs and the fentanyl issue, China's foreign minister said on Friday, adding that major powers "should not bully the weak", in a veiled swipe at the Trump administration's foreign policy. Top diplomat Wang Yi also presented China as a reliable global power in the midst of geopolitical turmoil and U.S. President Donald Trump's withdrawal from international institutions, part of a clear appeal from Beijing to Europe and countries in the Global South.

The U.S. levied an additional 10% tariff on Chinese imports this week over the continued flow of the deadly opioid fentanyl into the country, threatening to worsen an escalatory spiral of trade actions. "If one side blindly exerts pressure, China will resolutely counter that," Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at a press conference on the sidelines of China's annual parliamentary meeting. The U.S. "should not repay kindness with grievances, let alone impose tariffs without reason," Wang added, referring to the "various assistance" Beijing has provided Washington on tackling the flow of fentanyl precursor drugs into the U.S. No country

can suppress China on the one hand and develop good relations with China on the other, said Wang, when asked how China would engage with the Trump administration over the next four years.

Such a "two-faced" approach is not helpful to stable ties, he said, without identifying any individual in the U.S. administration. Wang's largely subdued remarks on the U.S., without mentioning Trump once by name, suggested Beijing wishes to keep the prospect of potential future trade talks alive, said Wen-Ti Sung, a Taiwan-based nonresident fellow at the Atlantic Council's Global China Hub. "They want to pursue any room for de-escalation with Trump when it comes to trade," Sung said. "One way of doing it is to keep the level of rhetorical intensity down to manageable size to preserve room for manoeuvre for both sides." On resolving the Ukraine war, China wants to achieve a "fair, lasting and binding peace agreement" acceptable to all parties, Wang Yi said.

"China is willing to continue to play a constructive role in the final resolution of the crisis and the realisation of lasting peace, in accordance with the wishes of the parties concerned, together with the international community." Western countries have urged Beijing to take a more active role in using its economic leverage over Russia to stop the war, but Beijing has so far refused to publicly criticise its strategic partner or halt its economic support of Moscow. China-Russia relations are a "constant in a turbulent world, not a variable in geopolitical games," Wang told the press conference.

Chinese President Xi Jinping recently reaffirmed Beijing's "no limits" partnership with Moscow in a telephone call with his Russian counterpart on the third anniversary of Moscow's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Trump has upended U.S. policy on Ukraine after taking office last month, showing a more conciliatory stance towards Russia that has unnerved Washington's traditional allies in the

West. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Wednesday the Ukraine conflict is a "proxy war" between Washington and Moscow that needs to end, and has previously said that Washington wishes to "peel off" Moscow from Beijing. Analysts say Beijing wishes to exploit the growing transatlantic rift to bolster its ties with European countries, which have been strained over Ukraine and trade tensions. "China still has confidence in Europe, and believes Europe can still be China's trusted partner," Wang said. GLOBAL SOUTH Wang also urged developing countries to "continue to improve our representation and discourse power in global governance." "If every country emphasizes its own national priorities and believes in strength and status, the world will regress to the law of the jungle, small and weak countries will bear the brunt," said Wang in a veiled reference to Washington's actions. "Major powers ... should not be profit-driven, and they should not bully the weak."

Within the first two months of taking office, Trump has withdrawn the U.S. from several multilateral organisations and climate agreements, suspended most foreign aid, and voted against a United Nations resolution condemning Russia for the Ukraine invasion. "At a time when the Trump administration's foreign policy is revising a lot of established expectations, China wants to present itself as preserving the status quo," said Sung, the analyst. "When the Global South sees a retrenching, inward-looking U.S., there's a fear of a strategic vacuum - one that China intends to help fill." The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here. Reporting by Laurie Chen, Ryan Woo and Ethan Wang in Beijing; Writing by Laurie Chen; Editing by Tom Hogue and Lincoln Feast. Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles. opens new tab Laurie Chen is a China Correspondent at Reuters' Beijing bureau, covering politics and general news. Before joining Reuters, she reported on China for six years at Agence France-Presse and the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong. She speaks fluent Mandarin.

## South Korea's impeached President Yoon to be released from jail, after court cancels arrest warrant



Yoon was arrested in January in connection with his December 3 martial law decree.

GNS News Agency, March 7

The Yonhap News Agency reported that the Seoul Central District Court made the ruling Friday. Other South Korean media carried similar reports. "South Korea's rule of law is still alive," Mr. Yoon's legal counsel said, according to broadcaster YTN. Mr. Yoon is expected to be released immediately and take part in his trial while out of detention, local media said. Mr. Yoon's lawyers had argued the warrant issued on January 19 that has kept him in detention was invalid because the request filed by prosecutors was procedurally flawed.

He declared martial law on December 3 saying it was needed to root out "anti-state" elements but lifted the decree six hours later after Parliament voted to reject it. He has said he never intended to fully impose emergency military rule. Weeks later he was impeached by the opposition-led parliament on accusations he had violated his constitutional duty by declaring martial law. Mr. Yoon faces a separate criminal trial and became the first sitting President to be arrested on criminal charges on January 15.

## Donald Trump delays some tariffs on Mexico and Canada for one month

GNS News Agency, March 7

Washington: US President Donald Trump has signed executive actions that delay for nearly one month tariffs on all products from Mexico and Canada that are covered by the USMCA free trade treaty, a significant walk back of the administration's signature economic plan that has rattled markets, businesses and consumers. The executive actions follow a discussion Trump held on Thursday with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum and negotiations between Canadian and Trump administration officials.

"After speaking with President Claudia Sheinbaum of Mexico, I have agreed that Mexico will not be required to pay Tariffs on anything that falls under the USMCA Agreement," Trump wrote on Truth Social on Thursday, after a phone conversation with the Mexican President. He said the tariffs would be delayed until April 2. The USMCA is the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, negotiated by Trump during his first term, that makes the three North American countries a free trade zone. "I did this as an accommodation, and out of respect for, President Sheinbaum. Our relationship has been a very good one, and we are working hard, together, on the Border, both in terms of stopping Illegal Aliens from entering the United States and, likewise, stopping Fentanyl," Trump added. "Thank you to President Sheinbaum for your hard work and cooperation!" Sheinbaum, in a post on X, thanked US President Donald Trump for a "respectful" discussion about the tariffs he imposed. "Muchas gracias al presidente Donald Trump. Tuvimos una excelente y respetuosa llamada en la que coincidimos en que nuestro trabajo y colaboración han dado resultados sin precedentes, en el marco de respeto a nuestras soberanías. Continuaremos trabajando juntos, particularmente en

Sheinbaum said that "virtually all" of Mexico's trade with the United States is included in the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement. "Practically all the trade we have with the United



States is within the Mexico, United States, Canada Agreement. There is a part that has to do with rules of origin, but everything is practically within the trade agreement," Sheinbaum said at a news conference on Thursday. It's a complicated trade policy, and the White House official suggested those goods producers could register to comply with USMCA rules to avoid the 25 per cent tariff for a month.

But the official referred the press to the US Trade Representative for more details about which products will maintain the 25 per cent tariff and which won't once those details become available. However, Trump has sharply criticised Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whom he accused of trying to capitalise politically on the tariff angst Canadians have felt. It was notable that Trump initially announced a reprieve for Mexico but not Canada, although he eventually granted one for Canada, too. "Believe it or not, despite the terrible job he's done for Canada, I think that Justin Trudeau is using the Tariff problem, which he has largely caused, in order to run again for Prime Minister," Trump wrote in a Truth Social post. And Trudeau said that all his country's retaliatory measures would remain in place unless the United States completely rolls back its tariffs, not just temporarily.

## India, China achieved positive outcomes at all levels after Modi-Xi meeting: Chinese FM Wang Yi

GNS News Agency, March 7

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Friday (March 7, 2025) that India-China relations have made "positive strides" and achieved a series of encouraging outcomes at all levels after last year's breakthrough ending the over four-year-long military standoff in eastern Ladakh. Mr. Wang's remarks came during his annual press conference here as he replied to a question on how Beijing views the course of bilateral ties after the two countries ended the prolonged stalemate in the ties. "China-India relations have made positive strides over the past year" after the successful meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping at Kazan in Russia, Mr. Wang said.

Both Mr. Xi and Mr. Modi provided strategic guidance for the improvement of ties at the Kazan meeting, Mr. Wang said on the sidelines of the annual session of China's Parliament currently underway here. After this, both sides earnestly followed through on the important common understanding of the leaders, "strengthened exchanges and practical cooperation at all levels and achieved a series of positive outcomes", he said. India and China completed the disengagement process late last year after firming up a pact for the withdrawal of troops from Depsang and Demchok, the last two friction points in eastern Ladakh, ending over four years of freeze in ties.

After the finalisation of the pact, Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi held talks in Kazan on October 23. In the meeting, the two sides decided to revive the various dialogue mechanisms. After that, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Mr. Wang held the 23rd Special Representatives (SR) dialogue in Beijing on December 18.

On January 26, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri travelled to the Chinese capital and held talks with his Chinese counterpart Sun Weidong under the framework of the 'Foreign Secretary-Vice Minister' mechanism. In an apparent reference to India stressing the importance of peace at borders for the development of relations, Mr. Wang reiterated China's stand that the differences over the boundary or on other issues should not affect the overall bilateral ties. "As two ancient civilisations, we have enough wisdom and capability to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border ar-



eaes pending a fair and reasonable solution" to the boundary issue, said Mr. Wang, who is also a member of the powerful political bureau of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC). "We should never allow bilateral relations to be defined by the boundary question or specific differences to affect the overall picture of our bilateral ties," he said. China believes that as the largest neighbours, both countries should be partners in each other's success. "A cooperative partnership between the dragon and the elephant is the only right choice for both sides," he said. "There is every reason for us to support each other rather than undermine each other or undercut each other," he said, adding that both the countries "should work with each other rather than guard against each other". "This is the only path that truly serves the fundamental interests of the two countries," Mr. Wang said. "As important members of the Global South, we have the responsibility to take the lead in opposing hegemonism and power politics" he said in apparent reference to the United States. "We must not only safeguard legitimate rights and interests of our countries but also uphold the basic norms governing international relations," he said.

"If China and India join hands, the prospect of greater democracy in international affairs and the stronger Global South will improve greatly," he said. Mr. Wang said 2025 marks the 75th anniversary of China-India diplomatic relations. "China stands ready to work with India to sum up past experience and forge a fast forward and advance China-India relations on the track of sound and stable development," he said.

## EAM Jaishankar discusses role of culture in strengthening nationhood with Ireland's President Michael Higgins



GNS News Agency, March 7

Dublin: External Affairs Minister (EAM), S Jaishankar, has called on Irish President Michael D Higgins, marking the beginning of his visit to Ireland where he is also scheduled to hold bilateral talks with his Irish counterpart. EAM Jaishankar on Thursday conveyed the regards of President Droupadi Murmu to the Irish President and the two leaders discussed the role of culture in strengthening the nationhood. The EAM, who is on a tour of the UK and Ireland this week, posted on Thursday on X, "Honoured to call on President Michael D Higgins in Dublin this evening. Conveyed the warm regards of President Droupadi Murmu." "Value his insights on the contemporary world and its development debates. Spoke of the role of culture in strengthening nationhood," he said.

It marks the second leg of EAM Jaishankar's visit which began in London on Tuesday. In Dublin, he is also scheduled to hold bilateral talks with Irish Foreign Minister Simon Harris. From Ireland, EAM Jaishankar will return to the UK to open new consulates in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Manchester, northern England, over Friday and Saturday. EAM Jaishankar is on an official visit to the United Kingdom and Ireland from March 4 to 9. During the Irish leg of his visit on March 6-7, the EAM will be meeting with his Irish counterpart, Simon Harris, other dignitaries and members of Indian community, the Ministry of External Affairs

(MEA) has said in an official statement. India and Ireland share friendly bilateral relations based on shared democratic values, cultural ties and growing economic engagements. India-Ireland interactions date back to the 19th century when a significant number of Irishmen joined the British Civil Service, medical, engineering and army services, the MEA said. Ireland had supported and assisted India during the Covid-19 pandemic under the EU-ECHO mechanism, Ireland sent emergency medical assistance of 1248 oxygen concentrators, 425 ventilators and 2 oxygen generators in two consignments. Ireland has consistently supported India in its fight against terror. As per the MEA, Indian Embassy has been encouraging Irish companies to engage in major flagship programmes like "Make in India", "Digital India", "Clean India" and "Smart Cities".

## Women create nuisance in Kukatpally

GNS News Agency, March 7

Hyderabad: A group of young women created a ruckus by creating havoc by driving a car under the influence of alcohol in Kukatpally on Thursday midnight.

The young women hit a bike at KPHB Metro Station and then got into a fight with the motorist. As per available information, they resorted to threatening the biker, who then approached the traffic police.

As a result, the police conducted a drink and drive test on the young woman driving the car with a breath analyser and recorded 212 points. This confirmed that she had drunk alcohol.

There were some other passengers in the car along with the young woman who was driving and reportedly confessed that they had all drunk alcohol. The police found liquor bottles in the car. An investigation is on.

## Pakistan world's second-most terrorism-affected country in 2024: Global Terrorism Index 2025

GNS News Agency, March 7

Islamabad: Terrorism continues to plague Pakistan making it the world's second-most terrorism-affected country in 2024, according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025 report. Pakistan witnessed an alarming 45 per cent increase in terrorism-related deaths, with the total rising from 748 in 2023 to 1,081 in 2024 — one of the steepest surges globally, pushing it to the second spot from its previously fourth position, Geo News reported, citing the report. Meanwhile, the number of terror attacks more than doubled from 517 in 2023 to 1,099 in 2024, which also marked the first year that attacks exceeded the 1,000 mark since the inception of the Index. Echoing Pakistan's repeated stance on the use of Afghanistan's territory by the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other terrorist organisations to carry attacks against Pakistan, the GTI report underscored a coinciding significant increase in terrorism in Pakistan and the rise of Afghan Taliban to power in Kabul.

Noting that the militant groups operating from Afghanistan have intensified their attacks, particularly along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, the report said that the TTP remained the deadliest terrorist group in the country, accounting for 52 per cent of all terrorism-related deaths.

The outlawed outfit carried out 482 attacks in 2024, which led to 558 deaths. The attacks carried out by the groups doubled in the previous year coupled with a 90 per cent increase in deaths. "Since the (Afghan) Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, TTP has capitalised on increased operational freedom and access to safe havens across the border. This has allowed the group to plan and execute attacks with greater impunity," said the report. The number of attacks attributed to the TTP was at its highest ever on record in 2024, while deaths caused by the group were at their highest level since 2011, it stated.

Meanwhile, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remain the most heavily affected provinces — which also



Witnessed alarming 45 per cent increase in terrorism-related deaths, with total rising from 748 in 2023 to 1,081 in 2024 — one of the steepest surges globally

share a border with neighbouring Afghanistan — accounted for over 96 per cent of terrorist attacks and deaths in Pakistan in 2024. Furthermore, the GTI report mentions the outlawed Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) for being responsible for the deadliest terror attack of 2024, when a suicide bomber killed at least 25 civilians and soldiers at Quetta railway station. Attacks by BLA and other similar outfits, the report adds, increased significantly from 116 in 2023 to 504 in 2024 with fatalities increasing fourfold to 388, from 88 in 2023, according to the Geo News report.

## How are financial fraudsters using Gen AI, and what can you do to protect yourself?



The story so far: You may have received multiple warnings from your banks and other financial institutions about a surge in AI-driven crimes. In December 2024, the U.S. FBI issued a warning, stating that criminals are increasingly exploiting generative artificial intelligence (AI) to commit fraud on a larger scale, making their schemes more convincing. Enterprising criminals exploit generative AI-powered text, images, videos, and audio to trap victims who lack technological proficiency or time and are too exhausted to thoroughly assess potentially hazardous content.

How is Generative AI used to carry out financial fraud?

Today, a variety of unregulated or even illegal Generative AI tools are available on the web. These tools enable the creation of scams from start to finish, resulting in a web of multimedia tricks that separates victims from their money. Attackers can use text generators alone to craft grammatically correct messages that threaten or deceive victims in their native languages. They can also generate malicious code to create websites that compromise victims' systems. Criminals can exploit AI images to create convincing deepfakes of victims, fooling their loved ones. They can also fabricate false photos of crucial documents, produce sexually explicit images for extortion, establish fake social media or dating app profiles, and even portray celebrities endorsing services and scams they would never support in real life, as per the FBI's recent release. Malicious users can exploit the voice cloning technology in Generative AI audio tools to create fake recordings of real people in distress. These recordings can be sent as voice messages or even as fake yet complex telephone calls to force their contacts into transferring money. When AI-generated videos enter the scene, attackers can orchestrate intricate scenarios or even circumvent system tests designed to verify the user's humanity. For instance, by capturing just a few seconds of video from your social media account, an attacker could create a convincing deepfake video call where you appear to have been involved in an accident and are desperately seeking financial assistance.

What are some warning signs of AI-generated financial fraud?

It is best to be cautious of unexpected requests for

money, even from your loved ones. Additionally, be wary of surprise requests to carry out various financial activities, including redeeming gift cards, claiming prize money, paying fines, repaying loans, paying customs officials, or paying bail. Be extra cautious when receiving texts or media files from unfamiliar users. Unless you have a secure device or environment, refrain from opening such files. When video scams, like the prevalent 'digital arrest' scheme, target a victim, the caller will likely resort to aggressive or intimidating tactics to force compliance. They might create a sense of urgency, claiming that time is running out or that the victim urgently needs to act. Additionally, they might emphasise the importance of keeping the matter a secret from others. It is crucial to avoid sharing any financial information or transferring money through unsecured channels to prevent yourself from falling for such scams. Instead of believing a caller who shows you their uniform and police ID (since this could be a deepfake), reach out directly to the police for guidance. Cease all communication and contact the person involved directly.

How can users keep themselves safe from AI-enabled crime?

One way to safeguard yourself and your family from AI-generated financial fraud is by using a family password. This is a unique word known only to you and your immediate family members. You can use it to verify the identity of others whenever you want. For instance, if you receive a phone call from your child or parent requesting a large sum of money, ask them for the family password to ensure that their voice hasn't been cloned by a stranger. Agree on a strong and difficult-to-guess password. Regularly updating your password is also recommended. If your family has minors or vulnerable elders, ensure that their devices are safeguarded. Lock and set their social media accounts to the private mode to prevent the misuse of their personal photos and audio. Educate your children about online safety and help them distinguish between genuine and AI-generated content. When using dating apps, users should report any matches who use AI-generated media. Never share personal financial information with romantic matches, and never agree to transfer money, invest in cryptocurrency, pay customs charges for parcels, or accept gift cards. Until you completely trust the person and have met them in person, stay on the app's messaging platform and avoid switching to other apps like WhatsApp or email. When donating to charities, ensure that the featured images of different causes and team members are genuine. Give to groups or individuals you trust deeply, those whom you know personally, or those with high transparency levels. Additionally, you can use Gen AI image detectors to review photos. Finally, do not implicitly trust calls from users whose profile pictures include police or military-related accessories, as these can be easily generated using AI. Real police officers never arrest or make demands of you through video calls. If you encounter such a call, record it and submit the evidence to a genuine police station.

## How Bengaluru became India's scientific powerhouse

It is common knowledge that the first known use of ballistics in warfare globally was by Tipu Sultan. However, what many might not know is that the Yelahanka Air Force station, where recently the prestigious air show was conducted with much pomp and glory attracting crowds in lakhs, is located not very far from one of the major armories that produced the very same rockets of Tipu used in the Anglo-Mysore wars, points out Aromar Revi, founding Director of the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bengaluru.

Referred to as "Mysore Rockets", these were deployed against the British in the first three Anglo-Mysore wars and were far more advanced than the British tools of warfare then. The Mysore army used high-quality iron tubes to fill in gunpowder, giving it better speed and range than the others. "They were successful because of the alloys and metallurgy that were locally developed, which could pack in a lot more gunpowder. These rockets could shoot over a kilometer. The battle with Cornwallis was won simply because of the range that was possible because of metallurgy," says Vijay Chandru, academic and entrepreneur. Bengaluru's road to becoming the scientific powerhouse of India did not happen overnight. It tracks its roots to its strong connection with metallurgy, an abundance of human capital trained in science and technology, and choices made by leaders and rulers over time, argued panellists Aromar Revi, Vijay Chandru and Jahnabi Phalkey, who were speaking at the recent History Lit Fest held at Christ University.

What made Bengaluru a city of its scale today despite it not being a national capital or a major trading centre?

"This is a region which has seen the backwash of history for more than 1,500 years with multiple waves of people going back and forth. In that sense, it is a deeply cosmopolitan city... And that has influenced this place, its culture and how it functions," said Revi, while acknowledging that it wasn't still enough to explain the rapid growth and expansion the city witnessed. In the absence of a strong financial sector, he believes Bengaluru's story was written by its people, its institutions and its legacy of innovation which seems to go as far back as Tipu and beyond. The metallurgy connection citing the recent reports emerging from the archeological digs in Tamil Nadu, Chandru pointed out that the region may have advanced to the iron age while other parts of the subcontinent were still in the Copper Age due to its capabilities and resources to smelt iron ore.

And it doesn't stop at the Mysore rockets. Bengaluru's saga of metallurgy continued and saw several epochal moments, such as the setting up of the Bhadravati Iron and Steel plant and the formation of the country's first advanced research institute, the Indian Institute of Science. Jamsetji Tata, who wanted to start a research institution in the country, also wanted to establish an institution that could help with his industry in the battles, pointed out Chandru. This culminated in the idea of establishing a college of electro-metallurgy in the city, which today is known as the Indian Institute of Science or IISc.

"Of course, it expanded into many other things later, but there is a strong connection with metallurgy. The Bhadravati Iron and Steel, which was the creation of Sir M Visvesvaraya, is another connect... Metallurgy may have been part of the secret of Bengaluru... Technology was always at the core of this city," he noted. While the technological core of the city has been important in shaping Bengaluru, equally important has been the role of its human capital. Economist and Nobel laureate Milton Friedman, who visited the country in 1955 at the invitation of then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, observed that there is "great untapped resource of technical and scientific knowledge available to India for the taking" and he termed it "the economic equivalent of the untapped continent available to



the United States 150 years ago."

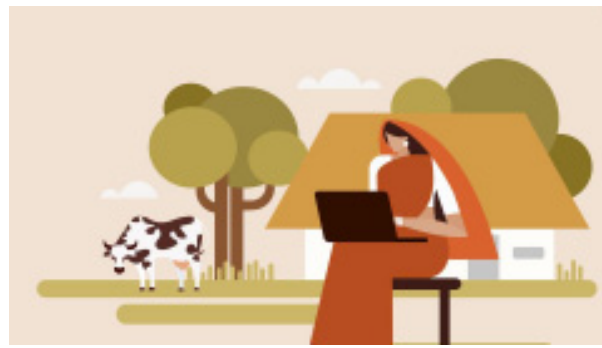
Referring to this, Chandru said, "In the 1980s, Texas Instruments and all the chip design companies started coming to the city because they could find technical talent here. It was the multinationals who discovered this talent and leveraged it. The local tech boom came 15-20 years later; it was not they who discovered it or leveraged it. And that continues till today. Why does the government make statements about GCCs? It's nothing but the same old Milton treatment. There is talent there for the taking." The 'triangle'

While the city was always strong on science and technology, there were also very specific incidents that gave its growth the much-needed momentum. "There was a confluence of accidents and choices made in the early 20th century, and Sir Visvesvaraya was very much a part of that process," said Revi, pointing to a 'triangle' formed by the KRS Dam, the Bhadravati Iron and Steel, and Kolar Gold Fields.

"The KRS was built to deal with the challenge of drought and agricultural productivity; Bhadravati was built on the very old tradition of metallurgy, which was very well advanced in this particular region. And thirdly Kolar. The triangle of the connection between these three produced electricity, fuelled industrial processes and brought in electricity for the mines in Kolar, and Bengaluru got mixed up in the middle, making it the first electrified city in this country. It is a mix of choices and accidents," he said. Yet another happy turn of events was IISc being set up in Bengaluru instead of Roorkee, the location proposed for the institute by the committee comprising Colonel John Clibborn and David Orme Masson. As the city had no financial backing, the government decided to go with Bengaluru as proposed by Sir William Ramsay. According to Revi, there was also another set of "accidents" historical in nature and caused by the world war: "The war essentially brought the western military industrial complex into the heart of this city primarily because the Japanese were in the Andamans, they attacked Kolkatta, they also shelled Chennai. So, Mountbatten's headquarters was here. Walchand Hirachand set up HAL here because initially, it was part of maintaining the Allied aircraft, later building out our own capacity. So, the aerospace industry also came here through an accident of fate," he noted.

Years later, the city saw some of the first PSUs in the country, the establishment of the Indian National Committee for Space Research (the predecessor of ISRO), and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research catalysing the formation of other institutions such as NCBS and a boom in biotech research. "There is a whole range of different pathways that have created a set of institutions here in the city which are both in the CSIR and public science tradition... There are these intertwined processes that created opportunities and a whole set of entrepreneurs and tremendous leaders who actually used those things whether it is in the IT industry, BT industry or even in the computer trade to actually make things work," Revi noted.

## Beyond 'Beijing', unlocking a feminist future in India



The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is one of the most comprehensive global blueprints for advancing women's rights. India's progress on gender equality stands as a testament to sustained policy efforts, grassroots movements, and the resilience of women and girls. The Beijing meeting, in 1995, brought together world leaders and 17,000 delegates from 189 countries to agree on a road map to accelerate women's equality through 12 critical "areas of concern". More than 200 Indian women were in attendance along with the Government of India. The areas of concern included poverty reduction, education and training, health, violence against women, women's economic empowerment and influence in decision making. The past three decades have witnessed remarkable strides in many of these dimensions. Visible evidence of change

The expansion of maternal health care under initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan and the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana has increased institutional deliveries to 95%. Maternal mortality has dropped from 130 to 97 deaths per 1,00,000 births between 2014 and 2020 (Sample Registration System data). Today, over half of married women (56.5%) choose to use modern contraceptives, giving them greater control over their reproductive health. The Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, the world's largest government-funded health-care scheme, has provided millions of women with free access to critical medical treatment. Education, a core pillar of the Beijing Platform for Action, has seen notable progress. The 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' (BBBP) initiative has played a pivotal role in improving the child sex ratio and increasing school enrolments for girls.

The National Education Policy 2020 has paved the way for higher retention rates and opportunities in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Though safety concerns in higher secondary education remain in some places, the Ministry of Education has integrated education with skills development and life skills training, charting flexible and inclusive pathways for adolescents. UNICEF has been able to provide support in increasing linkages with broader support systems — improved sanitation reducing menstruation related absences.

Women's economic empowerment has been central to India's gender-equality agenda. Through the National Rural and Urban Livelihood Missions, nearly 100 million women have been connected to financial networks via self-help groups, fostering entrepreneurship and financial independence. The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has revolutionised financial transactions, with women increasingly using digital platforms for savings and investments. The

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana—National Rural Livelihood Mission has empowered over 100 million rural women through access to credit, livelihood opportunities, and financial literacy programmes. The Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan has trained over 35 million rural women in digital literacy, ensuring that they are not left behind in the digital revolution. Bridging the digital gender divide has helped women participate in the digital economy. India has increasingly financed women's empowerment through gender-responsive budgeting. The share of the Gender Budget in the total national Budget has increased from 6.8% in 2024-25 to 8.8% in 2025-26; \$55.2 billion is allocated toward gender-specific programmes. UN Women has been able to provide support for these government efforts.

Gender-based violence remains a challenge. The Beijing Declaration called for ending violence against women, yet many women still face violence, here and across the world. The establishment of 770 One Stop Centres has provided essential medical, legal, and psychological support to survivors of violence. The introduction of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, which came into effect in July 2024, strengthens legal protections and improves women's safety and justice. The country's efforts to eliminate harmful practices and strengthen responses include many innovations — a blockchain-based system in Odisha ensures that survivors receive swift, confidential, and coordinated support. Partnerships such as the one between the United Nations Population Fund and the Rajasthan Police Academy, have enhanced gender-responsive policing, building survivor trust, and expanding access to justice. A powerful force for change lies in the leadership of young women. From climate action to digital entrepreneurship, young leaders are redefining gender. Initiatives such as the Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI) project, which promotes women in STEM, and the G20 TechEquity platform, which has trained thousands of young women in emerging technologies, showcase their potential. Women have played a pivotal role in India's transformation, driving change, from technology and entrepreneurship to governance and social development. The Women's Reservation Bill, which guarantees 33% legislative representation, builds on local governance successes that have empowered close to 1.5 million women leaders, the largest cohort of women political leaders in the world. The 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration reinforces that gender equality is not just a women's issue. It is a global imperative. India's progress has been propelled by strong government leadership and capable partners, both local and global. Strengthening collaborations, investing in young women's leadership, and addressing systemic barriers will be key to accelerating action and progress. The Beijing Platform for Action remains a guiding framework as India continues its journey toward gender equality. With an unwavering commitment to women-led development, financial inclusion, and social transformation, India is setting a global benchmark for inclusive and sustainable growth — one that is needed in the world today, now more than ever. Susan Ferguson is the Country Representative for UN Women in India, and is a part of Team UN in India. Cynthia McCaffrey is the Country Representative for UNICEF in India, and is a part of Team UN in India

## Silent suffering in the hinterland

At first glance, Durga is a happy young woman. Her bright smile contrasts with her fading yellow saree, and her long, neatly pleated hair shimmers in the sun. A yellow thread lay snugly around her neck, and a pair of golden earrings beamed against her dark complexion. Her serene appearance, however, belies the stress weighing down on her, and as she recalls her days from October last, the smile weakens, and tears bead in her eyes. Durga, a Dalit, was a helper at a government school in Kotikalapudi, a village in Ibrahimpatnam mandal of NTR district. During the two years she worked, she and another helper would sweep the school compound and clean the four bathrooms and nine classrooms every day. "It was tough," says Durga, "I would prepare lunch for my husband and children and get them ready for school before leaving for work," says Durga, who felt it was her responsibility to help her husband, Ravi, in running the household however she could. And her ₹6,000 a month did indeed shore up Ravi's earnings of ₹400-₹500 a day, helping their family of four navigate the vagaries of life.

So, Durga was crestfallen when she lost her job last year, and mounting debts, anxiety over their children's future and a debilitating poverty took a toll on her mental health. She confined herself indoors and burst into tears when no one was around. She did not eat for days and spent sleepless nights battling thoughts of ending her life. Lacking any proper education, the 29-year-old did not understand what afflicted her. "My head throbbed constantly, and my outbursts of anger alienated my children and husband," she says.

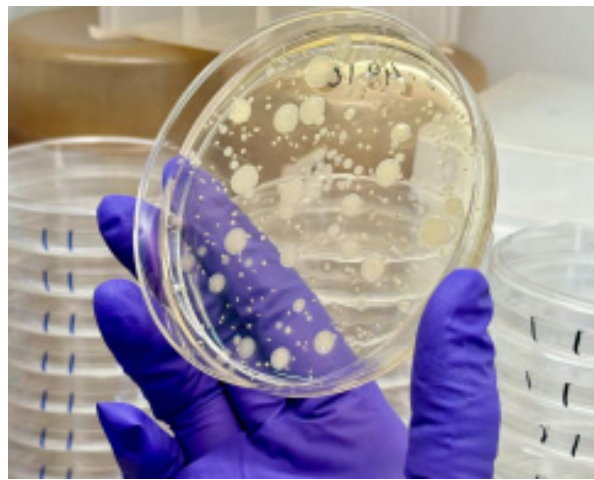
What exacerbated her suffering was the constant fear of prying eyes spinning tales about her. She dreaded being branded a "mental" (mentally ill), or worse, 'possessed'. Durga claims that it is common in her village to take such individuals to a temple, dargah or a church, where elaborate rituals are performed to "shoo away the spirit". Around 10 kilometres from Kotikalapudi, in Ibrahimpatnam town, John sits in his old auto-rickshaw outside a tin-roof house. A tall man with the expressions of a child, he wears a confused look on his face. Two of his lower front teeth are missing, and words slurred mildly as he spoke.

John says that he has been suffering from a mental illness for the past 12 years and believes that his mental health began to deteriorate after an accident at a construction site in the town. In a voice broken by grief and despair, the 54-year-old narrates how he used to wander the streets at night, bang his head against a wall and shout at his wife and son. Worried, they took him to a temple and made him drink water mixed with vermilion and turmeric for six days, believing it would make him better. "Nothing seemed to work. There was no one to advise me on which medicine to take or what to drink," says John, who belongs to a BC community. His eyes well up as he recounts his long trips to Vijayawada and visits to countless doctors on Nakkala Road in the city, searching for a cure. While John does not know the exact nature of his condition, the medical officer of a team from Vijayawada-based NGO 'Vasavya Mahila Mandal', who examined him as part of a survey, found him to be exhibiting the symptoms of schizophrenia. John drives his auto-rickshaw rarely, when he needs money. If he gets a headache, he parks it by the road and sleeps, he says. He, too, earns ₹500 a day but spends most of it on medicines, consultation fees and check-ups, which he undergoes once every month at a private hospital in Vijayawada. He says his family has fully disowned him now because he could not give them anything. "I sleep in my autorickshaw and eat from outside every day... I feel terrible, but I want to live and need these medicines," says John, holding back

tears. Asked why he never went to a government hospital, he says he did not know where to go for his condition. The cases of Durga and John may well represent a larger problem coiling around Andhra's rural landscape. The National Mental Health Survey, conducted by National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) across 12 States in the country in 2016, found that socio-economic factors played a key role in causing mental disorders. It found poverty, limited education and low social status to be closely linked with one's mental state of being.

According to the survey, while the overall mental morbidity was higher among males, specific mental problems such as depression, anxiety and neurotic disorders were identified more among women. NGO Vasavya Mahila Mandal's survey, conducted in association with 'The Live Love Laugh Foundation' in several villages of Ibrahimpatnam mandal as part of a pilot project titled 'Santwana' or Community Mental Health Programme, found that over 440 people in 15 villages were suffering from mental disorders — women constituted approximately 70% of them, says project director Rama Rao, who earlier worked as District Programme Officer of National Health Mission in Guntur for 15 years. "None of the individuals understood what was happening to them or where to seek help. It was only after we spoke to them that they realised it required medical care," says Dr. Rama Rao. Out of 440-odd people, 216 are on medication. The others, presenting mild symptoms, are hesitant to seek medical care owing to the social stigma associated with it. Moreover, superstitions affected 30% of the 440 cases surveyed, added Dr. Rama Rao. Noted psychiatrist and former president of the Indian Medical Association Indira Ramasubba Reddy says there could be many more in every mandal or district suffering silently. "Lack of awareness, stigma, superstitions, unavailability of easy mental healthcare access prevent people in rural areas from seeking medical help for mental disorders," adds Dr. Ramasubba Reddy. Back in 1996, the Centre launched the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) in an attempt to bridge the gap between people and mental healthcare in rural areas. It is a component of the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP), which was launched in 1982 to ensure access to mental healthcare for all. Under the DMHP, mental healthcare is provided at the community level by integrating it with the general physical care delivery system. To achieve this, frontline workers, including Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANMs), are given training to identify individuals with symptoms of mental disorders. Such people will be taken to the nearest Primary Health Centres (PHC) on the day of visit by a special medical team comprising a psychiatrist, a clinical psychologist, a social worker and a staff nurse. For two days a week, this team provides outpatient services at an allotted hospital and makes field visits to PHCs in the district on the other four days. As per information shared by the office of the Commissioner of Health and Family Welfare, the team is required to counsel symptomatic people and refer those requiring further treatment to government general hospitals (GGHs). Under the DMHP, at least one member of the team should visit a PHC once every 15 days. The DMHP, however, is not functioning properly in the 13 new districts formed in the State in 2022, says Dr. Rama Rao, alleging that in other districts, too, the visits to the PHCs are not regular. Dr. Ramasubba Reddy, too, feels that the programme has failed to achieve its objective of taking mental healthcare to people. As per information received from a PHC doctor in Ibrahimpatnam mandal of the new district of NTR, who sought anonymity, the team is not making any visits in their area.

# Study shows antimicrobial resistance in soil bacteria without using antibiotics



Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and Kiel University have shown in a study that antimicro-

bial resistance (AMR) can be found in soil bacterial communities due to microbial interactions driven by a species of predatory bacteria. According to IISc, *M. xanthus* is a predatory species that is known to release antimicrobials and other molecules to kill its prey. "Human-driven (antibiotic) resistance is a major problem, but the question is: Are there other aspects that we completely ignore? This was very exciting to explore," said Samay Pande, Assistant Professor at the Department of Microbiology and Cell Biology (MCB), IISc, and corresponding author of the study.

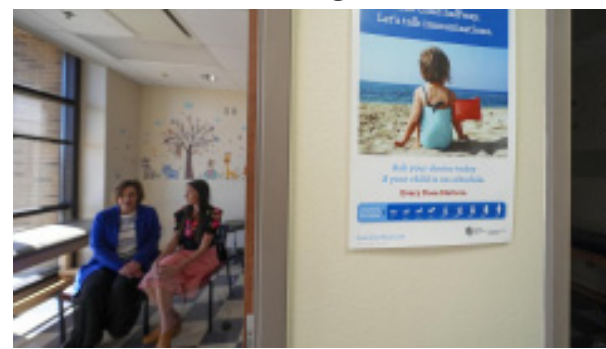
Pande and others found that the death of *M. xanthus* in soil bacterial communities increased the frequency of resistant isolates — bacterial cells resistant to antibiotics — in many different species of soil bacteria. These cells also showed resistance to certain antibiotics even without exposure to these drugs. When faced with starvation, populations of *M. xanthus* die en masse. In famine-like conditions, which are very common in soil environments, these bacterial cells form stress-resistant structures called fruiting bodies that are filled with spores. During the development of fruit-

ing bodies, only a minority of cells succeed in becoming spores, whereas the majority of the bacterial cells undergo lysis (rupture) and release growth-inhibitory substances into the environment.

Biosynthetic clusters The researchers believe that exposure to these growth inhibitory molecules is the reason behind the increased frequency of resistant isolates in the soil bacterial community. Interestingly, not all strains of *M. xanthus* triggered enrichment of resistance; it was the ones with higher diversity of biosynthetic clusters that seem to drive it.

"We identified multiple different molecules and did a very crude classification. Individually, these molecules might not do anything, but when you put them together, they suddenly do this strange thing where they can enrich other resistant isolates," said Saheli Saha, PhD student at MCB and co-first author of the study. The researchers found that resistance was enriched against several antibiotics, which include commonly used drugs such as tetracycline and rifampicin.

# Unvaccinated U.S. man dies after contracting measles

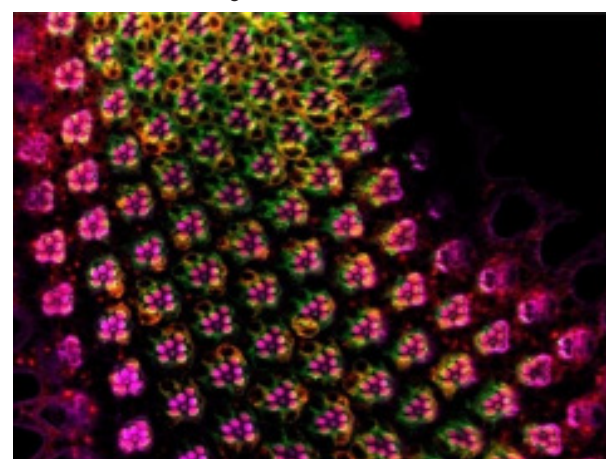


GNS News Agency, March 7

An adult who was infected with measles has died in New Mexico, state health officials announced on Thursday (March 6, 2025), though the virus has not been confirmed as the cause. The person who died was unvaccinated and did not seek medical care, a state health department spokesperson said in a statement. The person's exact age and other details were not immediately released. The person was from Lea County, just across the state line from the West Texas region where 159 measles cases have been identified and a school-age child died last week. New Mexico health officials have not linked the outbreak there to the Texas cases.

The person is the 10th in Lea County to have a confirmed measles infection. Seven were unvaccinated. The vaccination status of the other three is unknown. Six of the cases are in adults and the rest are in children younger than 17. On Tuesday, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that they were sending a team to Texas to help local public health officials respond to the outbreak, which began in late January. Measles is a respiratory virus that can survive in the air for up to two hours. Up to 9 out of 10 people who are susceptible will get the virus if exposed, according to the CDC. The measles, mumps and rubella vaccine is safe and highly effective at preventing infection and severe cases. The first shot is recommended for children ages 12 to 15 months, and the second for ages 4 to 6 years. "We don't want to see New Mexicans getting sick or dying from measles," said Dr. Chad Smelser, the deputy state epidemiologist. "The measles-mumps-rubella vaccine is the best protection against this serious disease."

# NCBS study identifies key protein whose dysfunction could trigger neurodegenerative diseases



GNS News Agency, March 7

Confocal microscopy image depicting the localisation of the calcium-binding mutant of *Esyt* in *Drosophila* photoreceptors, along side the contact site marker *RDGB* and phalloidin labeling *F-actin*. Neurobiologists from the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS-TIFR) have identified a key protein whose dysfunction could potentially trigger neurodegenerative diseases.

Using the *Drosophila* model, the group led by Professor Raghu Padinjat has identified a protein named Extended synaptotagmin (*Esyt*) that sits close to the cell membrane. The study was published in the *Journal of Cell Biology*. According to NCBS, a cell's exterior region comprises plasma membrane (PM) and endoplasmic reticulum (ER). PM forms the cell's outer boundary, gatekeeping entry of material into the cell and communicating between the outside of the cell and its interior, whereas the ER is a network of membranes inside the cell. The region where PM and ER meet is known as the membrane contact site (MCS). This site permits intra-cellular signalling, transporting essentials like lipids and calcium between organelles.

"Over the past decade or so, modern genomics and technological advancements have helped scientists establish that more than 20 proteins are located at the MCS between the ER and PM. However, there is still limited scientific evidence to answer why certain proteins are prevalent at these sites or what role they play in cell health," NCBS said. The present study has tracked how some of these proteins tune the operations at the cell MCS, whose health is directly linked to cell health. NCBS said for photoreceptors, a special type of neuron in the retina, calcium is a message encoder. It encodes and delivers information (about light intensity) from the surroundings to the cell, which in this case is the amount of light. When light is absorbed, the lipid transfer activity of *RDGB* at MCS is triggered.

# Survey finds occupational health issues among food handlers in Kerala's Kozhikode

A survey conducted among 2,000 food handlers in Kozhikode district of Kerala has found prevalence of occupational health problems such as typhoid, skin infections, jaundice, cut injuries and burns among them. It was conducted as part of Sanitation and Fitness Evaluation (SAFE) project undertaken by the Department of Community Medicine at KMCT Medical College, Mukkom, in collaboration with the district committee of the Kerala Hotel and Restaurant Association. The project was conceived as a surveillance program for food handlers to strengthen food safety and public health. The food handlers were later issued health cards of one-year validity.

Among the participants, 15.6% were female, with an average age of 39.86, and 20.1% were from outside Kerala. The majority worked as cooks (49.4%) or food servers (28.4%). The occupational health issues found among them include paronychia, a finger infection that occurs around the fingernail or toenail (6.1%), contact dermatitis (3%), cut injuries (3.3%), burns (2.0%) and onychomycosis, a fungal infection on the nail (1.1%). Communicable diseases such as fever, vomiting and diarrhoea were reported in 2.5%, 0.3% and 0.2% of the respondents, respectively. Of the total food handlers examined, 7.4% and 1.4% had a history of jaundice and typhoid, respectively, ever in life. Among them, 35.7% had received the tetanus toxoid (TT) vaccine, while typhoid and Hepatitis A vaccination rates stood at a mere 9.1% and 2.1%, respectively. Laboratory screenings further revealed that 7.6% of the participants tested reactive for *Salmonella typhi* 'O' that causes typhoid fever and 0.2% tested positive for Hepatitis B surface antigen that causes Hepatitis B infection affecting the liver. The study suggested that in the wake of the recent increase in Hepatitis A infec-



tions, and the possibility that food handlers may be a source of transmission, it is mandatory to monitor their health parameters to implement vaccination policies.

Sources told The Hindu that the incidence of food-borne illnesses in Kozhikode surged from 5.3% in 2022 to 10.1% in 2023, according to the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health department. Nearly half of all reported disease outbreaks now are linked to contaminated food. The camps for the food handlers were organised and conducted by T. Jayakrishnan, Sruthikrishna P, and Abhin. The survey report was handed over by Vijish Venugopal, principal, KMCT Medical College, to P.K. Sasidharan, former head of the department, Medicine & Hematology, Government Medical College, Kozhikode.

# 'Supriya ki aankhein dekho, kitni achchi hai': Ratna Pathak Shah on building self-confidence despite measuring her looks against sister's



Actor Ratna Pathak Shah has always been known for her intelligence, wit, and acting talent, but she admits that she once grappled with insecurities about her looks — and even compared her appearance to that of her sister, Supriya Pathak. Reflecting on this during an interview with *Hauterfly*, she shared, "I didn't consider myself good-looking. I was very worried about my teeth, very thin lips, aankhein badi nahi hai, Supriya ki aankhein dekho, kitni achchi hai (Your eyes aren't big. Look at Supriya's eyes, how beautiful they are)."

However, instead of letting these insecurities consume her, Ratna found confidence by focusing on personal growth. "But it didn't really bother me, because I think I was focused on that I wanted to build myself as a whole person, not merely as a person who looks like X or Y," she said. When asked how her perception changed, she recalled, "The women I hung with were so not involved with the way they looked. There were many other things we could talk about. This focus on the way you look, the way you dress, the way you present yourself as an attractive person, was not so intense, I would think at that time." Her perspective challenges the deep-rooted belief that physical appearance defines self-worth. But, how does societal emphasis on conventional beauty standards impact self-esteem, especially

among siblings who are compared to each other? Neha Cadabam, senior psychologist and executive director at Cadabams Hospitals, tells indianexpress.com, "Society's narrow definitions of beauty can exert immense pressure on individuals, particularly when comparisons are drawn among siblings. Constant exposure to idealised images and standards often leads to internalizing unrealistic expectations. For siblings, this comparison can intensify feelings of inadequacy, where one may feel they fall short if they do not mirror those conventional attributes. This dynamic can undermine self-esteem and create an environment where external appearance is overvalued, often at the expense of recognising personal talents, intellect, and emotional depth. Such societal pressures not only distort self-perception but also complicate familial relationships by fostering competition rather than mutual support."

How can individuals develop a mindset like Ratna Pathak Shah's, where they focus on overall growth rather than focusing just on physical appearance?

Developing a holistic mindset involves redefining what it means to be 'successful' and 'beautiful.' "It begins with self-reflection and the recognition that personal growth encompasses emotional, intellectual, and social development — not merely physical traits. Adopting a growth mindset, where challenges are viewed as opportunities for learning and self-improvement, can help shift focus away from external appearances. Practices such as journaling, meditation, or even engaging in creative pursuits provide avenues to explore one's inner landscape and set meaningful personal goals," notes Cadabam. Embracing diversity in beauty and celebrating individual uniqueness fosters resilience against societal pressures. Ultimately, by valuing overall development and inner strengths, individuals can achieve a balanced, confident self-view that mirrors the holistic approach.

# Is red carpet fashion becoming mundane, or is the Internet making us feel that way?

My eyes, of their own accord, opened at 7 AM on the dot this Monday morning — a feat rarer than Halley's comet, but an Oscar-night ritual for those of us who celebrate. As I browsed through the red carpet looks, hoping for the extravagance to propel me from bed to action, the opposite happened. I wanted to burrow deeper in my kambal at the sheer mundanity of fashion. This disappointment, however, is not new, and unsurprisingly, one I share with other fashion commentators. On a phone call with celebrity stylist Rishi Raj, both of us were left lamenting "how the looks just did not look" (Gen Z speak for falling flat on their face) at the Oscars red carpet this season. "The red carpet had some strong moments, but nothing groundbreaking. Classic silhouettes, luxurious fabrics, refined styling — everything was elegant and polished but predictable. Even so-called 'experimental' looks felt safe, tied to actors' on-screen personas. We're missing spontaneity and real risk-taking," Raj

told me. Sure, the Met Gala is where avant-garde thrives, but shouldn't the Oscars still have moments that take our breath away — like Nicole Kidman in her yellow John Galiano for Christian Dior gown in 1997 or Julia Roberts in her Armani suit at the 1990 Golden Globes? This obsession with nostalgia could perhaps be the reason we're seeing a resurgence of old-world Hollywood glamour. From Selena Gomez's Ralph Lauren dress inspired by yesteryear actor Sophia Loren to Elle Fanning in Sarah Burton's Givenchy, the Oscars were replete with vintage silhouettes. "This revival isn't just about aesthetics — it taps into a broader cultural moment," said Henna Parimoo, department lead, fashion styling, Pearl Academy. When I asked her why she thinks classic glamour is back in the game, she said, "Well, besides being the golden era of storytelling, in uncertain times (socially, politically, and economically) people often look back to times that feel safe, elegant and idealised. Old Hol-

lywood, with its polished elegance and larger-than-life stars, represents a sense of order, beauty, and aspiration that feels reassuring." "Classic glamour photographs beautifully. Whether it's a plunging satin gown, dramatic opera gloves, or timeless curls. These visuals thrive on platforms like Instagram, YouTube shorts, and Pinterest, which are driving fashion cycles faster than ever," Parimoo said. Raj echoed this sentiment, adding social media has sped up trend cycles, leaving people craving something timeless, something that isn't just a fleeting TikTok moment. "In fashion, this translates to structured silhouettes... opera gloves... draped gowns... and classic beauty looks... things that feel polished, considered, and cinematic," he said. This shift towards calculated, carefully curated red carpet moments contrasts sharply with past eras when a single look — Cher's extravagant Bob Mackie ensembles or Björk's infamous swan dress — could define an entire awards season.

# ZEISS India to drive Karnataka's eye-care campaign Vidya Drishti

ZEISS India, part of Carl Zeiss, a German manufacturer of optical systems and optoelectronics, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government of Karnataka to improve eye-care in the rural regions of the State.

The two-year-long eye care campaign — named Vidya Drishti — would commence in Kalaburagi district. The programme would be executed by Aloka Vision, a social arm of ZEISS, and would screen 5,32,000 school children in the age group of 5 and 16 for any vision related issues, and the relevant persons would be given prescription glasses. Some 600,000 underprivileged population, aged above 39, would also be screened as part of this drive.

On March 6, Miguel Gonzalez Diaz, Managing Director, Carl Zeiss India, said, "Through this initiative, we aim to positively impact the lives of children in rural areas by providing essential vision care support. Clear vision is fundamental to education and overall development."

Dhaval Radia, Chief Financial Officer, Carl Zeiss India, said, "Vidya Drishti programme in Kalaburagi in Karnataka will be the company's pilot programme for the country. Based on the learnings it brings and the requirements for such screenings among deserving populations, the programme may be expanded to other districts of Karnataka, and event other States. Vidya Drishti is our first attempt. In addition, Aloka Foundation has already screened over 3.5 million people across the country during various campaigns." Minister for IT, BT, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Priyank Kharge said, "There is an urgent need to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, where access to quality eye care remains a challenge. This collaboration between ZEISS India and Karnataka marks a significant step toward bridging this gap.

"Good vision is essential for a child's education and overall development. Through the Vidya Drishti project, we aim to ensure that over 500,000 school children receive the critical eye care they need. A child's ability to see clearly should not be a privilege — it should be their right! A child who cannot see clearly cannot learn effectively," said Mr. Kharge. Additionally, by extending this initiative to benefit nearly 600,000 underprivileged adults in Kalaburagi, the government is taking a holistic approach to eye health. This initiative is expected to have a lasting positive impact on the lives of many people in Kalaburagi district.

Minister of Health and Family Welfare Dinesh Gundu Rao said, "Karnataka remains committed in its mission to eliminate preventable blindness and ensure accessible eye-care for all. Our Asha Kirana initiative has already made significant strides in delivering eye-care services directly to our citizens' doorsteps. By integrating innovative technologies and comprehensive screening programmes by ZEISS India, we aim to foster a future where every child has the clarity of vision."

# Pope Francis has increased his physical therapy and marked the start of Lent in the hospital

Pope Francis increased his physical therapy with his condition remaining stable on Wednesday (March 5, 2025), marking the start of Lent by receiving ashes on his forehead and calling the parish priest in Gaza, the Vatican said. The Holy Father suffered no respiratory crises during the day, receiving oxygen through a nasal tube as has been the case in recent days. He will resume the use of a non-invasive mechanical mask for the night.

Doctors treating the Pope for double pneumonia underlined that his prognosis remained guarded due to the complex picture. The 88-year-old Pope, who has chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, had two respiratory crises on Monday (March 3, 2025) in a setback to recovery. During the morning he participated in an Ash Wednesday celebration, receiving ashes and Holy Communion. He later set to work, which included a call to the Rev. Gabriel Romanelli, the Argentine priest who is the parish priest of the Holy Family church in Gaza. It was the third time they have spoken since the Pope was hospitalized Feb. 14. The evening health bulletin carried the first mention of physical therapy for the pope, in addition to respiratory therapy, and the Vatican said it was to ensure no other negative impacts from the longest hospitalization of his papacy.

The Catholic Church opened the solemn Lenten season leading to Easter on Wednesday without the participation of Pope Francis, who is in the third week of hospital treatment for double pneumonia. A cardinal took the Pope's place leading a short penitential procession between two churches on the Aventine Hill, and opened an Ash Wednesday homily prepared for the pontiff with words of solidarity and thanks for Pope Francis. "We feel deeply united with him in this moment," Cardinal Angelo De Donatis said. "And we thank him for the offering of his prayer and his suffering for the good of the entire church in all the world." Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and leads up to Easter on April 20. A cardinal has been designated to take Pope Francis' place at Vatican celebrations. On Ash Wednesday, observant Catholics receive a sign of the cross in ashes on their foreheads, a gesture that underscores human mortality.



# Women in corporate leadership, the lived reality

best practices of gender diversity The inclusion of women directors on the board of NSE 500 listed companies has increased more than threefold, from 5% in 2011 to 18% in 2023.

Research across the world finds that organisations also greatly benefit from women in leadership roles. At a fundamental level, the presence of women increases the depth of the talent pool available in the workforce. Women provide informational diversity gained from different educational and career trajectories and distinct social and professional network associations and offer a participative, democratic leadership style that stimulates robust discussion, drives a richer challenge and delivers greater value. Additionally, women tend to focus on relationship building, foster greater stakeholder commitment and assist in formulating strategies that address stakeholder concerns while also overseeing better monitoring, broader human capital management, and communication channels which increase corporate accountability and reduce corporate risks. When companies have more women in senior management and leadership roles, they begin to appear on lists of the most admired and ethical companies, best companies to work for, and best corporate citizens, thereby also serving the agenda of companies from an optics perspective and feeding into a virtuous cycle of benefits. Key identified areas where women leaders bring greater dividends are corporate governance, strategic proposition oversight, risk management, shareholder and stakeholder value, gender and society, and environmental responsibility, all of which are important facets of running an efficient and clean corporate ship which contributes to economic parity.

While token participation of women in companies may be a way out for some companies to demonstrate commitment towards gender diversity in the workplace, women are truly effective corporate leaders when they are given actual power and responsibility and not merely appointed to positions as a token for gender diversity or to serve the agenda of their male benefactors. It is only when a greater number of C-Suite/KMPs (top-level executives in an organisation and Key Managerial Personnel, or KMPs) are women, and, in addition, more independent directors and chairpersons of committees of the board and board committees are women, that they are truly effective corporate leaders. Importantly, the remuneration of women that is at parity with their male counterparts is a key indicator that women's presence in the corporate workforce is real and robust. While we do have a lot to celebrate on the occasion of Women's Day this year, it is important to keep in mind that there are still significant steps that companies and regulators must take in order to ensure that women's participation in the corporate workforce, especially in senior leadership roles, is strong, contributes meaningfully toward corporate governance and is not just a token concept that is aimed at gaining brownie points from stakeholders. Women's participation in the workforce must be promoted for its many benefits and must not fall victim to the dominant political narrative. End note: The issue of women in the corporate workforce, especially on company boards, is of great significance and merits deep research into various facets. Thought Arbitrage is undertaking such a study which maps the patterns of women on corporate boards by using qualitative and quantitative research methodologies over a 10-year period, involving about 1,000 companies.

# The academic link between Nepal and India



On February 16, a third-year woman student from Nepal was found dead by suicide in the Bhubaneswar-based Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT). Initial investigation by the police revealed that harassment from a fellow male student had led the student to take her own life. Other students from Nepal carried out a protest stating that the university had ignored the consistent complaints made by the female student about the harassment. This led to KIIT halting academic activities and ordering students from Nepal to vacate the campus. This move caused widespread outrage, with the Nepali government also getting involved. KIIT eventually withdrew the order and resumed the academic session.

The latest available All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) data reveals that during 2021-22, 46,878 foreign students from 170 nations were enrolled in various institutes of higher learning in India, and that the highest share of foreign students came from Nepal (28%). The percentage share of foreign students from Nepal had been the highest (21% when the figure for total foreign student enrolment was 34,774) even in 2012-13, as per AISHE data. It is thus evidenced that while the number of foreign students enrolling in India has been on the rise over the years, majority of them came from Nepal. Table 1 gives us a brief overview of the enrolment of students from Nepal studying different courses offered by almost 180 Indian universities and institutes. These students are spread across the nation — from Kashmir University in the north to Kerala University in the south, from North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) in the east to Gujarat Ayurveda University in the west. While the enrolment is highest in the undergraduate category, enrolment in higher categories like PhD displays a steady increase, although it is far from being impressive. Students from Nepal display an increasing attraction to Indian institutes offering training and degrees in engineering and technology. As a matter of fact, their presence in IITs (Delhi, Kanpur, Roorkee, Guwahati among others), the Indian Institute of Science (IISc Bangalore), and other private institutes like KIIT, has been substantial.

Nepal's academic relationship with India and Indian academic institutions in particular illustrate a rich history. Paying a cursory look at that historical tapestry, as shown by scholars like Pratyush Onta or Rhoderick Chalmers, would help us recognise the contribution of Banaras and Darjeeling in shaping Nepali public sphere from both within and outside Nepal. However, unlike the colonial legacy associated to the 'Gorkhas', the cultural linkage between Nepal and India, which epitomised India as an educational hub for the Nepalis, is as old as the gurukul system. Since the days of the Rana regime when education in Nepal remained exclusively an elitist affair, places in India like Banaras, Patna, Dehradun, Gorakhpur and Darjeeling opened up opportunities to those who could afford to send their wards to India for education.

Further, when it comes to the history of the 'modern' formal education system in Nepal, a cursory glance will reveal that not only is it not very old, but it also displays intricate connections with India. It is said that the western-style of education began in Nepal with the establishment of

the Durbar High School in 1854, although accessible only to the children of the royal family and courtiers. In 1901, some steps were taken for the benefit of the public, as schools, such as the Bhasa Pathshala (Language Schools), were opened up with Nepali (then known as Gorkhali/Khas) as the medium of instruction. The Tri-Chandra College was established in Kathmandu in 1918 and was initially affiliated to Calcutta University which later shifted to Patna University, India. As per this affiliation, the responsibility of the college lied only with the teaching part while the overall academic programme, including courses, textbooks, pedagogy, examinations, award of degree, were run by the affiliating Indian institute.

Letting go of colonial influence Thus, without even being colonised, the colonial legacy of Nepal's education system was established through two routes: first, by affiliating the first college in Nepal to universities of colonial India, thereby, diminishing any opportunity to premise pedagogy around Nepali roots and branches (except language); and the second was through college instructors, all of whom had received their master's degrees from Indian universities, and therefore felt secure in following the same content. Before the establishment of the Tribhuvan University in 1959, there was no provision for postgraduate instruction in the country, and higher education was limited to the undergraduate level. Social science teaching, followed by science, was introduced in Nepal only in the 1940s, starting with economics and geography, while sociology and anthropology came a little while later in the 1950s. In summary, until the 1950s, the colonial legacy of British India strongly influenced Nepal's education, even when attempts were undertaken to 'Nepalise' the education system. Towards this end, the Gandhian model of education was valorised as a reference point albeit with certain tweaks. Finally, in 1954, the government constituted the National Educational Planning Commission (NEPC) to give recommendations across all aspects of education, having declared that the goal is to make education relevant to 'national need'. Later, with the introduction of the New Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971, the entire machinery was revamped. Nepal began her independent journey in the sphere of higher education, even though students from Nepal continued to enrol themselves in Indian higher education institutions. Major players within the intellectual field post-1950s Nepal, were trained in India, and with the passage of time the numbers kept on rising, even amidst ups and downs in diplomatic relations between these two nations.

Higher educational training, even though available as a commodity, still embeds avenues that register learning experiences as impactful memories which shape future lives and proclivities. These memories, among other things, are potential sources of South Asian cultural capital that grows spontaneously when nurtured with care. And when this process involves the category of 'foreign students', it becomes the responsibility of the host institution to prevent the process from turning into a pedagogy of the oppressed. Students are students, no matter where they are from. Creating categories within studenthood and offering differential treatment is an act of institutionally sponsored ragging that devalues the institution, renders the educational ambience volatile, and most importantly, propagates a culture of misanthropy, thereby nullifying the core of education in itself, no matter where the institution appears on the charts of national or international grading systems. Moreover, the KIIT instance, when viewed in the light of the Indo-Nepal Peace Treaty of 1950, appears to be a case that is in direct conflict with Article 6 (confirms national treatment to be offered to the nationals of either country) and Article 7 (confirms reciprocal privileges of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other) of the said Treaty, and thereby has the potency to affect bilateral ties between India and Nepal.

# What ails pre-clinical PG courses in Karnataka?

There were zero admissions for the post graduate (PG) medical pre-clinical courses in Vydehi Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre (VIMS), Bengaluru, including in anatomy, biochemistry, physiology, forensic medicine, microbiology and pharmacology, till the second round of PG-NEET counselling. The institute then informed the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA), the counselling authority in the State, that it would waive the tuition fees for candidates opting for these courses, after which, all the pharmacology seats were filled during the subsequent round of counselling, said Kalpaja D.A., Chairperson of the Institute.

This is the situation of PG medical pre-clinical courses in Karnataka, as candidates are hesitant to take them up due to a lack of job opportunities. Even in government medical colleges, only 15% to 20% of the seats in these courses are filled. The situation is far worse in private medical colleges, which have resorted to fee reduction, free hostel facility, stipend as per government guidelines, and job guarantee with good salary as promises to attract students towards pre-clinical and para-clinical courses.

Like VIMS, Oxford Medical College, Hospital and Research Centre has also waived the tuition fees, while BGS Institute of Medical Sciences has promised jobs to candidates immediately after completing the courses. "For PG medical courses, students like to join clinical courses due to job prospects. As a result, despite measures such as fee reduction, free hostel facility and stipend, the enrollment has been poor. It is very difficult to find candidates for courses like anatomy, biochemistry, physiology, forensic medicine, and microbiology. Therefore, many seats in PG medical courses have remained vacant this year as well. The KEA has announced it will conduct a special stray vacancy round for the second time. We hope all the vacant seats will be filled," Kalpaja explained.

"This time, several private medical colleges have announced many facilities, including fee reduction and free hostel facility and others to attract students towards pre-clinical and para-clinical courses. There is no other way to attract students," said M.K. Ramesh, former Vice Chancellor of Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS). A large number of postgraduate medical seats remained vacant in the State this year due to the lack of students opting for pre-clinical courses. A total of 3,864 postgraduate medical seats were available in the State for 2024-25. Out of these, 3,379 seats have been filled, and 485 seats remain vacant. Out of these, 471 are PG medical courses, while the remaining 14 are Diplomate of National Board (DNB) courses for in-service doctors.

Among these, most of the seats filled are in clinical courses, while most of the vacant seats are in pre-clinical courses. Out of the total 104 seats available in the MD Anatomy course this year, only six seats have been filled, leaving 98 seats vacant; of the 97 seats in the Physiology, 10 have been filled, leaving 87 vacant. Out of the 99 Biochemistry slots, 12 seats have been filled, and 87 remain vacant. Out of the 114 seats in Pharmacology, only 46 seats have been filled, leaving 68 seats vacant. Further, out of the 116 seats in Microbiology, 48 have been filled, and 68 are vacant, and of 58 seats in Forensic Medicine, only 10 have been filled and 48 remain vacant. On the other hand, almost all the seats in other clinical courses, including MD General



Medicine, Radiotherapy, Dermatology, Psychiatry, General Surgeon have been filled. The statistics of the KEA show students have been showing apathy towards clinical courses even in the past. In 2023-24, only two students were enrolled in the MD Anatomy course across the State. There were 12 students enrolled in Physiology, 7 in Biochemistry, 29 in Pharmacology, 15 in Microbiology, and 22 in Forensic Medicine. In 2022-23, only one student was enrolled in MD Anatomy, and no student enrolled in Physiology, leaving all the seats vacant. Only two students were enrolled in Biochemistry, 20 in Pharmacology, 8 in Microbiology, and two in Forensic Medicine. KEA is the counselling authority to fill the PG medical seats of the state on the basis of PGNEET ranking. This year, a large number of PG medical seats, including clinical, pre-clinical and para-clinical, remained vacant in Karnataka and the country after the mop-up round. Therefore, the NMC reduced the PGNEET cut-off percentage to 15% and allotted seats in the stray vacancy round. However, in this round too, more than 600 PG medical seats remained vacant in Karnataka. In this context, the NMC has again reduced the NEET cut-off percentage to 5% and has ordered to conduct the 'Special Stay Vacancy Round' counselling for the fifth time to allocate the remaining PG medical seats.

"This year, the pre-clinical seats are the largest number of unfilled seats among PG medical courses, and the NMC has reduced the PGNEET cut-off percentage and has asked us to conduct another round of counselling to allocate the seats. It has been four months since the PGNEET counselling started, and now the NMC has reduced the cut-off percentage to 5%. Earlier, the NMC had reduced the cut-off percentage to zero. If the PGNEET cut-off percentage had been reduced to 5% earlier, it would have been more beneficial for the candidates, and more people would have opted for the courses. As soon as the NMC admission schedule is released, we will start option entry and allocate all these seats," said Prasanna.H. Executive Director of KEA. But will this be enough? "I have decided to study clinical courses in PG. I did not get any clinical course seat in the last four rounds of counselling due to my PGNEET ranking. Recently, the cut-off percentage for the special stray vacancy round has been reduced to 5%. So, there is a possibility of getting a seat. If I do not get a PG clinical course seat this time, I will write the PGNEET exam next year as well," said Abhijit, a PG medical seat aspirant from Bengaluru. Experts believe that candidates who have completed MBBS are hesitant to pursue pre-clinical courses in their postgraduate degrees due to a lack of future opportunities.

# How 'Chhaava' erases history and leaves no room for complexity

After watching the latest Bollywood blockbuster Chhaava, a viewer in Gujarat tore the cinema screen, angered by the torture inflicted by Aurangzeb on Sambhaji. Multiple videos of viewers, including children, crying and shouting slogans, after watching the film, have been circulating on social media. Any film that devotes the final 40 of a total 136 minutes, to a brutal depiction of torture is already suspect with its sense of aesthetics.

Chhaava does have the laudable goal of setting the historical record straight about Sambhaji as a great warrior and administrator against biased accounts. But it becomes harmful national-level propaganda when it is fixated on the good Hindu versus the bad Muslim binary, skips some incontrovertible facts, and is in complete sync with the ruling party's ideology. Thus, it joins the cohort of over 20 blatant propaganda films made recently such as The Kashmir Files, The Kerala Story, The Vaccine War, Article 370, Bastar - The Naxal Story, Swatantrya Veer Savarkar, JNU: Jahangir National University, The Sabarmati Report and Samrat Prithviraj. And Chhaava, like some others, was endorsed by the Prime Minister and other Ministers, and made tax-free in certain BJP-ruled States.

Chhaava's world is one in which the relentless quest to expose the evilness of the Muslim Aurangzeb makes it omit that he came to power on the basis of support from the Rajputs; that his administration had the highest percentage of Hindu Mansabdars in Mughal history (33%); that it also had Hindus in the posts of the Dewan and as heads of two important provinces; and that the emperor who imposed the Jizya (but exempted it for Brahmins, Rajputs, women, the elderly, etc.) protected some temples just as he demolished others, according to some historians. This, of course, does not make Aurangzeb tolerant, only that his orthodoxy had to accommodate political pragmatism. While secularist historians emphasise this political pragmatism, Samira Sheikh shows how Aurangzeb's Sunni bigotry arguably persecuted Shia and other Islamic millenarian groups such as the Mahdavis, Dawoodi Bohras and Sufis more than the Hindus. This persecution had an economic side too — the rising prosperity of these "heretic" groups drew the ire of Aurangzeb's Sunni clerics who had business motives as well. Of course, these complexities/debates cannot be a part of Chhaava's world in which the quest for Maratha "Swaraj" under Sambhaji is suffused with Hindu imagery and is presented as liberating India from "foreign rule." Actually, the Mughals had already lived in India for over 150 years then. Historian Stewart Gordon argues that Chhatrapati Shivaji, who championed tolerance and syncretism, and who had beseeched Aurangzeb to follow Akbar's tolerance, was not advocating nationalism or the cause of a "universal Hindu rule." Shivaji, too, had a substantial number of Muslims in his administration, including top military commanders.



Chhaava's world of Hindus versus Muslims/Indians versus foreigners is far from the real 17th century in which there were multiple states and emerging European powers, with various cross-coastal alliances and rivalries between them. A strong coastal power was the Sids of Janjira, who were African Muslims, while the Peshwa of the Ahmadnagar Sultanate for 26 years was the legendary military general Malik Ambar, an Ethiopian slave. Shivaji (and his father) were a part of the Adil Shahi rule of Bijapur. Even when he rebelled and carved out his own kingdom, he allied with them, the Qutb Shahis of Golconda and even the Mughals, and sometimes against Hindu kingdoms like the Nayaks of the Karnatic. Similarly, Sambhaji, too, allied with Muslim Sultanates against Hindu kings like Chikka Devaraja of Mysore. Chhaava's central narrative of Aurangzeb's evilness would be diluted of its shock value if the film showed that Sambhaji himself had rebelled against his father Shivaji and had briefly joined the same evil Aurangzeb! While Chhaava, unlike other propaganda films, does show aberrations in the 'good Hindus' narrative by showing some Hindu traitors, including in his own family, all the kohl-lined Muslims are universally bad.

In positing Aurangzeb's torture as exceptional, what Chhaava's world elides is the brutal nature of the medieval world with daily wars. States, including the Marathas, were built through consolidation, as well as through the violent subjugation of Hindu (and Muslim) landed nobles (deshmukhs, jagirdars, etc.) who were constantly shifting allegiances between states for better material/symbolic benefits. Internecine conflict between family members, just like among the Mughals, was rife: Shivaji battled his half-brother Ekoji, and so did Sambhaji's son with other contenders. When the film shows the failed plot to poison Sambhaji on behalf of his half-brother Rajaram, where 20 key Maratha ministers and elites are executed, it only hints at the violence by the trampling of elephants. When Sambhaji's Marathas attack Goa, a Portuguese account (cited by historian Jadunath Sarkar) says, "up to now nowhere else in India has such barbarity been seen..." While such narratives have to be treated carefully.

# Donald Trump walks back on his tariff threat as markets tank, industry pushes back: Why his tariff plan is unsustainable

For the second time in less than 48-hours, US President Donald Trump rolled back the newly imposed taxes on imports from Canada and Mexico by signing orders significantly expanding the goods exempted from duties slapped on America's two biggest trade partners. Earlier, on Wednesday, Trump said he would temporarily exempt carmakers from 25 per cent import taxes just a day after they came into effect. The trade war tensions have roiled markets, with the leading US stock indexes all ending lower in Thursday's trade. In signing the new orders, Trump denied the suggestion that he was walking back the measures because of concerns about the stock market. "Nothing to do with the market," Trump said. "I'm not even looking at the market, because long term, the United States will be very strong with what's happening." The exemption from the proposed duties applies to goods shipped under North America's free trade pact, the US-Mexico-Canada agreement (USMCA), which Trump signed during his first term. On Tuesday, Trump had imposed 25 per cent tariffs on both Canada and Mexico, as well as an additional 10 per cent tariff on China. Beijing was slapped with an initial 10 per cent tariff last month, while both Canada and Mexico were able to successfully negotiate for a one-month delay. But if economic logic is to prevail, the Trump administration will have to roll back most of these tariffs in the due course. Here's why:

The structural issues with the American economy The US economy relies heavily on trade, and that's part of its structural construct in the post World War-II era. This is because the American economy consumes more goods than it produces domestically at full employment. As a result, its imports are almost always higher than its exports, resulting in a trade deficit. Why is that so? When a country consumes more goods than it produces domestically, it

needs to source the additional goods from other countries through imports. And that is resulting in a high trade deficit — the gap between what it buys from other countries and what sells to them.

This trade deficit is a point of contention for Trump, which he's used as the trigger for the imposition of tariffs on countries around the world. But what this simplistic assumption glosses over is the fact that till the time America consumes more than it produces, it will have a deficit with a lot of countries. This is also triggered by the fact that the labour costs in America are high, and so it does not merit economic logic for US workers to be producing this efficiently in the country, like say garments or consumer durables. So, other countries that have relative efficiencies in these sectors, primarily due to labour or raw material advantages, are more effective at producing these goods and shipping them to the US. The evolving labour productivity issue, and a shift of comparative advantage to developing nations explain the loss in manufacturing jobs in the US, and tariffs are unlikely to fix that fundamental issue. Plus, the role of the US dollar as an international reserve currency — another enduring post-war reality — has actually helped America finance domestic consumption of imported goods. The US, in that aspect, has a comparative advantage that no other countries have. And other nations would also be well within their rights in looking at this currency advantage enjoyed by the US as a discriminatory trend, just as Trump eyes the trade deficit as a discrimination "suffered" by the US. Also, the pretext used by Trump — fentanyl inflows — is also specious, especially when it comes to Canada, given that America's northern neighbour accounts for less than 2 per cent of all fentanyl inflows into the US. For a man who is generally fickle with his views, tariffs are an issue where Trump's been uncharacteristically consistent. In 1987, long

before he voiced any intention to run for public office, Trump took out a full-page newspaper ad warning that Japan was "taking advantage" of the US, while pointing to the massive trade deficit between the two countries. Like most things with Trump, this was essentially a personal issue, which likely stemmed from the fact that the real estate developer had, just a few days prior to these ads, lost out on a bid for a grand piano in New York to the representative of a Japanese trading house. His views on tariffs have endured through these years, even though there is very little economic logic to the imposition of large scale tariffs by a country like America.

Trump has consistently insisted that tariffs are paid for by foreign countries. This hardsell, has resonated within his base, but is blatantly false. It is, in fact, US importers — American companies or representatives of foreign companies in the US — that end up paying tariffs when these goods come in, and this money goes to the American Treasury. These companies, in turn, generally pass their higher costs on to their customers in the form of higher retail prices. That is one reason why tariffs fell out of favour as global trade grew after World War II and economists maintain that consumers end up footing the tariffs bill. Yes, tariffs can impact foreign countries by making their products pricier and harder to sell abroad, but there is collateral damage on both sides. For instance, Canada and Mexico have announced retaliatory tariffs against American imports. That would matter to Washington, since Canada is its single biggest market, bigger than the UK, France, Japan and China put together. The European Union has also hit back against Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminum by taxing US products, from Harley-Davidson motorcycles to bourbon. China has imposed tariffs on American goods, including soybeans



and pork to dent Trump's agri support base. A study by economists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University, the University of Zurich and the World Bank concluded that Trump's tariffs in his last term neither raised or lowered US employment. Despite Trump's 2018 taxes on imported steel, for instance, the number of jobs at American steel plants was barely impacted. On the other hand, the retaliatory taxes imposed by China and other nations on US goods had "negative employment impacts," especially for farmers, the study found. These retaliatory tariffs were only partly offset by government aid that Trump was forced to dole out to farmers, partly funded by the incremental revenues raised by the tariffs. US tariffs, and the retaliatory duties that they've triggered, would spend two crucial segments of Trump's voter base. Auto workers and farmers. Over the last quarter of a century, the American cars industry has worked with policymakers to create an integrated supply chain with Canada and Mexico. Some parts of a car sold in the US are made in Canada, others in Mexico, and quite a lot are made in the US.

## As countries race to develop quantum technology, NITI Aayog flags national security risks

Countries that develop quantum capabilities will secure an "unprecedented strategic edge", which can "jeopardize" national security and economic competitiveness, NITI Aayog's Frontier Tech Hub said in a quarterly release Wednesday. Quantum technologies can crack modern encryption, destabilize financial markets, and transform military capabilities, hence India needs to assess vulnerabilities, adopt post-quantum cryptography, and forge bilateral partnerships for technology access, the release said.

Unlike classical computers, which process information in binary (0s and 1s), quantum computing uses quantum bits (qubits) that can exist in multiple states at the same time, allowing it to perform certain tasks much faster. A sufficiently powerful quantum computer can also break public-key encryption algorithms, in turn making modern internet security, online banking, and secure communications obsolete. Public investment in quantum

Public sector investment in quantum development has increased rapidly, with over \$40 billion pledged by more than 30 governments. China leads with a \$15 billion commitment, the United States has invested \$5 billion, and India plans to invest \$750 million, primarily through the National Quantum Mission (NQM) launched in 2023, the release noted. On India's lower public spending compared to China and the US, NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam pointed to the country's success in "frugal innovation". "If you throw some money, you won't necessarily get a good solution. I don't think the billions matter. Again, our mission to Mars was the cheapest in the world. We landed on the south pole of the moon. I am sure that India can genuinely come up with very economical solutions," Subrahmanyam said. Debjani Ghosh, Distinguished Fellow at NITI Aayog and chief architect of the Frontier Tech Hub, said, "The quantum race hasn't even started. It's very early days, and I'm glad that we have got a foot in the door with the quantum mission. We are at least thinking about it and building a foundation." The NQM, with a budgetary outlay of Rs 6,003 crore, was set up to build quantum-related capabilities in key domains, namely, computing, communications, sensors, and materials. The estimated expenditure for the ongoing financial year under the mission was reduced from Rs 427 crore to Rs 86 crore in the latest Union Budget. For 2025-26, it is projected to rise to Rs 600 crore.

"The Indian quantum mission caught the trend very early and they started the investment early. They had a specific goal, which was to address the hardware issue, because that is going to be a key limiter in quantum. Later on, we'll realize how important that is going to be, not right now. The mission also started growing the startup ecosystem," Ghosh said. "Companies are increasingly focusing on producing ultra-high purity materials, cryogenic systems, specialized lasers, and control electronics tailored for quantum computing," the release noted, highlighting the growing importance of specialized quantum hardware. Prepared with



the Data Security Council of India, the release also flagged an expected surge in export controls on quantum technologies as a key risk. "As quantum technologies become critical to national security, export restrictions are tightening on components like Arbitrary Waveform Generators (AWGs), Digital-to-Analog Converters (DACs), Microwave Components, specialized lasers, and cryogenic dilution refrigerators," it said.

Risk of strategic blind spots "Advancements in quantum technology would expose the country to increased risk of technological surprise and strategic blind spots. Being caught off guard by quantum driven advancements would jeopardize national security, economic competitiveness, and technological leadership," the release said. To mitigate risks to national security from quantum technologies, the release recommended developing a post-quantum cryptography (PQC) transition plan. PQC refers to cryptographic algorithms designed to withstand attacks from quantum computers, ensuring improved data security. "Countries are in a race to develop and implement PQC to safeguard their data. Those who master PQC first can protect their critical information while others remain vulnerable," it said.

Over 170 professors across leading academic institutions in India are actively working in quantum technology domains. Historically, India's quantum efforts have had a "strong focus on fundamental science rather than technology development and commercialization," the release said. "In recent years, start-up activity has emerged, particularly in quantum software, algorithms, and quantum-safe cryptography, though these ventures have largely been bootstrapped or received limited seed funding," it added. The US leads in quantum innovation through a mix of government support and private sector investment, with tech giants like Google and IBM, alongside startups like PsiQuantum, advancing diverse quantum modalities. In China, the quantum strategy is centralized and state-driven, with institutions like USTC and Zhejiang University leading breakthroughs. "(China's) ambition for quantum supremacy is evident in its large-scale programs and military-intelligence integration efforts, aiming for rapid deployment of quantum capabilities," the release said.

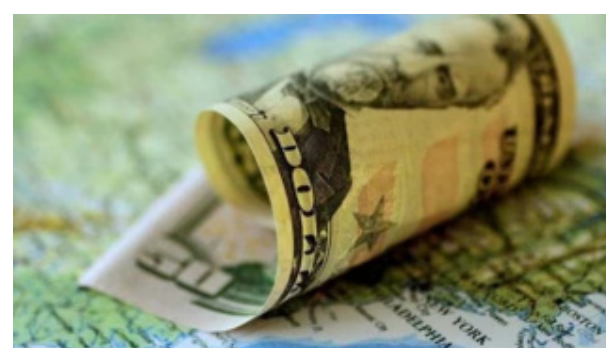
make up for the shortfall in Russian oil volumes. With the exception of Iraq, which is India's second-largest supplier of crude, oil imports from the other key West Asian suppliers — Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — declined sequentially. Oil imports from Iraq in February rose 5.5 per cent sequentially to 1.09 million bpd, while imports from Saudi Arabia declined over 6 per cent to 679,372 bpd. India's oil imports from the UAE fell over 22 per cent in February to 342,076 bpd. On the other hand, oil imports from relatively smaller sources of India's oil imports, like Brazil, Nigeria, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Qatar, Oman, Algeria, Republic of the Congo, Libya, and Gabon, rose in February. Some of these smaller suppliers exported oil to India after a gap of a few months. February also saw Argentina appearing on the map of India's crude oil import sources by supplying around 25,000 bpd. For instance, India's oil imports from Nigeria rose to around 76,000 bpd in February from around 40,000 bpd in January, a jump of nearly 90 per cent. Oil import volumes from Colombia jumped 146 per cent sequentially to 71,500 bpd and those from Brazil rose 60.6 per cent to over 145,000 bpd. Imports from Qatar jumped nearly 60 per cent sequentially to around 74,000 bpd, and supplies from Venezuela were higher by 44.4 per cent at over 93,000 bpd. Suppliers like Gabon, Libya, Algeria and the Republic of the Congo featured on India's oil import sources list in February after being absent for varying periods. India's oil imports f

## Over 30,000 taxpayers declare foreign assets worth Rs 29,208 crore

Over 30,000 taxpayers declared foreign assets worth more than Rs 29,000 crore after a special nudge campaign by the Income Tax Department that began in November 2024, government sources said. About 24,678 taxpayers reviewed their income tax returns (ITRs) and 5,483 taxpayers filed belated returns for assessment year 2024-25, declaring foreign assets worth Rs 29,208 crore and additional foreign income of Rs 1,089.88 crore, they said. In addition, 6,734 taxpayers revised their residential status from resident to non-resident. Around 62 per cent of nudged taxpayers responded positively, voluntarily revising their ITRs to declare foreign assets and income, sources said.

In November last year, citing compliance with global disclosure norms, the Income Tax Department had urged them to disclose details of foreign assets and income correctly in their income tax returns and file revised returns by December 31, if there was a requirement to update the information. The Department had also started an e-campaign in the next few days to facilitate filing of details of foreign assets and income by taxpayers. "The number of taxpayers disclosing foreign assets and income on a voluntary basis has steadily grown from 60,000 in AY 2021-22 to 2,31,452 taxpayers in AY 2024-25. This year, due to extensive outreach and awareness efforts, voluntary disclosures witnessed a significant 45.17 per cent growth compared to AY 2023-24," a source said, adding that the focus is on the 'Trust First' approach.

"Instead of immediate verification or intrusive actions, the Department has trusted taxpayers first, giving them ample opportunity to make true and complete disclosures of their foreign income and assets," the source said. Under the campaign, SMS and emails were sent to 19,501 taxpayers with high foreign account balances or significant foreign income from interest or dividends above a specified



threshold. These communications urged taxpayers to revise their ITRs to reflect their foreign assets and income accurately. Also, 30 outreach sessions, seminars, and webinars were conducted across the country. In September 2024, India received financial information from over 108 countries regarding foreign accounts and income in the form of interest and dividends earned outside India. Under Common Reporting Standard (CRS), India has been exchanging information with 125 countries since 2018 for the calendar year 2016 and onwards. It receives detailed information about financial accounts held by its residents in foreign jurisdictions, which includes account holder's name, address, and tax identification number (TIN), account number and balance, income details such as interest, dividends, and other financial proceeds. Since 2018 for the calendar year 2016 and onwards. A similar exchange occurs with the USA under the Inter-Governmental Agreement in line with the Foreign Accounts Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), 2010.

## Next phase of chip incentive scheme in the works, says IT Secretary Krishnan

Last August, The Indian Express had reported that the Centre had created a fresh \$15 billion blueprint for the second phase of the India Semiconductor Mission. Last August, The Indian Express had reported that the Centre had created a fresh \$15 billion blueprint for the second phase of the India Semiconductor Mission. The government is currently working on the contours of the second phase of the India Semiconductor Mission, with the design and outline of the scheme finalised and discussions with the industry underway, a senior government official said Thursday. "The next phase of the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) is currently in the works. We had preliminary discussions with many stakeholders as to how to design the programme. The design and the outline is currently ready and is undergoing detailed discussion internally within the government," IT Secretary S Krishnan said at the Gujarat SemiConnect.

Krishnan said that under the second phase of the ISM, the government will also look to provide some support to raw materials, equipment, gases and speciality chemicals needed in semiconductor manufacturing. Last August, The Indian Express had reported that the Centre had created a fresh \$15 billion blueprint for the second phase of the India Semiconductor Mission. Under the



renewed scheme, the government was planning to offer capital support for raw materials and gases used in chip manufacturing, this paper had reported. The first phase had an outlay of \$10 billion, and was approved in December 2021 to kickstart India's chip industry. "We have to now figure out how to make it a completely sustainable ecosystem and also how do we move up the value chain as time goes along. While the legacy nodes are important and they have considerable demand, there are also risks of over capacity and capacity from other geographies," Krishnan said. The government is also making some changes to the design linked incentive scheme for chips in order to encourage more fabless semiconductor companies to join and more ambitious projects and innovations are supported through incentives, he

said. "There is also (chip) packaging design which needs to go alongside and we have to look at how advanced packaging can be supported through the design linked scheme as well," Krishnan said.

The country had so far attracted investment worth \$18 billion till date under the first phase of the India Semiconductor Mission. The Tata-PSMC fab, being built at a cost of roughly \$11 billion, is among the five semiconductor projects the government has greenlit under the India Semiconductor Mission. Apart from the fab, four assembly and testing plants by US-based Micron Technology, the Tatas, Murugappa Group's CG Power in partnership with Japan's Renesas, and Kaynes Semicon, are also under construction. Micron, which is headquartered in the US, was the first com-

pany to receive government approval to set up a chip packaging unit at Sanand in Gujarat. The assembly, testing, marking, and packaging (ATMP) plant will be constructed at a total cost of \$2.75 billion, which include the investments to be made by the company as well as state and central government's sops and incentives. Soumyarendra Barik is Special Correspondent with The Indian Express and reports on the intersection of technology, policy and society. With over five years of newsroom experience, he has reported on issues of gig workers' rights, privacy, India's prevalent digital divide and a range of other policy interventions that impact big tech companies. He once also tailed a food delivery worker for over 12 hours to quantify the amount of money they make, and the pain they go through while doing so.

## As US sanctions cast shadow on India's Russian oil imports, smaller suppliers from Africa, Latin America cash in

Recent American sanctions on Russia's oil trade have started to have an impact on India's crude oil imports from Moscow, which fell to an over two-year low in February. To make up for the lost Russian volumes for now, Indian refiners are actively diversifying their crude oil sources by turning to relatively smaller suppliers from regions like Africa and Latin America, per vessel tracking data.

In January, just before demitting office, the US's Joe Biden administration announced sweeping sanctions against Russia's oil trade. It sanctioned as many as 183 tankers—a sizable part of the so-called shadow fleet that had kept Russian oil flowing—apart from sanctioning two Russian oil majors and Russian insurance companies, among others involved in the Russian oil sector and trade. The sanctions have made it difficult for Indian refiners to secure enough cargoes of Moscow's crude, and they are being forced to look elsewhere to cover the gap.

In February, India's oil imports from Russia declined 14.5 per cent month-on-month to 1.43 million barrels per day (bpd), the lowest since January 2023, shows data from commodity market analytics firm Kpler. Russia's share in India's oil imports declined to around 30 per cent in February, down significantly from the 2024 average of around 38 per cent. But India's traditional West Asian oil suppliers failed to cash in on the opportunity, while a few smaller players collectively saw their oil supplies to India rise notably to

## ICC Champions Trophy: Matt Henry the first threat India's star-studded batting line-up has to neutralise in final



GNS News Agency, March 7

and quite famously in the 2019 World Cup semifinal in Manchester, Henry, shoulder willing, is poised to recreate the new-ball menace again in Dubai. Numbers back him to do so and put him in the same bracket as his teenage heroes, "Pigeon" and "Bondy". Relegated to the shadows of Tim Southee and Trent Boult for nearly a decade since his ODI debut in 2014, Henry has subtly climbed up to 165 wickets in 91 matches with an impressive strike rate of 28.6. Only contemporaries Mohammed Shami (25.71) and Mitchell Starc (26.68) have acquired more ODI wickets at a better strike rate than Henry. The 33-year-old works his magic best in the first Powerplay, a phase where he has collected over 43 percent of his career wickets. Of the six bowlers who have picked up at least 50 scalps in that stage of a game since 2014, Henry's 72 wickets rank third behind Boult (90) and Chris Woakes (74). His 22.56 average in the phase ranks third-best (for min. 50 wickets) among all bowlers since 2000, only behind McGrath (100 wickets at 20.01) and Bond (65 at 21.29).

Shubman Gill Matt Henry India vs New Zealand Champions Trophy New Zealand's Matt Henry celebrates the dismissal of India's Shubman Gill, right, during the ICC Champions Trophy cricket match between India and New Zealand at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Sunday, March 2, 2025. (AP Photo/Altaf Qadri) With the two wickets in the semifinal that helped him cross the 50-wicket milestone in Asia, Henry also uncannily matched his compatriot Bond's numbers as an opening bowler in ODIs. While all 147 of Bond's career wickets from 80 innings came as an opening bowler, Henry picked up his 148th wicket in his 80th innings as an opening bowler on Wednesday in Lahore, sharing almost identical strike rates with the former Kiwi quick! As New Zealand hope to end the white-ball ICC trophy drought on Sunday, they have one of the finest visiting seam bowlers in Asia at their disposal. Of the 26 visiting bowlers who have picked up at least 50 ODI wickets in Asia, Henry's 25.9 strike rate stands distinctly clear at the top.

There is a smooth, unassuming nature to Matt Henry's efficiency in One-Day cricket. Even as his bristling action screams a Shane Bond likeness in the final motion at the crease, Henry was not gifted with the yards of extra pace as his Canterbury senior, one of his heroes growing up. Henry would model his style on that of another bowling great from his boyhood days — an epitome of accuracy who sacrificed pace for line and length, Glenn McGrath.

He may not bear a flamboyant presence on the circuit. But Henry's impact, or the lack of it, will be grossly felt should he not be a 100 percent fit for New Zealand's ICC Champions Trophy final against India in Dubai after jamming his right shoulder on the field during the semi-final win over South Africa. Matt Henry New Zealand's Matt Henry celebrates the dismissal of India's Shubman Gill during the ICC Champions Trophy cricket match between India and New Zealand at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Featuring in his maiden Champions Trophy edition, Henry tops the charts with 10 scalps, building on from his best ODI season in 2023 when he scalped 25 wickets in 17 games. He's nearly achieved the same numbers this year in double-quick time — 24 in nine games with a wicket every 19 deliveries.

Having jolted India in Dubai last Sunday with a five-for

## Sunil Chhetri, 40, dragged out of retirement to help India in March internationals



GNS News Agency, March 7

Twenty years after he debuted for India, and less than 12 months into his retirement last June, Sunil Chhetri has been summoned to join up with the Indian national team for the March international window. Head coach Manolo Márquez announced his 26-member squad on Thursday, and it included Chhetri, who will be 40 years, 7 months and 16 days old when India play the Maldives in a friendly on March 19. Dubbed the Blue Tigers, the team will then proceed to play the opening match of the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 qualifiers final round against Bangladesh on March 25 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Shillong. India's qualification group includes Hong Kong (China), and Singapore for the Asian Cup, where the national team has never progressed past the group stage after losing all their matches in the previous edition.

All India Football Federation's official social media handle quoted Márquez as saying, "The qualification for the Asian Cup is very crucial for us. Given the importance of the tournament and the matches ahead, I discussed with Sunil Chhetri about making a comeback to strengthen the national team. He agreed, and so we have included him in the squad." The news was greeted with some warmth as the talismanic player enjoys legendary status for scoring 94 goals in 150 matches on the international stage. The

Arjuna, Khel Ratna and Padma Shri awardee is fourth overall in the all-time international goal scorers' list, only behind Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi and Iran's Ali Daei in men's football.

Chhetri has continued to play for Bengaluru FC in the Indian Super League (ISL). However, his last game for the country was against Kuwait in the FIFA World Cup Qualifier at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata on June 6, 2024. After starting his professional journey at Mohun Bagan in 2002, Chhetri helped India win the 2007, 2009, and 2012 Nehru Cups, as well as the 2011, 2015, 2021 and 2023 SAFF Championships. When India qualified for its first AFC Asian Cup in 27 years, he had led the country to victory in the 2008 AFC Challenge Cup. His first goal came against Pakistan in 2005 and he went past IM Vijayan's six goals in the 2011 SAFF Championship, netting 7, before becoming the national team's highest scorer. Bare cupboard of talent? The recall, however, split opinion, highlighting India's desperation in the face of no ready replacements for the goal-poacher. Chhetri's inclusion comes at the cost of many young strikers who were staking a claim to step into his shoes. But Marquez chose to turn to the 40-year-old instead of Edmund Lalrindika, Lalrindzuala Lalbiakina and, crucially, David Lalhlansanga. Defenders: Ashish Rai, Boris Singh Thangjam, Chinglensana Singh Konsham, Hmingthanmawia, Mehtab Singh, Rahul Bheke, Roshan Singh, Sandesh Jhingan, Subhasish Bose. Midfielders: Ashique Kuruniyan, Ayush Dev Chhetri, Brandon Fernandes, Brison Fernandes, Jeakson Singh Thounaojam, Lalengmawia, Liston Colaco, Mahesh Singh Naorem, Suresh Singh Wangjam. Lalhlansanga, 23, is one of the few Indians in the ISL who plays as a centre-forward and has been among the goals this season both domestically and in Asia. His exclusion from the squad altogether is bound to raise eyebrows. Another notable omission from Márquez's squad was custodian Gurpreet Singh, with Vishal Kaith, Amrinder Singh or Gurmeet Singh expected to man the goal. Midfielder Brison Fernandes, 23, has been included for the first time.

## Aravindh Chithambaram inches closer to Prague Masters title

GNS News Agency, March 7

Grandmaster Aravindh Chithambaram came within striking distance of winning his first major tournament after an easy draw with David Navara of Czech Republic in the eighth and penultimate round of Prague Masters tournament here. With this result, Aravindh took his tally to 5.5 points, maintaining a half-point lead over compatriot R Praggnanandhaa, who drew with Vietnam's Quang Liem Le. In the final round, Aravindh will face Turkey's Ediz Gurel, while Praggnanandhaa has a tougher challenge against Anish Giri of the Netherlands.

After losing two of his first three games, top-seeded Chinese GM Wei Yi bounced back impressively, defeating local favorite Nguyen Thai Dai Van to move into sole third place with 4.5 points. Vincent Keymer (Germany), Ediz Gurel, and Giri share fourth place with four points each, followed by Quang Liem, Navara, and Sam Shankland, all on 3.5 points. Dai Van remains at the bottom with 2.5 points. The Berlin defense is normally known to get balanced endgames and this time too, Navara had little trouble reaching an equal endgame. A small oversight by both players at a critical moment briefly offered Aravindh a chance to push for victory, but the opportunity slipped, and both players signed truce in 32 moves. Praggnanandhaa, playing White, opted for his pet Catalan opening against Le. However, the Vietnamese GM found adequate counter play in the middle game by cornering the white queen. Praggnanandhaa parted with a pawn for activity but the resulting position was only good enough to repeat. The game lasted 36 moves. In the



Challengers' section, Divya Deshmukh drew with Czech player Nemej Jychym but remained in last place with two points. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Yakubboev regained sole lead with 6.5 points after defeating Richard Stalmach.

Results (Round 8) Aravindh Chithambaram (Ind, 5.5) drew with David Navara (Cze, 3.5); R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 5) drew with Quang Liem Le (Vie, 3.5); Sam Shankland (Usa, 3.5) lost to Anish Giri (Ned, 4); Wei Yi (Chn, 4.5) beat Nguyen Thai Dai Van (Cze, 2.5); Vincent Keymer (Ger, 4) drew with Gurel Ediz (Tur, 4). Challengers: Richard Stalmach (Cze, 3) lost to Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 6.5); Finel Vaclav (Cze, 3.5) drew with Jonas Buhl Bjerre (Den, 6); Nemej Jychym (Cze, 2.5) drew with Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 2) Ivan Salgado Lopez (Esp, 4) drew with Ma Qun (Chn, 4.5); Stamatis Kourkoulous-Arditis (Gre, 3) lost to Marc'andria Maurizzi (Fra, 5).

## Mumbai Indians captain Harmanpreet Kaur fined for Code of Conduct breach

GNS News Agency, March 7

Mumbai Indians captain Harmanpreet Kaur was on Friday fined 10 per cent of her match fee for showing dissent to umpire's decision during her team's match against UP Warriorz at the Ekana Cricket Stadium in Lucknow. The incident occurred at the end of the 19th over of UP Warriorz innings when umpire Ajitesh Argal informed Mumbai Indians skipper Harmanpreet Kaur that only three fielders could be outside the circle in the final over due to a slow over rate.

Seemingly unhappy with the ruling, she was seen engaged in a brief argument with the umpire, with teammate Amelia Kerr also joining the discussion. Harmanpreet also had a spat with UP Warriorz's Sophie Ecclestone during the match, when the English cricketer, standing at the non-striker's end, walked toward the umpire to explain something. Harmanpreet appeared to respond sharply, seemingly asking Ecclestone to stay out of the conversation. The exchange prompted intervention from square-leg umpire N Janani and UP Warriorz captain Deepti Sharma, who stepped in to defuse the tension. "Harmanpreet Kaur admitted to the Level 1 offence under Article 2.8 which relates to showing dissent at a match," WPL said in a release. "For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding." Former India captain Mithali Raj has commented on the animated incident between Harmanpreet Kaur and Sophie Ecclestone. "I believe



Mumbai Indians were four minutes behind the over rate, which meant they had to bring an extra fielder inside the ring—allowing only three fielders on the boundary," she told JioHotstar. "Harmanpreet was likely discussing this with the umpire and reconsidering whether she would have bowled Shabnim Ismail in the 19th over had she known earlier. "But I couldn't quite figure out what Ecclestone was trying to do in that moment. As a captain, when you're already dealing with an over-rate penalty and adjusting your field, it can be frustrating to have another player step into that conversation. I think it was just a moment of emotion."

Captain of Mumbai Indians, Harmanpreet fined for breaching Code of Conduct

**L U C K N O W :** Harmanpreet Kaur, captain of Mumbai Indians in the ongoing Women's Premier League, has been reprimanded and fined 10 per cent of her match fees for breaching the Code of Conduct during her team's match against UP Warriorz at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow on Thursday. Harmanpreet Kaur admitted to the Level 1 offence under Article 2.8 which relates to showing dissent at an umpire's decision during a match. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding. Speaking to Jio Hotstar on the incident featuring Harmanpreet and Sophie Ecclestone in the 19th over, former India captain Mithali Raj said she believed Mumbai Indians were four minutes behind the over rate, which meant they had to bring an extra fielder inside the ring—allowing only three fielders on the boundary. "Harmanpreet was likely discussing this with the umpire and reconsidering whether she would have bowled Shabnim Ismail in the 19th over, if she had known earlier. But I couldn't quite figure out what Ecclestone was trying to do at that moment," she said. "As a captain, when you're already dealing with an over-rate penalty and adjusting your field, it can be frustrating to have another player step into that conversation. I think it was just a moment of emotion," Mithali said.

## Sunil Gavaskar to Rohit Sharma: Are you happy with scoring 25-30 runs?



could reach 350 or more. "He also needs to give it some thought. It's one thing to go out and play aggressively, but there has to be a bit of discretion somewhere to give himself the chance to bat for 25-30 overs. If he does that, he takes the game away from the opposition. That kind of impact is match winning," he said.

Rohit Sharma India's captain Rohit Sharma walks off the field after losing his wicket during the ICC Champions Trophy cricket match between India and New Zealand at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Sunday, March 2, 2025. (AP Photo/Altaf Qadri) Gavaskar has also pointed out the "shortcomings" in India opens Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill, who have failed to give India go start in the ongoing tournament. "They haven't (played) to their maximum potential) because when you look at the openers, they haven't really given the Indian team the kind of start that they had hoped for. That has not happened. So, clearly, I think there's a shortcoming over there," said Gavaskar. India will lock horns against New Zealand in the final of the 2025 Champions Trophy at the Dubai International Stadium on Sunday.

Sunil Gavaskar wants Rohit Sharma to bat for 25-30 over, which will take the game away from the opposition.

GNS News Agency, March 7

R o h i t Sharma Australia's Josh Inglis appeals successfully for the wicket of India's captain Rohit Sharma, right, during the ICC Champions Trophy semifinal cricket match between India and Australia at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai. Legendary India cricketer Sunil Gavaskar has said Team India captain Rohit Sharma shouldn't be happy by scoring a quick-fire 25-30 and instead look to bat till the 25-30 overs, which will take

the game away from the opposition. Rohit Sharma has failed to convert starts in the ongoing Champions Trophy. Rohit's highest score is 41 that he made against Bangladesh. Since then, he has gotten scores of 20, 15, and 28. As a batter, are you happy with scoring 25-30 runs? You shouldn't be!" Gavaskar told India Today. "So that is what I would say to him: your impact on the team will be even greater if you bat for 25 overs instead of just seven, eight, or nine overs," Gavaskar said.

Rohit Sharma Sunil Gavaskar India's captain Rohit Sharma looks skywards to watch the ball just before he was caught during the ICC Champions Trophy cricket match between India and Bangladesh at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Thursday, Feb. 20, 2025. (AP Photo/Altaf Qadri) "If Rohit Sharma bats for even 25 overs, India will be around 180-200. Imagine if they have lost only a couple of wickets by then; just think what they could do. They

## Shahrukh Khan on Gautam Gambhir's return: "The best thing to happen to KKR"



GNS News Agency, March 7

Kolkata: "I never thought Gautam Gambhir left us. There has always been a lovely relationship with Gautam over the years. There are a few players with whom friendships remain strong, and Gautam Gambhir is one of them. For him, it was a big homecoming," said Shahrukh Khan, owner of defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders.

"When Gautam Gambhir returned as a mentor, and then built the squad, I felt that four pillars formed the foundation of the team. First was the unwavering faith in Mitchell Starc. Second, the decision to promote Sunil Narine as an opener. The third key element was reuniting with Shreyas Iyer. And last, but equally important, was investing in young talent." Shahrukh said in an

interview with JioHotstar.

"When Gautam was no longer with KKR, it felt like—where are the pieces going to settle? Since his exit, there was a slight loss of direction. I think, at one point, panic set in. From the outside, you could sense that things weren't as smooth as they seemed," he said. "You always expect KKR to perform at a high level, and when the performances didn't match the team's aura, it became evident that something had to change. As soon as I heard that Gautam Gambhir was coming back, I remember tweeting that the best thing to happen to KKR since Gautam Gambhir leaving, was Gautam Gambhir coming back!" Shahrukh explained. "For Gautam Gambhir the mentor, you needed a captain like Shreyas Iyer. Gautam is al-

ways deeply involved—he handpicks the players, decides the strategy, and brings a clear vision. To complement that, the captain has to be someone without conflicting thoughts. There are contrasting styles between the two—Gautam is intense, always in your face, while Shreyas has a laid-back, composed approach. But together, they were the perfect match, balancing each other out."

Captain of Mumbai Indians, Harmanpreet fined for breaching Code of Conduct

GNS News Agency, March 7 Lucknow: Harmanpreet Kaur, captain of Mumbai Indians in the ongoing Women's Premier League, has been reprimanded and fined 10 per cent of her match fees for breaching the Code of Conduct during her team's match against UP Warriorz at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow on Thursday.

Harmanpreet Kaur admitted to the Level 1 offence under Article 2.8 which relates to showing dissent at an umpire's decision during a match. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding. Speaking to Jio Hotstar on the incident featuring Harmanpreet and Sophie Ecclestone in the 19th over, former India captain Mithali Raj said she believed Mumbai Indians were four minutes behind the over rate, which meant they had to bring an extra fielder inside the ring—allowing only three fielders on the boundary.

## Dupahiya review: 'No gaali, no dunaali'; Gajraj Rao, Renuka Shahane's anti-Mirzapur show delivers clean, family entertainment



A stolen motorcycle— 'dupahiya'— in the fictional village of Dhadakpur becomes the fulcrum around which this new comedy and its characters revolve, delivering a melange of Bihari-via-Mumbai accents, loads of quirk and broad life lessons. This is the mix that gave 'Panchayat' its mojo, with Phulera's Sachivji and Pradhanji and their cohorts becoming a byword in the madly-popular OTT-specific ruralcom genre. Here, Uttar Pradesh is replaced by Bihar, but the mood remains similarly overall sunny, as the occasional clouds created by the busy plot (written by Avinash Dwivedi and Chirag Garg) are dispelled by the show's determinedly cheerful air: leave the viewer smiling is clearly the mandate.

The idea of a crime-free village in Bihar— what's that — has to be a figment of the writers' imagination. But we

submit to the doings in Dhadakpur mainly because its ensemble cast is so committed to their designated tasks: fixing a suitable match for affable school-teacher Banwari Jha's (Gajraj Rao) daughter, the city-loving Roshni (Shivani Raghuvanshi), which then rolls over into finding the stolen 'dupahiya' which has, in turn, stolen the heart of prospective Mumbai-based groom Kuber (Avinash Dwivedi, terrific). It takes nine episodes, each counting down to the day the 'baraat' arrives, to introduce us to Dhadakpur's residents. The lady-in-waiting to get to the top panchayat post, Pushplata Yadav, (Renuka Shahane), who tries her hardest to prevent the theft being registered as an FIR at the 'thana' run by somnolent-but-sharp Mithilesh Khuswaha (Yashpal Sharma): gasp, an actual crime in an 'apradh-mukt gaon'? The school-teacher, desperate to be the principal, now even more

desperate to find the 'dupahiya', even if he has to rope in his layabout son Bhugol (Spash Srivastava), who reaches out for help to Amavas (Bhuvan Arora), a local light-fingered fellow who has feelings for Roshni.

The canvas is crowded, with subplots and supporting characters, some there just to fill time or amp up the quirk quotient. Relatives landing up early to celebrate. Wannabe reporter wanting to do real 'patrakarita' being lectured on the state of journalism today, allowing some digs to be aired: 'confirm karna logon ka kaam hai, hamaara kaam hai chhaapna', smirks the local rag's editor (Brijendra Kala, as always leaving a mark, even walk-on parts). A deep-skinned girl putting her 'padha-likha' status to one side as she seeks fairness. And, if it is Bihar, how can a 'launda naach' be far behind? In perhaps the only risible portion in this clean-cut village saga, we get Srivastava and Arora, both very good, swing it. That it is strictly for laughs makes the whole ecosystem which runs that tradition not really of interest to the show. In the same vein, self-esteem connected to the colour of the skin — a worthy subject — is dealt with by the fair-skinned Roshni talking up brains and beauty, and a convenient hook. You can see the conundrum from afar: addressing problems of women in power, and the ills of colorism and dowry— because that's literally what the demand of the dupahiya boils down to — can make the whole thing heavy, and how would that sit with the light-hearted vein of the show?

Best to make peace with it, and enjoy 'Dupahiya' for what it aims to do — deliver clean, 'socially-relevant', family-entertainment — 'na gaali, na dunaali, na katta, no goli'— an anti-Mirzapur, if you will, even if the accents drop, and even when there are lags. Plenty of laughs are thrown in, topped by such helpful lines: 'yeh Bihar ka Belgium hai'. How can you not crack up, even when you know that it is a dialogue? I'm pretty much done with non-stop gratuitous 'gaali-galaaui', so I will take it, thank you. Dupahiya cast: Renuka Shahane, Gajraj Rao, Shivani Raghuvanshi, Bhuvan Arora, Spash Srivastava, Avinash Dwivedi, Yashpal Sharma, Samarth Mahor, Godaan Kumar, Anjuman Saxena, Chandan Kumar, Brijendra Kala

## Shawn Mendes goes 'chappal' shopping at Mumbai street market ahead of his maiden India gig at Lollapalooza 2025.

International performers coming to India and taking over the stage has become the latest trend. Singer Shawn Mendes is the new name on the list who is all set for his debut gig in the country at Lollapalooza 2025. The pop sensation, known for his hits 'Señorita' and 'There's Nothing Holdin' Me Back', will take the stage at Mumbai's Mahalakshmi Race Course, on March 8. But before that, he was seen on Mumbai's streets as he tried to soak up Mumbai city vibes. Before his maiden gig in India at the Lollapalooza India 2025, Shawn Mendes was seen out for some 'chappal' shopping at the Colaba market in the city.



Dressed in a ganji, he happily posed for selfies with fans who spotted him. This is going to be the third edition of the Lollapalooza festival and will take place on March 8 and 9. Shawn Mendes' photos and videos have been shared online where he can be seen taking a stroll at the street market. In another set of photos and videos, Shawn was seen at a Colaba Causeway market in Mumbai.

The singer was seen in a relaxed and casual look. Sharing the photo online, a fan wrote, "Shawn Mendes is buying chappal in Colaba (crying emojis)." Another fan reacted by saying, "Shawn mendes in his chappal era." Another fan asked, "Why is he wearing banyan on road? ??". Lollapalooza India 2025 will also see performances by Green Day, Louis Tomlinson, Glass Animals, and Nothing But Thieves.

## Priyanka Chopra's mom Madhu says it is the child's fault when parents treat them badly: 'The fault is in you, not in the parent who has done the best for you'

Priyanka Chopra's mother, Madhu Chopra, recently spoke about Priyanka's childhood. Madhu said that Priyanka and her brother, Siddharth, largely grew up with their grandparents, and if it wasn't for them, she wouldn't have been able to manage her work and personal life. She recalled that when she spent time with her kids, she gave them undivided attention. She also spoke about "misguided children" who blame their parents for their faults.

She shared on Rubina Dilaik's YouTube channel, "My kids, when they were really small and we were also young, they spent their childhood at my parents' house. There was a lot of support from their side." She recalled that after she was done with work, she spent uninterrupted time with her children, and shared, "We worked with complete focus and dedication but when we spent time with our kids, it was quality time. There was no interruption at that time. No phone calls, no patients, just 100 percent focus on the kids. So the kids were always happy with that. They knew that 'grown ups always come back', we always made sure that our kids knew about it." She then said that even if parents treat their kid badly, it is the child's responsibility to introspect. "Sometimes kids get misguided. They start earning, move out and parents get left behind. I hear so many kids complaining about their childhood. 'We are carrying the scars of our childhood, that is why we are like this'. They say, 'That's why we are smoking up, or doing something bad'. That is wrong. Even if your parents treated you badly, they were doing the best they could. Something was wrong with you which is why they had to change themselves. You didn't improve yourself so the fault is in you, not in the parent who has done the best for you. I tell them to introspect and improve themselves. Until you realise that, you can't change



your path and you can't do the right thing."

Previously, in a chat with Something Bigger Show's YouTube channel, Madhu had spoken about her son Siddharth and said that he was "collateral damage" to Priyanka's success. "Siddharth was the collateral damage to all of Priyanka's success, because dad was working, I was with Priyanka, he just grew up on his own and he was a teenager at that time. He, I think, was collateral damage for me," she said and added, "When I think about it, these are certain things that you had to deal with him."

## Viineet Kumar Siingh says torture scenes in Chhaava were toned down, audiences wouldn't have been able to handle graphic version: 'Chheele hue badan par namak lagaya...'

Vicky Kaushal's Chhaava has emerged as the biggest Indian hit of the year, and the biggest hit of the star's career. Directed by Laxman Utekar, Chhaava also stars Rashmika Mandanna, Viineet Kumar Siingh and Akshaye Khanna in pivotal roles. The film is nearing the Rs 500 crore mark domestically, and has crossed the Rs 600 crore mark worldwide. Chhaava's climactic scene, in which Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj is tortured by Aurangzeb, has proven to be divisive, with some suggesting that the violence was unbearable. In a recent appearance on The Raunac Podcast, Viineet offered his opinion about the depiction of violence in the film, and said that it wasn't even the half of it.

He shared, "Before starting the shoot of the film, I went to visit the shrines of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj and Kavi Kalash ji. I spend half a day there. Main samaadhi ke paas hi baitha tha bahut waqt tak. I talked to several people there, a few old folks who have been living there for years. They told me many stories."

The actor further added, "So, the brutality that happened during that time, people have only seen a part of it in Chhaava, that too quite toned down. Ek maheene se zyada waqt tak aap kisi ko torture karahe ho, agar aap usko shoot karoge, toh aap samajh rahe ho apko kya dekhne ko milega?" When the interviewer confirmed if Viineet was saying that what was shown was a toned-down version,



the actor said yes. Viineet Kumar Siingh added, "I have been a doctor, and I have seen people coming in the emergency ward after horrific accidents. When we used anti-septic to clean their wounds, baap baap chillaate hain log, naani yaad ajaati hai. Even fixing a fracture makes people scream out of pain." Comparing this to what the protagonist went through in the film, Viineet said, "Meanwhile in Chhaava, salt is being rubbed on open wounds. You can go and meet people to listen to such stories. I went there to take blessings before starting the film. As an actor, I follow the director once I've said yes to the script. I can only improvise in a certain limit of what's written," he concluded.

## The Waking of a Nation review: Series that probes the events leading up to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre lacks punch



From the very beginning, the viewers are made aware that The Waking of a Nation is a historical drama "inspired by true events". The six-part series, created and directed by Ram Madhvan, tries to expose the conspiracies that resulted in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre on April 13, 1919 — the day of Baisakhi celebrations. That day, during a public gathering at Jallianwala Bagh to protest against the draconian Rowlatt Act, under which Indians could be detained without a trial, British army officer Reginald Dyer ordered firing at the crowd, after blocking all exits. The Waking of a Nation is an attempt to acquaint the audience with the events which are considered to be turning points in Indian independence struggle. The series arouses interest and curiosity since the events leading up to the massacre, which was premeditated, and the inquiry that followed are not widely known facts.

The historical series follows advocate Kantilal Sahni (played by Taaruk Raina) — a fictional character — who becomes the undesignated narrator, giving a lowdown about the events preceding the Baisakhi gathering and the prevalent mood of Amritsar. He presents before the Hunter Commission, which was appointed by the British government to investigate the massacre, the facts that expose a deep conspiracy rooted in colonialism and white supremacy. The show is successful at showcasing the feel of that period, the public outrage over the Rowlatt Act and the efforts of Indian activists to maintain peace. The show, however, depends on Kantilal to convey these to the audience through his many monologues. The story of Kantilal and his friends (Sahil Mehta as Ali Allahbakhsh, Bhawshel Singh as Hari Singh Aulakh and Nikita Dutta as Poonam, Hari's wife) runs as a parallel to the courtroom drama.

## Yuvika Chaudhary finally reacts to

## divorce rumours with Prince Narula: 'I didn't feel the need to explain things to people'



In a recent interview, Yuvika Chaudhary broke her silence on divorce rumours with husband Prince Narula.

Yuvika Chaudhary has finally broken her silence on divorce rumours with Prince Narula. In a recent interview, Yuvika revealed that she never felt compelled to clarify her re-

lationship with Prince to anyone.

In an interview with ETimes, Yuvika reassured that everything is fine between her and Prince. The actor also shared that she

chose not to respond to the divorce rumors, as she "didn't feel the need to explain things to people." Reflecting on their bond, Yuvika shared that she and Prince have seen

"some fun days and some tough days." However, their journey has been uplifting, strengthening their connection even further. Speculation about trouble in Prince Narula and Yuvika Chaudhary's marriage arose after fans noticed Yuvika's absence from Prince's birthday celebration. The rumors gained traction when netizens speculated that Prince was taking indirect digs at Yuvika through an Instagram post. His post read, "Kuch log vlogs mein jhooth bol ke, sache ban jate hai. Or kuch log chup rahe kar galat sabit ho jate. Is zamane mein rishte se jada vlogs important hai" (Some people lie in their vlogs and appear truthful, while others stay silent and are deemed wrong. Nowadays, vlogs seem more important than relationships). However, Prince later shared pictures of Lohri celebrations with Yuvika and their daughter, putting an end to the separation rumors.