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Endogamy causing hereditary diseases in India, says CCMB Hyd

Hyderabad: Persistent practice of endogamy, which involves marrying within small communities, is the primary cause for population-specific hereditary diseases in India, a recent study led by Dr K Thangaraj, Bhatnagar Fellow, Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad said. One of the key findings of this study, published in Journal of Genetics and Genomics, was identifying that the widespread prevalence of ankylosing spondylitis, a type of arthritis that causes inflammation in the joints and ligaments of the spine. The ailment is linked to the HLA-B27:04 risk allele, a genetic variant that increases the likelihood of developing a disease.

PM at post-Budget webinar on MSME: Industry should take big steps in manufacturing, take advantage of opportunities available



GNS News Agency, March 4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday (March 4, 2025) asked the industry not to be a "mere spectator" and take advantage of the opportunities available in the global supply chain. Highlighting India's role as a growth engine for the global economy, Mr. Modi urged industries to innovate and integrate into global supply chains. "Today India provides stable policies and a better business environment. I urge you to take big steps to advance the country's manufacturing and exports," he said at a Post-Budget webinar on Regulatory, Investment and Ease of Doing Business Reforms. Mr. Modi said in-

dustry should look for manufacturing innovative products using R&D which has demand overseas, and this will push exports. "Today the world needs a trusted partner... Industry should not be a mere spectator, should seek opportunity in the global supply chain: Modi said, adding today India has become a growth engine for the global economy... The country has proved its resilience during hard times also. Mr. Modi stressed the need to develop new modes of credit delivery for MSMEs to ensure they receive low-cost, timely credit. He pointed out that the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme across 14 sectors has led to investments of over ₹1.5 lakh crore and production worth 13 lakh crore.

Reiterating the government's commitment to improving the ease of doing business, the Prime Minister said over 40,000 compliances at the Centre and state levels have been scrapped, making it easier for businesses to operate. He also noted that states play a crucial role in attracting investments, with investors preferring states that implement progressive policies. Calling the Union Budget a game-changer, Mr. Modi said it had exceeded people's expectations and laid a strong foundation for economic growth. He encouraged the industry to focus on research and development to manufacture innovative products with high demand overseas, ultimately boosting exports and strengthening India's position in the global market.

Modi govt weakening RTI in name of data protection: Kharge

GNS News Agency, March 4

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday (March 4, 2025) accused the Modi government of weakening the Right To Information (RTI) Act in the name of data protection and asserted that his party will keep fighting against the "dictatorial" regime to secure the rights of the people. Mr. Kharge asserted that the Congress will not let RTI weaken and will continue to raise its voice from the streets to Parliament.

"On one hand, India has been topping the charts on Misinformation and Disinformation for the past years and on the other hand, the Modi government is bent on weakening the Right To Information (RTI) Act implemented by the Congress-UPA by bringing in the Data Protection law," the Congress chief said in a post in Hindi on X. Whether it is information in the public sector like the list of ration cards, beneficiary labourers of MGNREGA, names of people involved in public welfare schemes, voter list in elections, or the names of scamster billionaires who fled abroad after taking loans from government banks— it is important for the public to have the names of all these in the public domain, he asserted. But now the Modi government is weakening the RTI in the name of Data Protection, due to which such names will no longer be made public, Mr. Kharge



claimed. The Right to Privacy is a fundamental right, and the Congress has fought for it, but when it comes to Public Welfare, the Right to Information is necessary, he asserted. The Right to Privacy was also taken care of in the RTI brought by the Congress, but this does not mean that the list of beneficiaries or the names of scamsters should not be made public, Mr. Kharge said. "The Congress party will not let RTI weaken, we have raised our voice for it earlier also, and will continue to raise our voice from the streets to the Parliament. We will keep fighting against this dictatorial government to secure the rights of the people!" the Congress chief said.

KTR's ultimatum: Siriclla Collector visits Malkapeta reservoir

GNS News Agency, March 4

Rajanna-Siriclla: Following BRS working president KT Rama Rao's ultimatum, Irrigation officials are making arrangements to release water to Malkapeta reservoir from the Mid Manair Reservoir. Collector Sandeep Kumar Jha visited the Malkapeta reservoir and examined the arrangements on Tuesday. While examining paddy fields in Devunigutta thanda of Yellareddy mandal where the crop had withered recently, Rama Rao had given an ultimatum to the State government that he would stage a dharna in front of Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy's chambers in the Secretariat if water was not supplied to crops within 48 hours. Earlier, farmers from Thangallapalli had met Rama Rao and requested him to take steps to protect the standing crops sowed under Malkapeta reservoir by releasing water from Mid Manair.

Based on the ryots' request, he had spoken to Irrigation Engineering-In-Chief Anil Kumar and requested him to release water from Mid Manair. Responding positively, irrigation officials led by Superintendent Engineer Ravinder on Monday examined the canal. On Tuesday, the Collector also visited Malkapeta reservoir and examined the gates,



tunnel, pump house, motors, control room and power supply system. Interacting with irrigation officer Amarendra Reddy, he enquired about water levels in the reservoir, which had 0.75 tmc (dead storage) water. The Collector said consultations were on with higher officials to release 0.5 tmc water from MMR. After filling Malkapeta, Maisamma Cheruvu and Singasamudram Cheruvu of Yellareddy mandal would be filled, he added.

KTR takes dig at Congress over body-shaming remarks against Rohit Sharma, calls it 'Gutter Politics'

GNS News Agency, March 4

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao took a dig at the Congress, condemning its spokesperson's derogatory remarks on Indian cricket team skipper Rohit Sharma. He said body shaming, derogatory comments, and delusional statements, were a hallmark of the Congress. Taking to X on Tuesday, Rama Rao found no reason why many were getting riled up over the Congress spokesperson's comments on Rohit Sharma. "To think Rohit Sharma needs fitness advice or sermons on achievements from a Congress spokesperson, is of course the cruel joke that gets passed off as politics," he remarked. I don't see a reason why many are getting riled up over Congress

spokesperson's comments on Rohit Sharma?! Body shaming, derogatory comments and delusional statements are a hallmark of Congress. To think Rohit Sharma needs fitness advice or sermons on achievements from a... The BRS working president also took a swipe at a Telangana Minister, stating that she was facing court proceedings for her cheapest and most derogatory comments on film stars and their families. He was indirectly referring to Minister Konda Surekha who is facing charges for her derogatory and defamatory remarks, against Telugu actors. "This is their level of gutter politics," he said, adding, "Rohit bhail! As a fellow Indian, I apologise for the vileness you had to endure. You are an absolute rockstar, and no silly politician's opinion can tarnish your reputation."

SCR announces one-way special train from Banaras to Secunderabad to clear extra rush

Hyderabad: In order to clear the extra rush of passengers, the South Central Railways (SCR) has announced a one-way special train from Banaras to Secunderabad.

In a press release issued here on Tuesday, the SCR informed the passengers that Train No. 05082 Banaras - Secunderabad will depart at 6 pm on March 5 and arrive here 10.30 pm the next day. Enroute, this train will stop at Varanasi, Prayagraj Chheoki, Satna, Maihar, Katni, Jabalpur, Itarsi, Ghoradongri, Betul, Nagpur, Sevagram, Chandrapur, Balharshah, Sirpur Kaghaznagar, Bellampali, Manchiryal, Ramagundam, Peddapalli, Jamikunta and Kazipet stations.

SC issues notice to Telangana government over 'delay' in deciding MLAs' disqualification pleas



GNS News Agency, March 4

Hyderabad: The Supreme Court on Monday issued a formal notice in the plea filed by BRS and its MLAs challenging the delay by the Telangana Legislative Assembly Speaker in deciding disqualification petitions against 10 MLAs who contested the 2023 elections on a BRS ticket but later defected to the Congress party. The matter has been posted for hearing on March 25. During a previous hearing on February 10, the court had asked Senior Advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Shekhar Naphde, who appeared on behalf of the Telangana Assembly Speaker, about the time limit for deciding on the disqualification petitions. The matter was posted for hearing on

February 18, but as the judges were occupied in the Constitutional bench, it was posted to March 4.

On Tuesday, the apex court heard both petitions filed by BRS working president KT Rama Rao on behalf of the party and also by BRS MLA Padi Kaushik Reddy, which were clubbed together for hearing. During the hearing, the Speaker's counsel, including Senior Advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Abhishek Manu Singhvi, objected on technical grounds citing the absence of a formal notice to the Speaker to clarify on reasonable time to decide on the disqualification petitions. The Supreme Court observed that it was "hyper-technical" without doubt, but necessary to ensure that no objection was raised at a later point that the matter was decided without following principles of natural justice. Accordingly, the Court issued a formal notice and waived it on behalf of the respondents. The case will now be taken up on March 25. Justice BR Gavai expressed strong reservations over the delay, remarking, "Should the reasonable period for deciding a disqualification plea be the end of the term? What happens to democratic principles then?" He emphasised that disqualification proceedings cannot become a case of "operation successful, patient dead." Senior Advocate S Sundaram, appearing for the petitioners, pointed out that more than a year had passed without a decision. He accused the Speaker's counsel of deliberate delay tactics, on different grounds whenever the issue came for hearing. "This is just another way of stalling," he said.

Maternal mortality rate of 100 deaths per lakh live births achieved: Health Minister

GNS News Agency, March 4

India has achieved the National Health Policy (NHP) target of a maternal mortality rate (MMR) of 100 deaths per one lakh live births, and 83% decline in MMR achieved between 1990 to 2020, which was much higher than the decline in Global MMR, Union Health Minister J. P. Nadda said on Tuesday. Mr. Nadda was chairing the ninth meeting of the National Health Mission's (NHM) Mission Steering Group, the highest policy-making and governance body under the NHM for the health sector. The Minister said that a 69% decline was observed in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) in India during this period, while the decline in Global IMR was 55%. Additionally, there has been a 75% decline in the 'Under 5 [years] Mortality Rate' while the global rate of decline was 58%.

At the meeting, the Minister stressed the need to translate the agendas and objectives of different health schemes, and the importance of the roles of officers, including Chief Medical Officers (CMO), at the ground level to achieve this. "Enhancing and strengthening the capacities of CMOs is vital as is the need for training and capacity-building exercises, so that their capacities can be utilised in the best way possible; that will pave the way for achieving required



results of healthcare schemes at the grassroot level," Mr. Nadda said. Mr. Nadda also spoke about the role of ASHA workers in the healthcare system and remarked on the need for their further empowerment and welfare through revised incentives for routine activities, and providing enhanced honorariums. While commending developments in strengthening health infrastructure through new technological advances, Mr. Nadda also said the quality of the latest additions, including the Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita and Maitri (BHISHM), should be ensured.

UP Assembly Speaker chides MLA for spitting 'pan masala' in House

GNS News Agency, March 4

Lucknow: Speaker Satish Mahana on Tuesday took exception to a member spitting 'pan masala' on the carpet at the entrance of the main hall of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly. He asked all MLAs to prevent such practices and maintain the dignity of the House. As soon as the House met in the morning, Mahana said he came to know that a member had spit 'pan masala' in the House.

"I am aware of who the member is. The video is available. But I do not want to publicly take a name because I do not intend to insult anyone. The member who did it should come and meet me or I will be forced to summon him," he said. On being informed about the incident earlier before the House proceedings began, the Speaker said that he went to the spot and supervised the cleaning. In a video, he was heard commenting that money should be taken from the member to change the carpet. Mahana told the MLAs that



25 crore people in the State had reposed their respect and faith in the Assembly, adding it was their responsibility to maintain its dignity.

Ayodhya is the meeting ground of Sanatan Dharma and Sikhism: Puri



GNS News Agency, March 4

Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri on Tuesday (March 4, 2025) described Ayodhya as a "meeting ground of Sanatana Dharma and Sikhism" as he paid obeisance both at the Ram Temple there as well as at the historic Gurudwara Sahib, associated with both the first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak Dev, and the last, Guru Gobind Singh. In a se-

ries of posts on X, Mr. Puri shared pictures of his Monday visit to the Uttar Pradesh temple town, discussing its significance to two faiths. "Ayodhyadham, the sacred meeting ground of Sanatan Dharma and Sikhism. The holy land blessed by Prabhu Shri Ram and three Sikh Guru Sahibs - the holy Udaas of the founder of Sikh faith Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji Maharaj in 1510-11 AD, 9th Guru Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji in 1668 and our Dasham Pita Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1672 who had founded the Khalsa Panth," he said. "I had the good fortune to pay obeisance and seek blessings at the historic Gurudwara Sahibs by the serene Saryu river in Brahmakund, Ayodhyadham," he added. Recalling historic occasions when Hindus and Sikhs had stood together with regard to the Ram Temple, Mr. Puri noted that in 1697, "when the invading Mughal army under Aurangzeb attacked the Shri Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji sent a battalion of 400 Nihang Sikhs to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Aghoris in a fierce battle."

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

War on drugs

THE Punjab government has launched yet another ambitious war on drugs, aiming to eradicate the menace within three months. With 798 raids, 290 arrests and massive seizures, the crackdown has been swift and aggressive. However, such operations are not new. Punjab has long been battling drug trafficking due to its proximity to the Golden Crescent — a hub of heroin production encompassing Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. Will this time be any different? The Bhagwant Mann-led administration has coupled enforcement with a broader strategy, including deaddiction and rehabilitation. The focus on regulating private drug deaddiction centres and prescription drug sales is a step in the right direction. However, the success of this war depends on addressing the root causes — political complicity, porous borders and lack of economic alternatives for the youth. Punjab has seen such crackdowns before. In 2017, the then CM, Capt Amarinder Singh, promised to break the drug trade in four weeks. His government took several measures, including annual drug tests for government employees and the drug abuse prevention officer initiative. Yet, the drug crisis raged on. Before that, the Badal-led SAD government's fight against drugs, too, proved to be a sham.

The failure to dismantle large cartels raises doubts about the effectiveness of the campaigns. The end-users, who are often poor addicts, remain easy targets for law enforcement while the 'big fish' stay elusive. If this pattern continues, the drug trade will persist under a different guise. Large drug consignments still enter Punjab despite heavy policing, pointing to deeper structural issues. Without a long-term vision, these crackdowns fail to bring lasting change. A three-month deadline is unrealistic. Instead of quick-fixes, Punjab needs structural reforms, stricter border controls, judicial efficiency and community-led solutions.

Punjab meets Santiniketan: Nature-inspired solo art exhibition curated by AIM opens at Chandigarh's Government Museum & Art Gallery

GNS News Agency, March 4

art exhibition, aim gallery, chandigarh, shantiniketan, Titled 'Rooted Reflections', the exhibition centres on the works of artist Pardeep Singh (left). The exhibition has been curated by the AIM gallery, founded by Gurpreet and Munish Jauhar (right). Spring is in the air, and what better than to experience this joy of nature through art. On Friday, the AIM Gallery in Chandigarh presented its debut solo art exhibition inspired by nature. Titled 'Rooted Reflections', the exhibition centres on the works of artist Pardeep Singh. Curated by AIM, the exhibition will be on at the Government Museum & Art Gallery, Sector 10, Chandigarh from February 28 to March 2. "Time spent amongst trees is never wasted time. It's the trees, in their varied hues and moods, colours and textures so vividly and masterfully captured on Pardeep Singh's canvases that caught our attention and captivated our senses. We knew, in an instant, that our first solo exhibition as curators of AIM Gallery had to have nature as the anchor and the driver. 'Rooted Reflections' is nature's poetry in motion, and with it, we also celebrate and honour the trees that have been an integral part and personality of Chandigarh, their changing shades announcing the arrival and departure of seasons, their rings and hollows nestling countless tales, their crowns touching the sky while their roots embracing the earth," say Gurpreet and Munish Jauhar, co-founders, AIM.

The artworks, oil on canvas, are layered, evocative and paint a compelling narrative, one that is Pardeep Singh's direct emotional response to the flora and fauna, pines, roads, mountains, canyons, and rivers which he encountered in his travels. "Just like words are to a poet, nature is to me — it's my language of expression. Trees have been my subject of attention, awe and affection for as long as I can remember. To be without trees is to be without roots, and 'Rooted Reflections' is my homage to these gentle giants," says Pardeep Singh.

Born in Hoshiarpur district of Punjab, Pardeep Singh, 39, is a product of Bengal's Santiniketan where he studied the arts for nearly a decade. He describes his art as a digestible abstract, a landscape with hints of the obvious. Nature for him is a place for immersion, to experience, enjoy and absorb, and then allow the subconscious memory of the same flow on canvas. "We believe art has the power to transcend, transform and transport one to a realm of limitless possibilities, phenomenal growth and extraordinary experiences. Through AIM, we strive to enable people, help them navigate the immensely interesting world of art, and educate them on the artist and artworks, the trends and market dynamics in order to help them make informed acquisitions and decisions," says Munish Jauhar.

Brisk pace of development works at Warangal Railway Station

GNS News Agency, March 4

Hyderabad: Works are going on a brisk pace at the Warangal Railway Station which is being modernised at a cost of Rs 25.41 crore. The modernisation is being taken up as part of the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS) launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year. According to a press release from the South Central Railway (SCR) here on Friday here are the works being taken up at Warangal Station: Provision of passenger friendly signages, Train Indication Boards, Coach Indication Boards etc. The press release said the Station is a major transportation hub, connecting the city to various parts of India. It has four platforms and handles a large volume of passenger traffic. Now this station, further upgrading with various passenger-friendly facilities, including a spacious concourse, waiting halls, food stalls, and restrooms. It also has provisions for divyangan passengers, including separate toilets and ramps etc. The Warangal Railway Station in the Secunderabad Division is categorized as Non-Suburban Grade-3 (NSG-3). The station in the Kazipet — Vijayawada section has an average footfall of 31,887 passengers per day and annual earnings of Rs 41.09 Crore. This station serves the passengers in and around Warangal, Hanumakonda and Kazipet. One pair of trains originate/terminate and about 137 trains halt at Warangal station.

Non-registration of FIR: Delhi High Court upholds NHRC order directing police to pay compensation of Rs 50k to doctor



GNS News Agency, March 4

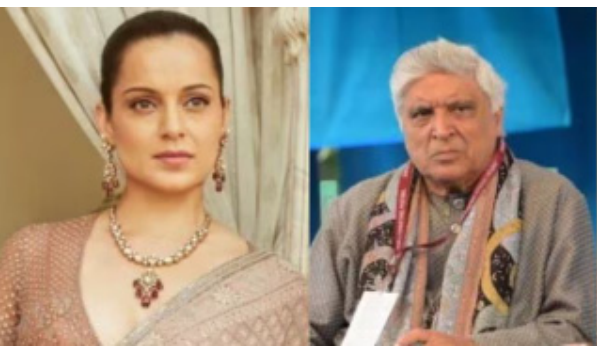
Taking cognizance of the complaint, the NHRC had directed the Deputy Commissioner of Police, South Delhi, to submit an Action Taken Report (ATR) within four weeks. Taking cognizance of the complaint, the NHRC had directed the Deputy Commissioner of Police, South Delhi, to submit an Action Taken Report (ATR) within four weeks. The Delhi High Court recently dismissed a plea by the Delhi Police Commissioner challenging an order by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) which directed the police to pay compensation of Rs 50,000 to a doctor for non-registration of an FIR. The police commissioner was also challenging a show-cause notice issued to the deputy commissioner of police, South Delhi, on May 13, 2023, under Section 18 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.

In November 2021, the doctor had submitted a complaint to the NHRC alleging that certain miscreants had illegally trespassed into his clinic and outraged the modesty of his female staff. He had also contended that despite making a call to the police control room, the police failed to take action. Taking cognizance of the complaint, the NHRC had directed the Deputy Commissioner of Police, South Delhi,

to submit an Action Taken Report (ATR) within four weeks. The police, as outlined in the ATR, had found during inquiry that the doctor had taken a loan from a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) and defaulted on payment because of Covid-19. Following this, five men from the NBFC arrived at the clinic for recovery. Noting that the loan-related settlement was done subsequently, the police stated that the complainant did not want to pursue the matter further. The NHRC, however, first issued a show-cause notice on February 19, 2023, directing the police commissioner to explain why it should not be held liable to pay Rs 50,000 as compensation to the complainant Dr Neeraj Kumar for the non-registration of a First Information Report (FIR). A second show-cause notice was issued in May that year. The police filed its reply in August 2023 and subsequently the NHRC passed an order on September 27, 2023, recommending that the commissioner release Rs 50,000 in compensation to Dr Kumar. Another inquiry was also conducted on November 9, 2023, which was then placed before the rights panel by the police.

Justice Sachin Datta, upholding the NHRC's direction against the police, noted in his order dated February 24 that the alleged statement of Dr Kumar, to the effect that he was not desirous of pursuing the matter, "appears to be misplaced." "It is quite incongruous that the statement of the complainant (Dr Kumar) would be recorded by the very same officer against whom the complainant has lodged the complaint. There was no occasion for the very same officer to approach the complainant and question the complainant as to whether the latter was desirous of pursuing his complaint before the NHRC," the order stated. "The action of the concerned delinquent officer, to record the statement of (Dr Kumar) with regard to the latter's complaint in the NHRC, is nothing short of an attempt to obtain a self-serving exculpatory statement to circumvent/avoid the consequences of the complaint submitted to the NHRC," Justice Datta's order noted.

Kangana Ranaut and Javed Akhtar settle defamation cases against each other in court after 5 years



GNS News Agency, March 4

kangana ranaut, javed akhtar, defamation case, Akhtar's lawyer Jay K Bharadwaj said both amicably settled the matter. Lyricist Javed Akhtar and actor and Lok Sabha MP Kangana Ranaut Friday reached a settlement before a magistrate court in Mumbai in the defamation suits they filed against each other. The Bandra magistrate court disposed of the two cases they filed against each other in 2020. Accompanied by their lawyers, Akhtar and Ranaut appeared before the Bandra court. Akhtar's lawyer Jay K Bharadwaj said both amicably settled the matter. "Ms Ranaut has said that whatever happened was due to a misunderstanding. She has stated she is unconditionally withdrawing all the statements made by her from July 19, 2020

and thereafter. She has undertaken that she will not make any such statements in the future," Bharadwaj said.

"She has also apologised for the inconvenience caused to Mr Akhtar due to the statements and has said that she has great respect for him, being a senior member of the film industry. In view of these statements, Mr Akhtar also chose to withdraw all the matters and all the cases have been disposed of," he said. Ranaut's lawyer Rizwan Siddiquee said both parties had been discussing mediation for nearly a year now. "Once the draft was finalised and accepted by both parties, the cases were disposed of," Siddiquee said. Kangana Ranaut took to Instagram and shared a photo with Javed Akhtar. She wrote, "Today Javed ji and I have resolved our legal matter (defamation case) through mediation, in the mediation Javed ji has been very kind and gracious, he also agreed to write songs for my next directorial." Akhtar filed a criminal defamation complaint against Ranaut in 2020, alleging the actor made defamatory statements against him in interviews. The interviews were given to electronic media after the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput. Subsequently, Ranaut also filed a counter-complaint against Akhtar. In her complaint, Ranaut said when she was involved in a personal dispute with a co-actor in 2016, Akhtar called her and her sister to his house in Juhu in March. She said while Akhtar had nothing to do with the dispute, he called them "with malafide intention and ulterior motive" and "criminally intimidated and threatened" them to tender a written apology to the co-actor to favour him.

Police arrest 3 Talhat Thangal gang members in Mangaluru highway robbery case



GNS News Agency, March 4

mangaluru, mangaluru highway robbers, Talhat Thangal gang. The police have arrested three of Thangal's gang members in connection with the robbery in the last two days, the police said. Investigations into the highway robbery of ?1.80 crore in cash — belonging to a Mangaluru gold businessman with links to gold smuggling — on January 28 have revealed the role of a notorious gang from the coastal Karnataka region. The gang led by Talhat Thangal alias Talat Bajal, 40, from Mangaluru is allegedly involved in various criminal activities including robberies, abduction, and murder cases. The police have arrested three of Thangal's gang members in connection with the robbery in the last two days, the police said. We have picked up three people. The entire gang is known. The key accused is a notorious person with multiple cases," said an officer. Thangal's gang was earlier accused of abducting a Mumbai businessman and robbing him of Rs 5 crore worth of precious stones in July 2016. He was arrested by the Mumbai police in this case, the police said. Details surrounding the January 28 highway robbery near Ankola in the Karwar region of coastal Karnataka emerged on February 17 after the police uncovered the connections between the businessman, Rajendra Prakash Pawar, and the recovery of ? 1.15 crore cash from an abandoned car in a forest near the Ramanguli village on January 28. The cash was hidden in a secret locker in the partially damaged car. According to police reports, Thangal was also accused in a 2023 case where his associates abducted the brothers of an alleged gold smuggler Shafiq who allegedly disappeared with a consignment. The gangster has been charged in cases of prison rioting and attacking policemen in Mangaluru, the police said.

ered ? 1.15 crore in cash from a concealed compartment beneath the rear passenger seats. It was noted that the car displayed a fake Bengaluru number plate and was registered in the name of a gold jewellery craftsman of Maharashtra origin living in Mangaluru.

When the jewellery craftsman was summoned by the Karwar police to Ankola, the police found that the car was used for delivering a gold consignment to Belgavi on January 26 as per the instructions of gold businessman Pawar. The robbery took place on January 28 while Pawar's driver Mohammed Ishak, 42, accompanied by another driver, was returning with ? 2.95 crore in cash after delivering the consignment.

The two men put the cash in two secret lockers in the Hyundai Creta — with ? 1.80 crore stashed under the front passenger seat and ? 1.15 crore stashed under the rear passenger seats, according to the police. While the car was approaching Ankola it was overtaken by a Maruti Swift car which initially brushed against their car and later, intercepted it. Five unknown people armed with knives allegedly attacked the car and forced the drivers out at knifepoint. The drivers were allegedly robbed of their phones, purses, and the car by the attackers. Ankola police registered a case of armed robbery against the unknown people after the gold businessmen met the Ankola police along with the two car drivers who were the direct victims of the robbery. The police suspect that the attackers managed to find the ? 1.80 crore stashed in the locker under the front seat of the car but did not find the ? 1.15 crore in the locker under the rear seat before abandoning the vehicle. Rajendra Pawar, on whose behalf the drivers were delivering the gold consignment, has been earlier accused of illegal gold transactions, including the use of airline staff in 2016 to smuggle gold into Mangaluru from Gulf countries.

TGSRTC driver drowns in Lower Manair Dam

GNS News Agency, March 4

Karimnagar: TGSRTC driver Thirupati Rao (59) drowned in Lower Manair Dam on Friday. Thirupati Rao, who along with friends went to LMD for swimming, drowned in the water.

As family members expressed doubts over the incident, Karimnagar police registered the case as suspicious death and began investigation. His body was shifted to district headquarters hospital for postmortem.

'100% protection for people of Delhi...': CM Rekha Gupta after meeting over 'international gangsters, women's safety' with Amit Shah



GNS News Agency, March 4

Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Delhi CM Rekha Gupta chairs a meeting to review law and order situation in Delhi. Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Delhi CM Rekha Gupta chairs a meeting to review law and order situation in Delhi. Several issues related to policing and the law and order situation in Delhi — from women's safety to tackling traffic congestion — came up for discussion during a meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Chief Minister Rekha Gupta Friday, sources said.

According to bureaucratic sources, the meeting came a day after Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan and Delhi Chief Secretary Dharmendra reviewed steps to transform the Yamuna's ghats along the line of the Sabarmati riverfront in Gujarat. "Several issues which require coordination came up for discussion... it was a detailed discussion," CM Gupta told reporters after the meeting. She added the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government never cooperated with the Centre when it came to providing details about small issues which snowballed into significant problems for the Capital.

"The way the double engine governments are functioning in other states, now Delhi too will see a glimpse of this over the coming days... All issues which need to be solved through cooperation will be dealt with... the people of Delhi will be given 100 per cent protection," she said. Sources added the meeting, attended by the top brass of the Delhi Police, was also convened to "send out a message of co-operation" between the new BJP government and the force which were mostly on opposing ends during the previous AAP government's tenure. According to police sources, the meeting began at 11.30 am and lasted at least two hours. From the Delhi Police, besides Sanjay Arora, Commissioner, Special Commissioners Vivek Gogia, Madhup Tiwari, and Devesh Srivastava were present in the meeting. They said the senior officers also briefed Amit Shah and Rekha Gupta about gangs operating in the city from outside the country. Discussions also took place on women's safety, according to sources, and the police were asked to prepare "a detailed report" on various issues including women's safety.

"Today, whether it is traffic points where congestion or water logging takes place came up for detailed discussion... The constitution of peace committees at the police station and district level," said the Delhi CM. "...Our manifesto-related promises for JJ cluster, for the creation of a specific police outfit (for these) was discussed... the issue of women's safety was discussed and soon detailed policies will be made regarding these," she added. Gupta said coordination between the Delhi Government's Public Works Department (PWD) and the police regarding the network of CCTVs in the Capital as well as the issue of national security and the impact of "international gangs" on the city was also discussed. She said similar review meetings would be held every month and ways to ease traffic congestion, solve the issue of water logging or those related to prosecution would be taken up.

Car rams guests at Ghaziabad wedding procession; 2 arrested, 2 absconding

GNS News Agency, March 4

Ghaziabad ACP Rai also told The Indian Express that following the investigation, Section 110 of BNS mentioned in the FIR has been changed to Section 109 (attempt to murder) of the same Act. ACP Rai also told The Indian Express that following the investigation, Section 110 of BNS mentioned in the FIR has been changed to Section 109 (attempt to murder) of the same Act.

At least eight guests in a wedding procession suffered injuries when four men driving a Wagon-R car allegedly ran over them after they were asked not to dance during a wedding procession in Ghaziabad on Tuesday night. "We have confirmed that there are four men involved in the incident and we have arrested two of them," said Prabhu Dayal, Station House Officer, Niwari, Ghaziabad. Gyan Prakash Rai, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Modinagar, said two of the four accused have been arrested.

Those arrested have been identified as Sagar Kumar, 23, and Pradeep Kumar, 22 — both residents of Meerut. Rai also said the statements of the injured and eyewitnesses have been recorded and a team has been formed to nab the absconders.

The incident occurred on Tuesday in Ghaziabad's Niwari area when two wedding ceremonies were being held at two wedding halls opposite each other. "There were two wedding celebrations, one at the Eco farm house and the other at the Sehrawat farm house. Those at the Eco farm house had booked band players and the other one had booked DJ. The guests of the Eco farm started dancing to the DJ, which was objected to... A scuffle began and minutes later a group of men came and rammed those dancing at the wedding procession," said Dayal.

Following the incident, a First Information Report was registered at Niwari police station on Wednesday evening based on the complaint of one Surendra Singh under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Sections 191(2) (rioting), 115(2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 352 (intentional insult to provoke breach of peace), 125(b) (acts endangering life and personal safety of others), 281 (rash and negligent driving endangering human life) and 110 (attempt to commit culpable homicide).

"They at first intruded our wedding function and started dancing to the DJ music being played, we requested them to leave. Upon this, they picked up a fight and started abusing us. Later, four to five men from the gate-crasher group arrived in a speeding Wagon-R and ran over our guests and fled the spot," said Singh.

'Need for forensic experts is rising': President Murmu at NFSU convocation



GNS News Agency, March 4

NFSU convocation ceremony President Droupadi Murmu during the convocation ceremony of National Forensic Science University (NFSU), in Gandhinagar, Friday, Feb. 28, 2025. Governor of Gujarat Acharya Devvrat is also seen. Lauding the enactment of three new criminal laws, President Droupadi Murmu emphasised on the need for more forensic experts in the country. Addressing the third convocation at the National Forensic Science University (NFSU) in Gandhinagar, Murmu said more employment opportunities are opening up in the field of forensics.

Murmu said, "July 1 2024 will be remembered for a crucial change in the justice system. The three new criminal laws came into effect on the day. It has become mandatory for forensic experts to conduct investigations at the crime scene in cases where the punishment is more than seven years. "The need for forensic experts is rising. This university was set up to address the need. More employ-

ment opportunities are opening up and new doors will open for you," Murmu said. Mentioning about the developments, Murmu said: "Forensic facilities will be upgraded in all states. Time-bound forensic investigation has been made mandatory. Changes have been brought in to make forensic examination and investigation stronger." Murmu urged the students to ensure the fast delivery of justice to everyone and said: "Make sure that nobody is left without justice due to financial limitations." Commenting on the delay in probes, Murmu said: "One of the many reasons for delays in the justice system is that the examination of exhibits coming to forensic facilities in large numbers is not possible in a speedy manner. Along with increasing forensic facilities, increasing the number of experts like you is also required. I am happy to learn that time-bound steps are being taken to scale up the forensic ecosystem in the country." Murmu also noted that the rise of digital technology, especially artificial intelligence, has led to "new ways to commit crimes" even as the "capabilities of forensic experts are increasing." Murmu remarked NFSU was one-of-a-kind and appreciated more women earning their degrees at the event. "Women have a greater affinity towards compassion, justice, and taking the side of the weaker sections of society. I am happy to learn that women have outnumbered men among the students passing out today. Of those receiving gold medals, more than 85 per cent are women. I see the picture of a justice-based Viksit Bharat in the future," she said. "Any justice system will be considered strong only when it is inclusive...when it works for the weaker and deprived sections of society based on forensic evidence and provides impartial and speedy justice. This should be your aim," Murmu told the students.

Going ahead with implementation of PM-ABHIM scheme, Delhi government tells SC

GNS News Agency, March 4

supreme court, indian express On January 17, the Supreme Court had stayed the December 24, 2024, Delhi High Court order asking the GNCTD to sign the MoU by January 5, 2025, irrespective of the Model Code of Conduct coming into force then in the run-up to the Assembly elections. The BJP government in Delhi on Friday told the Supreme Court that it has decided to go ahead with the implementation of the PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) scheme in the national capital. Advocate Jyoti Mendiratta, appearing for the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD), conveyed this to a bench of Justices B R Gavai and P K Mishra while seeking permission to withdraw a plea filed by the erstwhile Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, challenging the Delhi High Court order asking the government to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Centre to implement the scheme. Responding to the request, Justice Gavai, apparently keeping in mind the change in government in Delhi, remarked, "Now you won't be interested". The counsel then said, "We are going ahead with the implementation of the scheme." The court allowed the request for withdrawing the appeal. PM-ABHIM is a central government scheme that aims to strengthen public health



infrastructure to respond to future pandemics and outbreaks. On January 17, the Supreme Court had stayed the December 24, 2024, Delhi High Court order asking the GNCTD to sign the MoU by January 5, 2025, irrespective of the Model Code of Conduct coming into force then in the run-up to the Assembly elections. The AAP government in Delhi had chosen not to implement the PM-ABHIM scheme even though the All India Institute of Medical Sciences director had stated in a report that it was only being implemented for diagnostic labs at the Indira Gandhi Hospital on a pilot basis.

Drug shortage, project delays, unutilised funds: here's what the CAG report on health services under Delhi AAP govt has flagged



GNS News Agency, March 4

Shortage of drugs in government hospitals, vacant posts of specialists and medical officers, Delhi Arogya Kosh not maintaining scheme-wise details of beneficiaries - the CAG report on public health infrastructure and management of health services in the Capital has found several lapses in the working of the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government. It said that out of the eight new hospitals under construction during the audit period, only three were completed. There were delays of up to six years in completing hospital projects. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta is set to table the CAG report on health services in the House at 2 pm on Friday, the fourth day of the Delhi Assembly session. The report added that the Delhi State Health Mission (DSHM) could not utilise the funds released under the National Health Mission as Rs 510.71 crore was lying unspent in the bank accounts of the Delhi State Health Society and its 11 Integrated District Health Societies till March 2022.

The CAG report found that there was a shortage of injections for rare and fatal diseases like haemophilia and rabies, and hospitals failed to evaluate the need for timely repair, maintenance, replacement, and condemnation of equipment. The audit noted that during 2016-17 to 2021-22, hospitals had to procure 33 to 47 per cent of drugs contained in the Essential Drug List (EDL) directly as the Central Procurement Agency (CPA), which is the nodal agency to procure drugs for hospitals, mohalla clinics and dispensaries, failed to deliver them. Out of the 86 tenders floated by the CPA for the procurement of equipment, only 24 (28%) were finally awarded. "A lot of EDL medicines demanded by hospitals were not supplied by CPA in respect of four test checked hospitals. As CPA was not procuring the drugs timely for health institutions of the GNCTD (Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi), hospitals were purchasing Essential Drugs from local chemists for meeting their day-to-day requirements," it said. The report added that the Delhi government did not undertake any need-based assessment to identify district-wise areas deficient in healthcare facilities. "Against the proposed addition of 10,000 beds (Budget speech 2016-17) only 1,357 beds were added during 2016-17 to 2020-21. The Department was unable to utilise any of the 15 plots acquired (June 2007 and December 2015) at a cost of Rs 648.05 lakh for establishing hospitals and dispensaries, despite having possession for periods ranging between six to 15 years," it said. Janakpuri Super Speciality Hospital (JSSH) and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital (RGSSH) could not provide Super Speciality

tertiary care as envisaged in the Memorandum of Association due to weak monitoring and failure to develop a viable business model. There was delay in completion of various building and infrastructural projects in test-checked hospitals, it added. Several machines set up under public-private partnership (PPP) mode to allow free dialysis for BPL patients were not in use in one hospital due to an inappropriate water analysis report.

Delhi Arogya Kosh (DAK) has not maintained scheme-wise details of beneficiaries, the report said. DAK was constituted in September 2011 as a society to provide financial assistance to poor patients suffering from life-threatening diseases. It did not regularly seek utilisation certificates or details of unspent amounts lying with government hospitals, the report said, adding that the DAK also did not implement online Aadhaar-based/biometric tracking of patients to ensure proper follow-up and to prevent any malpractices. The audit noted that DAK's basic aims and objectives were not widely disseminated. Its free surgery scheme provides for sending eligible patients from identified Delhi government hospitals to empanelled private hospitals when the allotted date for a specified surgery is beyond one calendar month or when the specified surgery is not performed in the government hospital. Under the high-end diagnostic tests scheme, patients from identified Delhi government hospitals, polyclinics, etc, are referred to empanelled diagnostic centres. DAK did not carry out any assessment to verify the effectiveness of the steps taken and reduce waiting periods. One of the conditions for reimbursement of medico-legal victims' bills is that the victim is not covered under any insurance scheme but no mechanism was in place to check this before making payments, the report pointed out.

Operations on phase 2 of Mumbai Metro Line 3 getting ready as trial run begins

GNS News Agency, March 4

The first phase of Metro Line 3, also called Aqua Line, was opened last year, offering a new underground experience for commuters between Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) and Aarey JVLR. (Express Archive) The first phase of Metro Line 3, also called Aqua Line, was opened last year, offering a new underground experience for commuters between Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) and Aarey JVLR. The much-awaited second phase of the underground Mumbai Metro Line 3, connecting Dharavi to Acharya Atr Chowk in Worli, is set to begin commercial operations. This new stretch with six stations will cover an additional 9.77 km. The trial run on this stretch is ongoing. Currently, over 11 km of the underground Metro Line 3, from Aarey to BKC, is operational. The first phase of Metro Line 3, also called Aqua Line, was opened last year, offering a new underground experience for commuters between Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) and Aarey JVLR.

suspect attempted suicide before his arrest, verifying facts, say police



GNS News Agency, March 4

pune rape case Dattatraya Ramdas Gade, the 37-year-old man accused of raping a woman inside a Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) bus parked at Swargate depot. The man suspected of raping a 26-year-old woman inside a government-operated bus stationed at a depot in Pune allegedly tried to kill himself before being arrested after an intensive search, said the Pune police Friday. The suspect, identified as Dattatraya Ramdas Gade, 37, a resident of the Gunat village in Shirur, was apprehended around 1.10 am on Friday, and later put under arrest after his medical examination was conducted at the Sassoon Hospital. Amitesh Kumar, Commissioner, Pune City police, said they found ligature marks on the suspect, and preliminary interrogation suggests he attempted to kill himself. However, he said they will have to verify Gade's claim. The Pune police commissioner said a special team has been formed for an in-depth investigation of the case. "We are developing a watertight case against the accused. A special public prosecutor will be appointed," he said. He

also said the case will be tried before a fast-track court.

Kumar said Gade was arrested from Gunat with the help of about 500 villagers. "The villager who shared the last crucial information about the accused will be given a reward of Rs 1 lakh. I will go to Gunat, and felicitate all those who supported us in the search operation," he said. The Pune police commissioner said after they got to know about the crime committed early Tuesday, an analysis of footage captured by 23 closed-circuit television cameras inside the bus depot, and 48 CCTV cameras at other locations revealed the identity of the suspect. According to the police, Gade went home after committing the crime.

Teams from the Pune city and Pune Rural police scoured the area around the Gunat village, searched nearby sugarcane fields, and deployed drones with thermal imaging facilities, and a dog squad to track the suspect. As he knew the police were searching for him, he fled from his house and was hiding in sugarcane farms in the village. A villager spotted the accused when he came to meet his relative in the village to ask for water at around 10.30 pm Thursday. The villager then passed on the information to the police, after which sniffer dogs and drones were pressed into service. The police said the dogs provided crucial clues, and accordingly the search was intensified at specific locations during the night. At around 1.10 am, the villagers spotted Gade near Canal Road, after which he was nabbed and then brought to the area police station for further investigation. The Pune police commissioner said Gade did not want to surrender. Gade, who has six previous criminal cases against him, was out on bail when he allegedly raped the woman, and had been living with his family, including his wife, young son, brother, and parents, in Gunat.

Special court takes fresh cognisance of chargesheet against former Karnataka CM B S Yediyurappa, issues summons

GNS News Agency, March 4

A special court in Bengaluru on Friday took fresh cognisance of a chargesheet filed by the Karnataka CID police against former chief minister and senior BJP leader B S Yediyurappa in a Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act case registered in March 2024. The court hearing Pocso cases passed a detailed order citing reasons for taking the chargesheet on record and also issued fresh summons for Yediyurappa, 82, and three other accused to appear before it on March 15, a senior advocate said.

The Karnataka High Court had referred the case back to the Pocso court on February 7, citing the lack of reasoning in a July 4, 2024 order on taking cognisance. The high court had also granted protection against arrest for the senior politician by citing his age and his eminence as a former chief minister. The special court taking cognisance of the chargesheet against Yediyurappa, who has been booked on charges of sexual assault and harassment following a complaint by the mother of a teenager in March last year, has set the stage for the start of the trial in the case after the former chief minister's appearance in court. Earlier, on February 24, the special court had set aside the previous process of taking cognisance on the basis of the high court orders and had posted the matter for fresh cognisance. Almost a year since case filed against Yediyurappa. In March last year, a woman had accused former Karnataka chief minister B S Yediyurappa of touching her daughter inappropriately when they visited his house in February to seek help regarding an earlier case of sexual



assault. On March 14, 2024, the Bengaluru police filed an FIR against Yediyurappa on the basis of the woman's complaint. The CID unit of the Karnataka police filed a chargesheet against Yediyurappa and three others on June 27, 2024, under Section 8 (sexual assault) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 and sections 354A, 204 and 214 of the Indian Penal Code for sexual harassment, destroying evidence, and offering gifts to silence the victim. The special court for Pocso cases took cognisance of the chargesheet on July 4 and issued a summons for Yediyurappa and others to appear in court to face trial. Yediyurappa approached the Karnataka High Court. Although no stay was issued by the high court against the proceedings in the special court, the Pocso court proceedings were stalled since July 4, 2024, on account of Yediyurappa seeking the quashing of the chargesheet in the high court.

Bird flu cases detected in Raichur, Chikkaballapur and Ballari districts of Karnataka



GNS News Agency, March 4

As part of precautionary measures, the Animal Husbandry department has initiated culling within 3 km radius of the place where cases of bird flu have been detected, he said. As part of precautionary measures, the Animal Husbandry department has initiated culling within 3 km radius of the place where cases of bird flu have been detected, he said. After cases of bird flu were detected in Ballari, Chikkaballapur and Raichur districts of Karnataka, the

Health Department has stepped up its surveillance across the state, officials said on Friday. Cases of bird flu (H5N1 avian influenza), among poultry birds have been reported in Manvi taluk of Raichur, Chikkaballapur taluk of Chikkaballapur and Sandur taluk of Ballari, they said. However, no cases of bird flu in humans have been reported in the state so far, official said.

Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services department collected samples of dead poultry birds and sent them to Central Laboratory in Bhopal where it was confirmed that those birds died due to bird flu, a senior official from the health department told PTI. As part of precautionary measures, the Animal Husbandry department has initiated culling within 3 km radius of the place where cases of bird flu have been detected, he said. "We have stepped up surveillance and set up facilities for isolation beds in the nearest hospitals where cases of bird flu have been detected," he said. Urging public to not panic, the senior health department official assured that all preventive measures are being taken by the respective district authorities in coordination with Health and Animal Husbandry departments of the state.

AgustaWestland chopper scam: Delhi HC reserves order on bail for 'middleman' Christian Michel James in ED case

GNS News Agency, March 4

The Delhi High Court, reserved its order on the bail plea of British national Christian Michel James, the alleged middleman in the Rs 3,600-crore AgustaWestland chopper deal, in a case registered by the Enforcement Directorate. James' counsel Aljo Joseph reiterated to Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma that James has already undergone seven years and one month of incarceration, including incarceration in Dubai, and thus has completed the maximum possible punishment for the offences he is accused of, along with remission. ED's counsel, on the other hand, submitted that the period of incarceration in Dubai cannot be counted and argued that he has been incarcerated for a little over six years in an Indian prison. James has been in jail since December 2018, and the maximum punishment possible in the ED complaint is seven years.

ED also reiterated that he is a flight risk. Joseph, countering ED's submission, added, "the purpose of staying in India is to serve the sentence. So I've completed 7 years with remission." James, one of the alleged middlemen in the

deal for the purchase of 12 VVIP choppers, was extradited from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 2018 to stand trial in the case. He moved the Supreme Court in the CBI case after the Delhi High Court denied him bail on September 25, 2024. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) that filed its chargesheet against James in 2017 had alleged that James was a consultant for AgustaWestland and acted as a middleman negotiating on behalf of the firm. According to the agency, undue favour was given to AgustaWestland for awarding the contract for procurement of VVIP helicopters in its favour by accepting illegal gratification from it through middlemen. CBI claimed that James "had been paid a huge bribe amount by M/s AgustaWestland, which was paid to the officers of the Indian Air Force, MOD (Ministry of Defence), bureaucrats, politicians and family in India for showing favour in the VVIP helicopter deal". ED also booked him on money laundering charges with a complaint lodged against him on July 3, 2014. James was booked under Sections 7, 8, 9, 12 and 13(2)(d) of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

City's vegan cafe culture takes root as more people embrace plant-based eating



GNS News Agency, March 4

Pune's food scene is evolving, and at the heart of this transformation is the rise of cafes offering alternative diet foods. In the last few years, the city has witnessed a surge in customers who opt for vegan choices, driven by increasing awareness of plant-based diets, ethical eating, and health consciousness. Cafes like Chafa Cafe & Studio and Zen Cafe in Koregaon Park have become hotspots, attracting locals and foreigners alike. Many of their customers include people in their mid-30s and 40s who are making a conscious shift toward a healthier lifestyle. Located in Koregaon Park, Chafa Cafe & Studio has established itself with a carefully curated vegan menu that features plant-based alternatives to popular dishes. "We have a lot of customers who come in specifically looking for vegan food," says its manager Manish Choudhary. "Our almond milk lattes, smoothie bowls, and vegan pizzas with cashew cheese are some of the bestsellers. On average, we serve about 100-200 customers a week, out of which nearly 30 per cent pick vegan options."

The cafe's calm ambience, with both indoor and outdoor seating, makes it a favourite among professionals and fitness enthusiasts. The customer base is predominantly between the ages of 30 and 45, with many adopting veganism for health benefits rather than just ethical reasons. Chafa's menu boasts a variety of vegan and gluten-free dishes. Their smoothie bowls, priced between Rs 395 and Rs 445, are a popular breakfast choice while their vegan pizza with cashew cheese starts at Rs 575. Their almond milk lattes are priced at Rs 250, and a hearty vegan Buddha bowl costs around Rs 525. Known for its simple yet elegant atmosphere, Zen Cafe, also located in Koregaon

Park, mostly attracts artists, writers, and working professionals. "Vegan diet is still rising in the city. Although we don't have a set vegan menu, we offer to customise food on demand," says the cafe's manager Prashant. "A lot of them prefer plant-based meals, so we make sure to have a variety of vegan options, including tofu, pasta, ravioli, and mousse cakes." They receive around 200-250 customers a week, with a significant number requesting vegan meals. The demand has grown so much that they are considering expanding their menu to include more options free of dairy and gluten. Zen Cafe's crispy tofu zenwich (vegan), priced at Rs 425, is a crowd favourite while their avocado and beetroot hummus zenwich and pesto avocado open zenwich cost Rs 575 each. Customers can also opt for pesto bell pepper paneer zenwich at Rs 425 or peri-peri chicken zenwich at Rs 450.

The rise of veganism in Pune's food culture is led by growing health awareness among individuals between the ages of 30 and 40 who are looking for better digestion, weight management, and overall wellness. Influence by foreign visitors, especially those at the Osho International Meditation Centre, has also popularised plant-based meals. Moreover, rising environmental consciousness is also key in making many people take to sustainable eating habits, reducing their reliance on animal products. Chef Priyanka Vaidya, who promotes plant-based South Asian cuisine, believes that vegan food is more than just a trend. "Many people assume vegan food is boring, but Indian cuisine has so much variety that can be made completely plant-based without compromising on flavour," she says, adding, "Pune's food culture is evolving, and the demand for vegan options will only increase." Explaining the health benefits of a vegan diet, particularly for people in their mid-30s to 40s, nutritionist Dr Yusuf Khambatta says, "Switching to a whole-food, plant-based diet helps reduce inflammation, lower cholesterol, and manage weight better. Many of my clients in Pune have thus seen significant improvements in their energy levels and overall health." On the other hand, Avanti Damle, a dietitian and nutritionist practising in Pune, believes in a slightly different approach for Indians. "Although veganism has several health benefits, it also puts a lot of restrictions on people. In a country like India, where the food is rich in spices, natural probiotics are important. Vegan food can limit that. A more ideal option would be to go for a lacto-vegan diet where one can include probiotic foods like yoghurt and buttermilk," Damle says.

Search on for more donors as Golden Retriever Coco donates blood to save Doberman Leo in Kolkata

GNS News Agency, March 4

This week, Kolkata witnessed a rare blood transfusion when five-year-old Coco, a Golden Retriever, donated blood to give a new lease of life to Leo, a 10-month-old Doberman suffering from renal issues. While the medical procedure came as a respite for Leo, he is likely to undergo more transfusions in the future and will require more donors. "Initially, when I heard that Leo needed blood and was looking for a donor, I was hesitant. But then Coco's blood test turned out fine so I decided that if Coco could help Leo, why not?" Rishee Kanta Mukherjee, Coco's human parent, told The Indian Express. Leo is Mukherjee's brother-in-law Satyajit Kumar Vidyarthi's dog.

Vidyarthi said they suspected something was amiss when Leo stopped eating for a few days after suffering from fever. "We ran a few tests but were not satisfied as Leo's condition was not improving. The veterinarian suspected that Leo may be suffering from renal issues as his creatinine was high and was fluctuating. His blood count was also going down. Then, the ultrasound report showed that Leo had a tumour in his spleen, which caused the blood disorder and brought down his haemoglobin to 2.1," Vidyarthi said, adding that ideally, haemoglobin should not drop below 12. With the veterinarian suggesting a blood transfusion, Vidyarthi started looking for a suitable donor. The search ended with Coco and the transfusion was conducted at the Animal Health Pathology Lab at Dover Terrace near Deshapriya Park on Tuesday. "For a first-time transfusion,



matching blood groups are not a must. But if Leo needs a subsequent transfusion, a matching donor will be required," Pratik Chakraborty, who runs the pathology lab, told

While a dog can donate around 300 ml of blood at a time, depending on its size, Coco gave 260 ml of blood. "Coco is absolutely fine after the transfusion," said Mukherjee, adding that there was a need to create awareness about such blood donations. For Vidyarthi, the priority is to get Leo's haemoglobin up. "Leo requires at least two more transfusions. Once he is stable, the future course of action can be decided," he added. Two more donors have been lined up and if their blood grouping matches Leo's, the second transfusion is likely to take place this weekend, Vidyarthi said, adding that he is also looking for more donors.

Dates, prayer mats, fruits: Shoppers hit streets of Old Delhi to stock up on Ramzan essentials



GNS News Agency, March 4

Dates and fruits, prayer mats and perfumes: The holy month of Ramzan is around the corner and Delhi's Jama Masjid is bustling with shoppers stocking up on essentials for fasting and prayer. Street vendors have set up temporary stalls to cater to the increased demand. Sajid Khan, 29, who sells dates at Gate No 1 of Jama Masjid, says his sales double during this time. "People prefer high-quality dates from Saudi Arabia and Iran, especially Ajwa and

Medjool, for their health benefits and religious significance," he says. Fruit sellers, too, are witnessing a surge in customers as people of Delhi stock up on bananas, watermelons, and papayas for iftar.

Among the highlights of the Jama Masjid market are the vibrant bottles of shariat in different flavors. Amjad Sofi, 35, who runs a shariat stall near Gate No. 2, describes the seasonal rush: "Rooh Afza, with its signature rose essence, remains the most popular choice, but homemade variants made from basil seeds, kewra, sandalwood, and fruit extracts are also in high demand. On regular days, I sell around 400 glasses, but during Ramzan, sales go up to nearly 1,000 glasses per day." Ahsan Ahmad Mir, 34, a Kashmiri shopkeeper at Meena Bazaar, has been coming here for over a decade. "I break my fast inside Jama Masjid... The masjid committee... distributes dates and shariat to those breaking their fast," he says. The mosque committee is working around the clock to manage the influx of worshippers. Speaking to The Indian Express, a committee representative says, "We expect a massive turnout, and our team is ensuring cleanliness and smooth operations. Several NGOs are also collaborating with us for iftar arrangements and maintenance."

In police custody, key accused in 2 grenade attacks killed in shootout

A key accused involved in two recent grenade attacks was killed in an exchange of fire in Batala while he was being taken, in police custody, for recovery of weapon, Thursday evening, officials said. The development came hours after police claimed to have busted a Pakistan's ISI-backed Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) terror module with the arrest of its two operatives identified as Mohit of Buddha di Khui in Batala and Vishal Bhatti of Basarpura in Batala. The module was operated by Pakistan-based terrorist Harvinder Rinda and USA-based terrorist Happy Passia, DGP Gaurav Yadav said, adding that with the arrests they have solved the cases pertaining to explosive substances that were hurled at the residence of a late former chairman of Amritsar Zila Parishad in Jaintipur on January 15 and near the resi-

dence of a policeman's relative on February 17 in Batala. Mohit was identified as the key perpetrator who carried out the both grenade attacks. Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Border Range Satinder Singh said following disclosures that Mohit had concealed arms and ammunition at an isolated place, he was being taken for their recovery. "During the weapon recovery, Mohit opened fire on the police team, prompting them to retaliate. In the exchange of fire, Mohit was shot and later admitted to Civil Hospital, Batala, for treatment, where he was declared brought dead," the DIG said. The police recovered .30 bore pistol, used by Mohit to fire at the police party, he added.

Why Punjab sees red in CBSE's proposed policy for class 10



GNS News Agency, March 4

A political row erupted in Punjab Wednesday after the Punjabi language was allegedly "removed" as a subject in the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)'s draft policy for the proposed Dual Board Exams for Class 10 from 2025-26 session under the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. The policy proposes that class-10 board exams will be held twice a year 2026 onwards, in order to give a chance to students to improve their scores and reduce the pressure. However, the Punjabi language was not just found "missing" from the list of regional languages in the draft document, but also allegedly "removed" from the list of five main subjects. Cutting across the party lines, the politicians blamed BJP-led Centre for "direct attack" on Punjab's identity and culture, with AAP leader and state education minister Harjot Singh Bains calling it a "deliberate attempt" by the BJP to undermine the status of Punjabi. The Congress and SAD also blamed Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann for "remaining silent". However, CBSE was quick to issue an addendum stating that Punjabi and other regional languages will continue to be offered as before. However, the trouble for Punjabi, according to educationists and teachers in Punjab, is much deeper in the new draft policy.

According to the CBSE's secondary school curriculum 2024-25 (the latest before 2026 dual exam draft came), the class 10 students were studying five compulsory subjects or informally "main" subjects- Language 1, Language 2, Social Science, Maths and Science. Apart from these five, students were also allowed to opt for additional third language and skill-based subjects. Of the two compulsory languages (L1 and L2), one had to be either English or Hindi and the second could be any from the list of 40 regional languages offered by the board, including Punjabi. The students were also free to opt Hindi as second language but not mandatorily. However, students of all CBSE-affiliated schools in Punjab have to study Punjabi as one of two main languages up to class 10 by default.

This is because the Punjab Learning of Punjabi and Other Languages Act, 2008, makes it mandatory for all schools to teach Punjabi as compulsory subject from classes 1 to 10. The law also empowers the government to act against erring schools. So, in Punjab, students mostly opted for English as Language-1 and Punjabi as Language-2 (two main subjects) and Hindi as Language-3 (additional).

What has changed in the new draft proposed for 2026? Is it the final draft?

The new CBSE draft proposing dual exams for class 10 from 2026 has proposed five main subjects as: English (Language 1), Hindi (Language 2), science, maths and social science. The draft prima facie indicates that Punjabi (or broadly regional languages) is no more among main five subjects and only optional if a student wants to study Language-3 and appear for an additional exam. According to the draft, the "regional and foreign languages" will now be clubbed in a single group. The draft also adds that while the exam for "science, maths, social science, Hindi and En-

glish" will be conducted on fixed, separate days as currently, the ones for "regional and foreign languages will be done in one go on a single day." This practically means that a student shall appear for Punjabi and French exam on the same day, hence limiting the time for preparation and dividing the student's attention. What further fueled the controversy Wednesday was that even the mention of Punjabi language was missing from the list of regional languages in the draft. While the languages such as Thai, Telugu, Japanese, French, Kashmiri, Marathi, Gujarati etc were mentioned in the document, Punjabi was missing. A school principal from Ludhiana said: "So the new draft primarily indicates that students have to study Hindi and English as compulsory languages now. Till now, one main language had to be either English or Hindi and the second could be any regional language or also Hindi. But if this draft is implemented, then students in Punjab will be appearing in three language exams- English and Hindi as mandated by the board, and Punjabi as mandated by state's law. Till now, students mostly used to study English and Punjabi as two main languages and some took Hindi as additional. But since the state civil services exams also mandate clearance in Punjabi, more opted for Punjabi than Hindi among two mandatory languages."

How has the CBSE reacted to the uproar?

After the political slugfest, the CBSE was quick to issue an addendum Wednesday stating that Punjabi would continue to be offered in regional languages, as before. An addendum issued by the board's Controller of Examinations Sanyam Bhardwaj read: "This is with regard to the draft policy for the conduct of two Board Examinations of class X released by the CBSE on its website on 25.02.2025. It is clarified that the list of other subjects and languages as offered presently shall continue to be offered for 2025-26 as well. Thus, in addition to the languages mentioned under the list of languages.. Punjabi, Russian, Nepali, Limboo, Lepcha, Sindhi, Malayalam, Odia, Assamese, Kannada, Kokborok, Telugu, Arabic and Persian shall continue to be offered." However, according to the school principals in Punjab, the board is yet to clarify if a regional language can be opted among the main five subjects or not, and if Hindi is now mandatory across states. "There's no clarity over it as of now," said a principal.

What the Punjab law states? How is the fresh notification by AAP government different?

The Punjab Learning of Punjabi and Other Languages Act, 2008, states: "Punjabi shall be taught as compulsory subject in all schools from class 1 to 10." It further adds: "No board or institution shall award matriculation certificate to any student, unless he has passed the tenth class examination in Punjabi subject." After the controversy erupted Wednesday, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led Punjab government issued a fresh notification, reiterating the provisions of the 2008 Act, with an addition that Punjabi has to be taught as "main subject" in all schools up to class 10, irrespective of the board that the school is affiliated with. Speaking to The Indian Express, Bains said: "We have countered the BJP government's sinister design to eliminate Punjabi from the central educational landscape, legally. According to the latest notification, the Punjabi has to be among five main subjects and only then the class-10 passing certificate would be valid. The Act did not specify Punjabi as one of the five main subjects which we have done now." In a letter to union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan Thursday, Bains wrote: "The state of Punjab has already mandated Punjabi as a compulsory main subject in class 10 through an official notification. CBSE's new draft directly violates the notification. Therefore, CBSE must be directed to immediately withdraw the proposed scheme and restore Punjabi as a main subject in Punjab..."

Capturing unprecedented details of solar flares with Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope

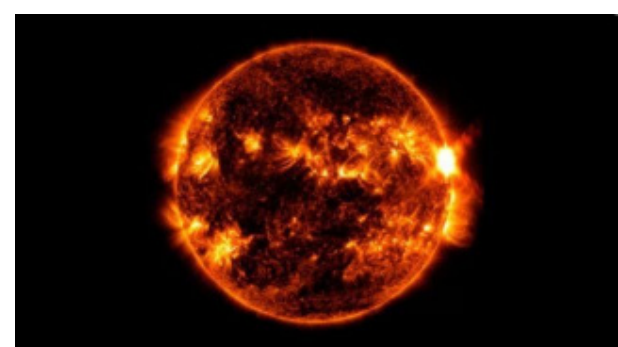
GNS News Agency, March 4

The Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT) on board the Aditya-L1 mission — India's first dedicated solar space mission — has captured a solar flare 'kernel' in the lower solar atmosphere, namely the photosphere and the chromosphere, in the images recorded in the near-ultraviolet (NUV) band, researchers at Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) said. This groundbreaking observation marks a leap in the understanding of explosive activities in the solar atmosphere.

Aditya-L1 spacecraft, India's first dedicated space mission for solar studies, was launched on September 2, 2023, and successfully injected into a halo orbit around the first Lagrange point L1. This location is 1.5 million kilometres away from Earth. The SUIT instrument onboard Aditya-L1 observed an X6.3-class solar flare on February 22, 2024, one of the most intense categories of solar eruptions. The uniqueness of this discovery lies in the fact that SUIT detected brightening in the near ultraviolet wavelength range (200-400 nm). "Why we are reporting a year later is because this instrument is new and data has to be thoroughly analysed and checked for any systematic effects," Prof A N Ramaprakash, SUIT instrument principal investigator and Dean, Core Academic Programmes at IUCAA told The Indian Express.

Results are published in Astrophysical Journal Letters, one of the world's leading astrophysics journals, on the occasion of National Science Day (Feb 28). The Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT) on board the Aditya L1 mission. (Credit: suit.iucaa.in) The Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT) on board the Aditya L1 mission. Ph.D. student Soumya Roy led this pioneering research under the guidance of Prof. Durgesh Tripathi and Prof. A. N. Ramaprakash at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), Pune, India. "With SUIT and other instruments now fully operational, Aditya-L1 is set to revolutionize our understanding of the Sun and its influence on space weather," scientists said. The research team includes other experts from IUCAA, Manipal Academy for Higher Education (MAHE), UR Rao Satellite Centre / ISRO, Centre for Excellence in Space Science India (ICESER-Kolkata), Max-Planck Institute for Solar System Research, Germany, Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST), Thiruvananthapuram and the SoLEXS team from UR Rao Satellite Centre / ISRO.

Solar flares release huge bursts of radiation and energetic particles by sudden release of magnetic energy stored in the complex solar magnetic field. Such events can have a serious impact on space weather and geo-space, including disrupting radio communications, affecting satellite operations, interfering with power grids, posing risks to astronauts and airline passengers. The Sun's full disk has never been imaged in this entire wavelength range in such detail. These observations provide new insights into these huge eruptions in the solar atmosphere and highlight the com-



plex physical processes involved in the transfer of mass and energy through different layers of the solar atmosphere, IUCAA scientists said. The SUIT instrument on board Aditya-L1 is, for the first time, providing these ever-missing observations, revealing never-before-seen insights into the complex dynamics of solar flares and the processes at play in the transfer of mass and energy across the different layers of the solar atmosphere.

Advanced AI model for video generation now open-source

GNS News Agency, March 4

Hyderabad: Chinese technology behemoth Alibaba has released Wan 2.1, an open-source video generation artificial intelligence (AI) model. The model is now offered on Hugging Face, with support for both commercial and academic utilization, although commercial usage has some limitations.

Wan 2.1 is available in four flavors: T2V-1.3B, T2V-14B, I2V-14B-720P, and I2V-14B-480P. The T2V flavors produce videos from text, while the I2V flavors synthesize images to videos. The T2V-1.3B flavor is notable, as it is capable of executing on consumer-grade GPUs with merely 8.19GB VRAM and outputs a five-second 480p video within four minutes using an Nvidia RTX 4090. The models employ an advanced 3D causal variational autoencoder (VAE), enhancing video consistency, reducing memory usage, and enabling unlimited-length 1080p video generation. Alibaba claims Wan 2.1 outperforms OpenAI's Sora AI model in key areas such as scene generation, motion smoothness, and spatial accuracy. Wan 2.1 is not only meant for video generation but also includes text-to-image, video-to-audio, and video editing features. These features are still not available in the open-source releases.

Trump plans tariffs on Mexico and Canada on March 4, while doubling existing 10% tariffs on China



GNS News Agency, March 4

President Donald Trump plans to impose tariffs on Canada and Mexico starting Tuesday (March 4, 2025), in addition to doubling the 10% universal tariff charged on imports from China. In a Truth Social post Thursday, Mr. Trump said illicit drugs such as fentanyl are being smuggled into the United States at "unacceptable levels" and that import taxes would force other countries to crack down on the trafficking. "We cannot allow this scourge to continue to harm the USA, and therefore, until it stops, or is seriously limited, the proposed TARIFFS scheduled to go into effect on MARCH FOURTH will, indeed, go into effect, as scheduled," the Republican President wrote. "China will likewise be charged an additional 10% Tariff on that date." "The prospect of escalating tariffs has already thrown the global economy into turmoil, with consumers expressing fears about inflation worsening and the auto sector and other domestic manufacturers suffering if Trump raises import taxes. But Mr. Trump has also at times engaged in aggressive posturing only to give last-minute reprieves, previously agreeing to a 30-day suspension of the Canada and Mexico tariffs that were initially supposed to start in February.

The threat of tariffs frightened the stock market with the S&P 500 index falling 1.6% on Thursday. The S&P 500 is now just 1.4% higher than it was after Mr. Trump won the election in November, giving up almost all of the gains that the president once cited as evidence of an economic revival. Asked Thursday about the fact that tariffs are largely paid for consumers and importing companies, Mr. Trump dismissed any concerns by saying: "It's a myth." It's possible for a stronger U.S. dollar to offset some of the costs of tariffs, but Trump's statement goes against most economic modeling given the breadth of his planned taxes. Mr. Trump intends to put 25% tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada, with a lower 10% tax on Canadian energy products such as oil and electricity. The move, ostensibly about drug trafficking and immigration, led Mexico and Canada to respond by emphasizing their existing efforts to address these issues. Canada created a fentanyl czar, and Mexico sent 10,000 members of its National Guard to its border with the United States. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Thursday that she hoped to speak with Mr. Trump after the Cabinet-level meetings occurring in Washington this week. Mexico's Foreign Affairs Secretary Juan Ramón de la Fuente was scheduled to meet with Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Thursday afternoon.

Mr. Trump, "as you know, has his way of communicating," Ms. Sheinbaum said. But she said that her government would stay "cool-headed" and optimistic about an agreement coming together to avoid the tariffs. "I hope we are able to reach an agreement and on March 4 we can announce something else," she said.

She said Mexico's security chiefs were discussing intelligence sharing with their American counterparts that would allow for important arrests in the U.S. On the economic front, she said Mexico's goal is to protect the free trade pact that was negotiated during the first Trump administration between Mexico and the United States. That

2020 deal, which included Canada, was an update of the North American Free Trade Agreement from 1994. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his country has invested more than 1 billion Canadian dollars to improve border security, adding that his government's ministers and officials are also in Washington this week. "There is no emergency for the United States at the border with Canada when it comes to fentanyl, and that is exactly what we are demonstrating at this time," Mr. Trudeau said in Montreal. "If the United States goes ahead and imposes tariffs, we already shared the details of our plan. We have \$30 billion worth of U.S. products that will be subject to tariffs. And \$125 billion of tariffs that will be applied three weeks later. But we don't want to be in that position."

Mr. Trump did impose a 10% tariff on China for its role in the manufacturing of chemicals used to make fentanyl, and that tax would now be doubled, according to his social media post. On Thursday, China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao wrote to Jamieson Greer, the newly confirmed U.S. trade representative, that differences on trade should be resolved through dialogues and negotiations. The 25% tariffs on Mexico and Canada would amount to a total tax increase on the U.S. public of somewhere between \$120 billion to \$225 billion annually, according to Jacob Jensen, a trade policy analyst at the American Action Forum, a center-right think tank. The additional China tariffs could cost consumers up to \$25 billion. The potential for higher prices and slower growth could create political blowback for Mr. Trump, who promised voters in last year's presidential election that he could quickly lower the inflation rate, which jumped during Democratic President Joe Biden's term. But, Mr. Trump also campaigned on imposing broad tariffs, which he plans to launch on April 2 by resetting them to match the taxes that he determines are charged by other countries on American goods. "The April Second Reciprocal Tariff date will remain in full force and effect," Mr. Trump said as part of his new social media post.

In an interview with News Nation, Kevin Hassett, the director of the White House National Economic Council, said progress by Mexico and Canada on fentanyl "was not as impressive as the president had hoped." There are significant differences between Canada and Mexico on the scale of drug smuggling. U.S. customs agents seized 43 pounds (19.5 kilograms) of fentanyl at the Canadian border during the last budget year, compared with 21,100 pounds (9,570 kilograms) at the Mexican border. Mr. Hassett stressed that the reciprocal tariffs would be in addition to the ones being placed on Canada and Mexico. Mr. Trump indicated Wednesday that European countries would also face a 25% tariff as part of his reciprocal tariffs. He also wants separate tariffs on autos, computer chips and pharmaceutical drugs that would be levied in addition to the reciprocal tariffs. The President already announced that he's removing the exemptions on his 2018 steel and aluminum tariffs, in addition to planning taxes on copper imports.

The prospect of a broader trade conflict should other nations follow through with their own retaliatory tariffs is already spooking U.S. consumers, potentially undermining Trump's promise to unleash stronger economic growth. The Conference Board reported on Tuesday that its consumer confidence index had dropped 7 points to a reading of 98.3. It was the largest monthly decline since August 2021, when inflationary pressures began to reverberate across the United States as the economy recovered from the coronavirus pandemic. Average 12-month inflation expectations jumped from 5.2% to 6% in February, the Conference Board noted. "There was a sharp increase in the mentions of trade and tariffs, back to a level unseen since 2019," said Stephanie Guichard, a senior economist at the Conference Board. "Most notably, comments on the current administration and its policies dominated the responses."

An enduring legacy of empowerment and change

GNS News Agency, March 4

At the entrance of Marlavai, a village nestled deep in the tribal heartland of Telangana's Kumram Bheem Asifabad district, a commemorative arch reading 'Adivasula Aathmabandhuvu Haimendorf Betty Elizabeth' stands like a sentinel. At first glance, it might seem like an ordinary welcome, but it conceals the fascinating tale of an unlikely bond forged between a tribal community and an Austrian anthropologist who made this land his home. Tucked away at the forest's edge, Marlavai was once a nondescript tribal village, located about 300 kilometres from the State capital Hyderabad. Life here followed a rhythm as old as the hills — simple, quiet, and steeped in the traditions of the Raj Gond tribe. That changed in the 1940s, during the reign of the Nizam, when Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf and his wife Elizabeth arrived here. Drawn by their passion for anthropology, the couple lived in a modest mud-walled, thatched-roof home, immersing themselves in the community's way of life for two years.

Visitors to this tranquil hamlet are drawn to the memorial that houses the tombs of Haimendorf and Elizabeth, lying side by side. Nearby, a photo gallery stands in their honour, offering glimpses into the lives of the couple who made Marlavai their second home. Haimendorf's legacy continues to live through his pioneering contribution to promote literacy among the aboriginal people as an instrument of transformative change among the indigenous Raj Gond community. His deep commitment to their welfare earned him the title of 'Athma Bandhuvu' — a soul friend, a revered figure whose influence is palpable even decades later. His landmark tribal welfare initiatives were far ahead of their time. Through meticulous field studies conducted along with his wife Elizabeth in the 1940s, Haimendorf identified the socio-economic challenges faced by the Raj Gonds under the Nizam's rule in the erstwhile united Adilabad district. Their work went beyond academic interest, delving into actionable solutions to uplift the community, securing the couple a unique place in the hearts of Marlavai's people. It leaves one to ponder: what drew this learned couple, hailing from privileged backgrounds in Austria, to a remote tribal village thousands of miles away? What made them not only embrace Marlavai as their second home but also choose its soil as their eternal resting place?

"It is the warmth of the Raj Gonds and the strategic location of Marlavai in the geographical centre of the erstwhile Adilabad district that made them reside in Marlavai in the 1940s," says Thodsam Chandu, the first doctor from the Raj Gond tribe in the State and a former District Medical and Health Officer of Adilabad.

He says he was in class VI when he first met Haimendorf in Tiryani, a village in Kumram Bheem Asifabad, in 1976. "He encouraged me to pursue higher education. I had the rare opportunity of meeting him later while pursuing an MBBS course in Hyderabad during the 1980s," he



reminisces. In 2012, Dr. Chandu witnessed a poignant moment when Haimendorf's family arrived in Marlavai to enshrine his ashes alongside his wife Elizabeth's in the village they had cherished. Reflecting on this, he describes the couple's profound connection to Marlavai as a transformative chapter for the tribal communities of the erstwhile composite Adilabad district.

Haimendorf's contributions were monumental. His painstaking research led to the establishment of Teacher Training Centres in Marlavai and Ginnadhari villages under the 'Gond Education Scheme', an initiative that empowered Adivasi youth through education.

He also championed land rights for tribal families, facilitating the redistribution of nearly 1,80,000 acres of forest land — a lifeline for countless families. Remarkably, Haimendorf achieved fluency in the Gond language, while Elizabeth, fondly referred to as Jangu Bai by local Adivasi women, became a beloved figure among the community. Kanaka Tukaram, son of the late Gussadi dance maestro Kanaka Raju, gestures toward the sprawling banyan tree near the Government Ashram High School in Marlavai. "This is where Haimendorf once held court," he says, recalling the days when Adivasis from distant villages gathered under its shade to converse with the anthropologist. The tree, like the village itself, stands as a silent witness to an extraordinary relationship that bridged continents, cultures, and centuries. "My son, Yadav Rao, is determined to carry forward the cultural legacy of his grandfather in preserving the iconic Gussadi dance for posterity," Kanaka Tukaram declares with pride. The photo gallery set up in memory of the famous ethnographer in the village has a rich collection of pictures depicting the milestones of his extraordinary journey through the tribal heartlands and capture his efforts to understand and uplift the Gonds, from 1942 to 1944. "The names of Haimendorf and Elizabeth will forever remain etched in our hearts," says Kanaka Venkatesh, a third-generation teacher from a Raj Gond family. For Venkatesh, the connection to Haimendorf's legacy is personal. His grandfather, Kanaka Hannu master, was among the first teachers trained at the teachers' training centre established by Haimendorf in 1942.

Science communication as a catalyst for change



Many of us have heard the story of Sir Isaac Newton discovering the laws of gravity and motion, which are almost a part of global folklore. Because we know that a falling apple helped him unpack the theory of gravitation, we have a reasonable understanding of and trust in the concept of gravity. This has been fundamental to humanity's development in physics and science. Our understanding and trust in science is key to our progress. Across multiple thematic areas, from drug discovery and vaccine development, space exploration and Artificial Intelligence, genomics and bio-engineering, and medical research and food security, our collective progress is a function of how well we can leverage and enhance our scientific knowledge to create better solutions. As the adage goes: 'to boldly go where no man (or woman) has gone before!' Science communication serves as a vital bridge, linking scientific knowledge with the wider public audience and building our trust in science. By disseminating scientific knowledge and new breakthroughs in an accessible and engaging manner, science communicators can empower citizens, inspire innovation, and expand possibilities for the future.

Take a few use cases. First, effective science communication is paramount to promoting public health. By educating the public about health risks, preventive measures, and available treatments, science communicators can help reduce the incidence of diseases and improve overall health outcomes. In a country such as India, where communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, and dengue fever tend to spread fast, and there is an increasing burden of non-communicable diseases (such as cancer and diabetes), clear and accurate health communication can enable citizens to focus on preventive health and wellness to make us more efficient and productive. Second, communicating clearly about dynamic new developments (such as in biotechnology or Artificial Intelligence) can open new avenues for entrepreneurs, start-ups, and new businesses. When people understand these emerging new opportunities, they are more than willing to experiment with them to set up new ventures. This has the potential to further open new lines of businesses, sometimes even setting up entirely new industry sectors.

Third, science communication can help foster a culture of scientific literacy and innovation, inspiring students and youth to learn and research more in these streams of knowledge. An institutionalised culture of curiosity can further inspire new streams of education and learning and open new vistas for humanity's progress. One example of sci-

ence communication driving economic progress is the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). Through effective public communication, ISRO has garnered widespread support and international recognition for its space missions, such as Mangalyaan (Mars mission) and Chandrayaan (moon mission). These achievements have not only boosted national pride but have also attracted investments in the space sector and allied industries.

Global examples also highlight the impact of science communication on development. The 'Science for Africa' initiative has successfully engaged communities on sustainable agriculture, health, and technology, leading to improved livelihoods and development outcomes. In the United States, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration has effectively communicated its scientific endeavours, leading to increased funding, public support, and economic benefits from space exploration technologies. In Germany, 'Science Year' campaigns have promoted public engagement with science and technology, driving innovation and economic growth. Unfortunately, however, science education in India does not prioritise science communication. So, scientific advancements might not always translate into progress opportunities, since they are not adequately and relayed on time to the wider public.

Among other challenges, this has the potential to lead to: a lack of knowledge, understanding and trust in new and emerging science-based innovations and solutions; the spread of incorrect perceptions and beliefs, which lack robust evidence, and can potentially lead to incorrect or even harmful behaviour by individuals and communities; the promotion of policies and decision making that are not supported by accepted science which can have negative consequences for the broader society, and also acceptance of false claims, assumptions and misinformation as facts and truth. In today's fast paced social media-led and information-saturated world, such a lack of trust or the emergence of misinformation can cause immediate harm. It also has significant long-term consequences on health and the growth of countries at large.

The onus of leading institutionalised mechanisms to address these challenges will need to come from science communicators themselves — who can also inform and engage the wider public on these new discoveries, innovations and their true potential for the world at large. By enhancing public knowledge through clear and accurate information, driving development by fostering scientific literacy, and stimulating economic progress through innovation and investment, science communication can serve as a key catalyst for positive change. By leveraging diverse communication channels and tailoring messages to different audiences, science communicators can ensure that scientific knowledge reaches every corner of the nation, fostering an informed and empowered citizenry. In doing so, they can play a crucial role in shaping India's journey towards a healthier, more developed, and economically prosperous future. Pooja Sehgal leads Health and Nutrition Communications at the Gates Foundation's India office. Shirshendu Mukherjee is the Managing Director for Wadhvani Innovation Network, Wadhvani Foundation. The views expressed are personal.

Will the U.S.'s changed Ukraine policy end the Russia-Ukraine war?

GNS News Agency, March 4

On February 18, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio met Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Riyadh. This was a dramatic reversal of the previous U.S. administration's policy of not having peace talks with Russia since the beginning of Russia's war with Ukraine in February 2022. The reversal took place because of Donald Trump's election campaign, in which he called for "ending the war in Ukraine". Since taking office, President Trump has spoken on phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is also criticised on the platform Truth Social. Will the U.S.'s changed Ukraine policy end the Russia-Ukraine war? Kanwal Sibal and Anuradha Chenoy discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Kallol Bhattacharjee. Edited excerpts:

Is U.S. President Donald Trump's peace overture to Russia a well-thought-out design or is it being driven by domestic dynamics?

Kanwal Sibal: Donald Trump is unpredictable and he could still swing a surprise. He may change or modify his position and go in a different direction depending on whether he feels that he's getting what he wants. Having said that, he has taken a position on Russia and has actually begun a dialogue with Russia, which hasn't existed for the last three years. He has reversed the U.S.'s position on having a dialogue with Russia and on finding a peaceful way out. His principal advisers, whether the Secretary of State or the National Security Adviser, or even the Defence Secretary, have made clear statements about their views. Meanwhile, Mr. Trump has been pretty harsh towards Volodymyr Zelenskyy. He has called him a 'dictator'. He thinks Mr. Zelenskyy needs to legitimise himself by organising elections in Ukraine, which has been Russia's demand too. He says the U.S. has pumped \$350 billion into the war in Ukraine, though that figure is disputed by the Ukrainian President. Mr. Trump says he needs to recover the \$350 billion and the way he will do that is by forcing Mr. Zelenskyy to sign an agreement with the U.S. to allow it to acquire mineral rights in Ukraine. So, basically, he has reduced it to an economic proposition. But the core issue is not economic; it is the role of the U.S. in providing security to Europe. Most importantly, this is the first time that a U.S. President has said that the expansion of NATO was the reason for the Ukraine conflict. Anuradha Chenoy: First, Mr. Trump sees the ground reality, which is that Russia is winning the war. A lot of Ukraine's military operations have failed. The war is like a black hole and a lot of American and European money is going into it. The Europeans obviously want the war to continue. So Mr. Trump is actually managing this defeat in the best way he can. Second, throughout his election campaign, Mr. Trump had argued for peace. He has got an overwhelming majority, so he has to please his voters. Third, I think he's resetting the extractive engagement of the military industrial complex of the U.S. vis-à-vis Ukraine with the deal for rare earth minerals. However, we have to remember that much of Ukraine's mineral wealth is in the Donbas region, which is already under Russian control. Mr. Trump's policy indicates a dramatic shift, and he feels this will be beneficial to American interests.

In 2022, Turkey brokered a deal which was scuttled by the U.S. and the U.K. Can a similar deal go through this time in Riyadh even if it involves Ukraine suffering loss of territory?

Kanwal Sibal: Well, Mr. Zelenskyy had dug his heels in. He's been very defiant. He has, in fact, insulted Mr. Trump. The U.S. Vice President said as much when Mr. Zelenskyy



alleged that Mr. Trump was actually purveying Russian disinformation. He claims that he's got 57% support in Ukraine, but the fact is that his support levels are exceedingly low. My European sources say the two people who are standing in the way [of peace talks] are Mr. Zelenskyy and Andriy Yermak, the chief of the presidential office, who is a hawk. The issue is, how long can Europe continue to support Mr. Zelenskyy? The Europeans are trying to convince the U.S. not to abandon Ukraine as it would be a big defeat for Europe.

Mr. Putin visited Saudi Arabia earlier and he enjoys good relations with Saudi Arabia. But at the end of the day, I feel that as long as Mr. Zelenskyy is there, there will be a problem in forcing a solution because he can continue to say that he is unwilling to yield territory. Anuradha Chenoy: Mr. Trump has many means of convincing the U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Mr. Zelenskyy, and the leaders of the European Union, who are all against a peace deal. Because the choice before Mr. Zelenskyy is to either agree to what Mr. Trump is putting forth or to face a complete collapse on the battlefield. That is the reality. The minute Mr. Trump withdraws funding, Ukraine will collapse. So, it is a choice between the devil and the deep blue sea, and Mr. Zelenskyy have to take one. I think the easier one is to go with Mr. Trump's plan because there at least he can ask the U.S. for some security guarantee for the Ukraine that is left after giving up territory to Russia. Plus, he can hope for some economic deals and some reconstruction. In comparison, Mr. Putin is clear. As there is no ceasefire yet, the Russian troops will continue to advance. I went to Moscow recently and people are very tough. They feel this is an existential conflict which they have to win. At the same time, they don't want to give up too much of what they already have. Why is it so difficult to find a solution to this war despite such a compelling humanitarian argument? The war has reportedly cost around one million lives and caused massive displacement in Ukraine. Kanwal Sibal: Ukraine is under martial law, so people can't express their opinion freely. The problem of Ukraine came out clearly from Marco Rubio, who, in his Congressional hearing, said the problem of Ukraine is not that it lacks weapons; it is that it lacks manpower. A lot of Ukrainian lives have been lost. On the Russian side, the number of casualties and the number of injured is around 2,00,000. Ukraine is fighting a losing battle but more tragically, there is no way to actually gauge public opinion there. Life is more or less normal in Kyiv but that is a strategy to display normalcy in the capital. The war is also raging because of the ultra-nationalist and neo-Nazi groups who had caused tension during the Soviet era. So long as these people are in power — and they came to power after the Maidan coup (in 2014) — they will continue to resist any peaceful settlement with Russia, unless of course they have no choice and they are compelled to do so.

India-EU trade deal would be largest of its kind, 2025 “historic opportunity”: Ursula von der Leyen



Pitching for improved “market access” and the “removal of trade barriers” between India and the EU, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said on Friday that 2025 represents a “historic opportunity” and an “inflection point” for both partners to elevate their strategic relationship by signing a free trade agreement (FTA) as both partners stand to lose in a world increasingly shaped by “spheres of influence and isolationism”. “A free trade agreement between the EU and India would be the largest deal of its kind anywhere in the world. I am well aware that it will not be easy. But I also know that timing and determination matter, and this partnership comes at the right moment for both of us. This is why Prime Minister Narendra Modi and I have agreed to push to get it done this year,” von der Leyen said at an EU event in New Delhi.

Without naming China, she said that both partners could help each other achieve the “common goal” of de-risking their economies in sensitive sectors such as batteries, pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, clean hydrogen, and defence. Strengthening economic security in these areas is crucial, especially as both the EU and India navigate “geo-economic” headwinds. “We have all seen how countries are weaponising their sources of strength against each other—

whether through natural resources, new technologies, or military and economic coercion. We have seen how supply chains and dependencies are exploited to gain influence or drive wedges between nations and regions. We have witnessed a more aggressive posture from major powers, and, of course, conflicts have destabilised entire regions,” von der Leyen said. “We both stand to lose from a world defined by spheres of influence and isolationism, and we both stand to gain from cooperation and working together. We can offer each other distinctive alternatives and tools to strengthen our security and sovereignty in today’s world—an offer that cannot easily be replicated by others. This is why the European Union and India have the potential to become one of the defining partnerships of this century, and why this relationship will be a cornerstone of Europe’s foreign policy in the years and decades to come,” she added.

Notably, nine rounds of negotiations have taken place between India and the EU, with the tenth round scheduled for 10–14 March in Brussels. The ninth round covered a broad range of issues, including trade in goods and services, investment, government procurement, rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, and technical trade barriers, according to a statement from the Indian Ministry of Commerce last month. Von der Leyen also announced that India and the EU are exploring the possibility of a future security and defence partnership, similar to the EU’s existing agreements with Japan and South Korea. “This will enable us to step up efforts to counter shared threats, whether cross-border terrorism, maritime security challenges, cyber-attacks, or the emerging phenomenon of attacks on critical infrastructure. For instance, the recent collaboration on maritime security has been a positive step. I am also delighted by India’s interest in joining defence industrial projects under the EU’s Permanent Structured Cooperation. India is actively diversifying its military supply chains and seeking new capabilities, and I believe we can help each other achieve our security objectives,” she said.

India GDP growth Q3 2024: India’s GDP grows 6.2% in Q3; economy to expand at 6.5% in FY25, shows govt data

The NSO, in its GDP second advance estimate of national accounts, pegged the country’s growth at 6.5 per cent for 2024-25. The NSO, in its second advance estimate of national accounts, pegged the country’s growth at 6.5 per cent for 2024-25. India economic growth statistics FY25: India’s economy grew at 6.2 per cent in the third quarter of 2024-25, pulled down by tepid show in the manufacturing and mining sectors.

The country’s gross domestic product (GDP) saw a growth of 6.2 per cent in during October-December 2024 (Q3 FY25) against 9.5 per cent in the year-ago period, showed data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Friday. In the second quarter, the Indian economy clocked in a growth rate of 5.6 per cent. For the full year of 2024-25, the NSO data showed the country’s economy expanding at a pace of 6.5 per cent, according to the second advance estimate of national accounts. Last month, the government department projected a 6.4 per cent growth during the current fiscal year. This was part of the first advance estimates released in January 2025. The NSO also revised the GDP growth for 2023-24 to 9.2 per cent against the earlier estimate of 8.2 per cent. The government’s fiscal deficit touched 74.5 per cent of full-year target at end of January, showed a data release from the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) on Friday. In actual terms, the fiscal deficit — the gap between the Centre’s expenditure and



revenue — was Rs 11,69,542 crore during the April-January 2024-25 period. The deficit, on the other hand, stood at 63.6 per cent of Revised Estimates (RE) of 2023-24 in the year-ago period.

The CGA data also showed that the central government’s net tax revenue stood at Rs 19.03 lakh crore, or 74.4 per cent of the RE of 2024-25. This compared to 80.9 per cent during the corresponding year of the last fiscal year. The total expenditure of the Centre was at Rs 35.7 lakh crore, or 75.7 per cent of the RE, according to the revenue-expenditure data of the Union government. In the year-ago period it was at 74.7 per cent of that year’s RE.

On Tuhin Kanta Pandey’s agenda: Regaining the credibility of Sebi top post, uplifting staff morale

Tuhin Kanta Pandey, the newly appointed Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), is set to take office on Monday. Pandey is faced with some serious challenges: restoring the credibility and prestige of the corner office at Sebi and restoring the morale of employees at market regulator’s head office in NSE House at BKC, Mumbai’s business hub. As the 11th Chairman of Sebi, Pandey also steps in at a time when there are multiple challenges plaguing the market, including the ongoing stock sell-off, foreign institutional investors’ withdrawal of over Rs 2 lakh crore since October last year, the unfinished task of reining in influencers and unregistered investment advisors and a review of the delisting norms. Pandey is joining the Sebi at a time when the market has plummeted 18 per cent over the last five months and investor confidence has taken a beating.

There were a host of allegations about conflict of interest against Pandey’s predecessor Madhabi Puri Buch last year that raised doubts about the integrity of the Chairperson, something that she has denied. In August last year, US-based Hindenburg Research alleged that Pandey’s predecessor Madhabi Puri Buch and her Singapore-based husband, Dhaval Buch, had stakes in offshore funds used in the Adani money siphoning scandal. The Buch couple had denied these allegations. Sebi had also come out in defence of its chairperson, stating that the regulator has adequate internal mechanisms for addressing issues relating to conflict of interest, which include disclosure framework and provision for recusal. The opposition Congress party had also made a series of allegations about the consultancy services of the Buchs, raising questions over their integrity. Buchs refuted those allegations and described them as “false, incorrect, malicious and motivated”.

Pandey, who is known to be an upfront, straight-talking officer, will have to regain the morale of Sebi employees who were up in arms against the management in September last year. On September 6, SEBI officers staged another protest outside the regulator’s headquarters, demanding withdrawal of a press release about them. They also sought the resignation of Buch for “spreading lies” against employees, according to an internal agenda circulated among officials of the regulator. On September 16, heeding to the demands of its agitating employees, Sebi withdrew the press release issued earlier this month in which the regulator said that its employees were “misguided by external elements” on issues related to house rent allowance (HRA). The regulator had issued the said press release on September 5, in response to a media report which said nearly 500 Grade A SEBI officials complained to the government in August about a “toxic work culture”. The employees had also claimed that shouting, scolding and public humiliation were a norm in meetings. A major agenda before Pandey will be to retain the retail investor interest and confidence in the stock market amid the market volatility triggered by tariff wars and economic slowdown. Since September 26, 2024, when both indices touched record highs, Sensex has

slid over 16 per cent, or 12,256 points, and Nifty has plummeted nearly 18 per cent, or 3,991 points. Retail investors are sitting on huge losses. Their investment in mutual funds has also eroded considerably.

Yet another issue before Pandey will be to bring back foreign institutional investors (FIIs) to India. They have been major sellers since October last year and pulled out over Rs 2 lakh crore worth stocks from the domestic market. The market regulator is yet to rein in influencers and unregistered investment advisors who are taking investors for a ride using social media platforms. The review of delisting regulations is another unfinished task before the Sebi. In short, the new Sebi chief has his task cut as he will have to ensure that the Indian capital market is healthy, without the menace of manipulations such as insider trading, front running and stock rigging. He will have to streamline the futures and options (F&O) segment where a majority of investors are incurring losses. There is need to tighten the rules governing initial public offering (IPO) and NFO proceeds by companies and fund houses. Market reforms, especially rules and regulations governing the market intermediaries, are an ongoing process with periodical changes required in the wake of the advancement of technology and entry of more investors.

Pandey’s appointment as Sebi chief marks the second major appointment of a bureaucrat as the head of a regulator, after Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officer Sanjay Malhotra appointment as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor in December 2024. Even though candidates from the private sector are learnt to have been considered for the post of Sebi Chairman, the final section of an IAS officer signifies a reposing of faith in bureaucracy by the government to manage critical institutions of the country. The appointment of the SEBI Chairman is made by the central government on the recommendation of the Financial Sector Regulatory Appointments Search Committee (FSRASC). Before being appointed as Revenue Secretary in January, Pandey had the charge of Secretary, DIPAM. Pandey, a 1987-batch Indian Administrative Service officer of Odisha cadre, had taken charge as Finance Secretary in September 2024 after his predecessor TV Somanathan was appointed as Cabinet Secretary. The charge of Finance Secretary is by convention given to the senior-most secretary amongst all the secretaries of the Ministry of Finance.

Pandey, who holds a Master’s degree in economics and an MBA, had earlier played a key role in finalising the sale of Air India as DIPAM Secretary. His appointment as Revenue Secretary just before Budget was seen as a crucial role for him, which he ably delivered as the government finalised the contours of the income tax relief measures and the nuances of the new Income-tax Bill. Before the present Sebi chief Buch, past chairmen of the markets regulator were either IAS officers or from public sector entities. Buch, who took over as the SEBI chief in March 2022, was the youngest, and the first person from the private sector, to be at the helm of the regulatory body.

Hostile hostels and prison-like PGs: women’s safety under siege in Hyd



For 26-year-old M. Shalini, the choice between working from home and the office is not just about convenience; it is also about safety. After a hectic Monday at her office housed in a gleaming corporate tower in Hyderabad’s Gachibowli, she dreads the next day at her paying guest (PG) accommodation, where unease lurks behind every door and window. At home, privacy is a luxury, and she is reduced to walking on eggshells. “We feel conscious even about opening our windows,” she says. “Whenever I work from home, I avoid stepping into the corridor or interacting with anyone. The men from the PG across the street stare, pass lewd comments, and even peer through cracks in the window glass. It is unsettling. I feel much safer at the office.” The unease doesn’t end indoors. Outside, a more insidious threat follows her. For the past six months, a young man from the neighbourhood has been stalking her — tracking her routine, watching her even in daylight. When she reported the matter to the hostel management, their response was cold and dismissive: “This is none of our concern”.

A software professional at a multinational company, Shalini has spent the past year and a half in Indira Nagar, Gachibowli, an area packed with PGs and hostels but lacking in security. Her five-storey building houses over 100 women, but there is no one to turn to for safety concerns. “Recently, a supervisor was hired, but his role is limited to managing food, electricity and plumbing issues.” After repeated demands from residents, a common night watchman was assigned — one for four to five PGs. “He locks the main doors and then goes off to sleep. If there is an emergency, we cannot rely on him. It takes him forever to respond,” says Shalini, one of hundreds of women navigating daily anxieties in spaces meant to offer safety. Hyderabad, India’s booming IT hub, is drawing young professionals from across the country, with women forming a significant part of this workforce. But as PGs and hostels multiply to accommodate them, safety concerns, poor regulation, and exploitative living conditions are on the rise. For many women living away from home for the first time, professional ambition comes with an unsettling trade-off — the constant negotiation of personal safety. HITEC City, spanning Madhapur, Gachibowli, Kondapur and Kukatpally, is a hub of IT giants, startups financial firms and elite institutions, fuelling a booming PG and hostel network. Yet, beneath the sleek skyline and rapid growth lies a quieter, unsettling reality.

K. Sakshi, 23, a healthtech professional living in a PG on Babukhan Lane of Gachibowli, knows it too well. Glancing at the dimly lit street, she says, “When I return from work late at night, there are always men standing around. Walking alone feels unsafe. The lack of security only makes it worse.” As the night deepens, the narrow road lined with PGs and small eateries becomes an unspoken gathering spot. Men linger on sidewalks, their eyes tracking the women walking past. Some try to strike up conversations, while others simply stare. “Nothing overtly threatening has happened, but the unease is constant. And somehow, we have just accepted that this is how we must feel in our own neighbourhood,” she rues. To create the illusion of male presence, some women living alone resort to tactics like leaving large men’s shoes outside their doors — small, silent attempts at self-protection. The numbers paint a grim picture. Telangana saw a 4.78% rise in crimes against women in 2024, continuing a five-year trend of increasing violence at an average rate of 7.70% per year. Rape cases surged by nearly 29%, kidnappings and abductions by 26.92%, and murders by 13.15%. Cases of outraging modesty went up by 8.71%, while incidents of abetment to suicide climbed by 4.41%. In the same year, She Teams — a division of Telangana Police for enhanced safety and security of women — received 10,862 complaints of harassment in public places. Yet, these figures barely scratch the surface. Many cases go unreported, buried under fear, societal pressure and institutional indifference, suggest officials. Troubling trend The new year brought anything but hope for students at CMR Engineering College in Hyderabad. Instead of fresh beginnings, they woke to outrage, fear and mass protests. Reason? A shocking breach of privacy — mess workers had been spying on women in hostel washrooms, even recording their videos.

For months, students had raised complaints, expecting swift action. Instead, they were met with silence, inaction and even blame. “Rather than confronting the perpetrators, the wardens tried to suppress the matter, shifting blame onto the victims. As the truth unravelled, it became clear this wasn’t just negligence — the principal, director and chairman had pressured wardens to bury the case, fearing damage to the institution’s reputation,” said Inspector A. Satyanarayana of Medchal Police. Emboldened by this cover-up, the accused continued their voyeurism without fear of consequence. A row of PG accommodations in Gowildoddi, a bustling hub near Hyderabad’s Financial District, one of many pockets in Hyderabad’s IT corridor housing thousands of young professionals and students in Hyderabad. Just as the outrage from one crime had barely begun to settle, another incident rocked Hyderabad. An engineering student, returning to her private hostel in Ibrahimpatnam after Sankranti celebrations, was sexually assaulted inside her own room. The perpetrator? The hostel owner’s driver, who took advantage of her solitude and violated the very space meant to be her sanctuary. These incidents are not isolated but part of a wider, systemic failure across Telangana, where accountability is rare and women’s safety is dismissed as an “added cost”. Meanwhile, technology has made exploitation easier than ever. A mini wireless WiFi spy camera, for example, a bestseller on an e-commerce site, is available for just ₹599 — cheaper than a decent meal — and can be delivered to your doorstep in 24 to 48 hours. It records “exceptional 1920 x 1080P HD” videos, which can be viewed live from anywhere, according to the description on the platform. The bitter irony? The very money that institutions refuse to spend on protecting women is being used to violate them.

On a bright Saturday afternoon in February, volunteers gathered in the narrow lanes of Gowildoddi, a bustling hub near Hyderabad’s Financial District. The streets buzzed with life, PG accommodations lined up one after another, their bright signboards standing out against a sea of concrete and iron gates. Gowildoddi is one of the many pockets of Hyderabad’s IT corridor housing thousands of young professionals and students. But over half of the hostels and

PGs here run without a proper licence, and nearly all lack essential security measures.

This alarming discovery came to light during a safety audit under ‘Project Safe Stay’, a joint initiative by the Cyberabad police and the Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC) to regulate these largely unchecked establishments. “Without oversight, these hostels run unchecked, raising serious concerns about resident safety,” says Cyberabad Women and Child Safety Wing DCP Srujana Karnam, who is leading the project. That afternoon, teams of auditors, including police constables, SCSC representatives and student volunteers, fanned out, knocking on hostel doors. Officers questioned PG owners and checked for valid licences, while volunteers inspected security infrastructure.

One volunteer climbed dimly lit staircases to ensure CCTV cameras were functioning and met the mandatory 90-day backup requirement. Others checked the height of compound walls, legal documents and first-aid kits — basic necessities often missing. Residents voiced frustration over unsafe conditions, pointing to poorly lit entryways, lack of emergency contacts and harassment incidents ignored by the management. Each audit culminated in a 70-question survey assessing 10 key safety parameters. The collected data will generate a public rating system, assigning each hostel a score out of 10 based on safety compliance. These ratings will be displayed on the Cyberabad police website and SCSC portal, helping new residents make informed choices.

“This system will be a wake-up call for hostel owners,” says Cyberabad Commissioner of Police Avinash Mohanty. A follow-up meeting will present the audit findings, giving owners a deadline to rectify violations, he explains. Those failing to comply will face strict action. Launched earlier this year, the initiative aims to cover over 1,500 hostels under the Cyberabad commissionerate, with audits conducted in a new area every weekend. However, officials admit there is no formal data on how many PGs and private hostels operate in Hyderabad, leaving many safety risks still unaccounted for. The growing lack of accountability in Hyderabad’s private accommodations has sparked urgent calls for reform. Hyderabad District Women Protection Officer Akkeshwar Rao insists that these establishments must be brought under the Women and Child Welfare Department to enforce safety regulations. Without formal oversight, he warns, thousands of women will remain vulnerable to exploitation, harassment and violence. “The first and most crucial step is mandatory registration. Every PG and private hostel must have a valid licence and those operating illegally should be shut down immediately,” Rao asserts. He admits that his department often steps in only after an incident has already occurred — when the damage is done. This reactive approach, he stresses, must change. Strict enforcement and continuous monitoring are the only way forward. PG accommodations in Gowildoddi, which houses thousands of young professionals and students in Hyderabad. But the scale of the problem is overwhelming. Medchal and Malkajgiri Child Development Project Officer Roja Eragoti points out that even if officials want to conduct regular inspections, the sheer number of PGs and hostels, combined with limited manpower and resources, makes that nearly impossible. Adding to the problem is a widespread lack of awareness. Many women in these accommodations endure harassment in silence, unaware of their rights or how to seek help. “Failure to act early is a major factor behind the rising suicide attempts in private hostels. Many tragedies could have been prevented with timely intervention,” Eragoti says. For the thousands of women living in these spaces, the demand is clear: safety cannot be an afterthought. They seek CCTV cameras that actually work, wardens who listen and act, security guards who are accessible and trained for emergencies, and infrastructure designed with safety in mind. Controlled entry points, emergency alert systems and a structured process to escalate concerns are no longer optional — they are essential. At the English and Foreign Languages University in eastern Hyderabad, female students live with an unshakable fear — one that lingers in empty corridors, deserted campus stretches and the silence that follows every reported case of harassment or assault. That fear became a reality in October 2023 when a student was allegedly ambushed and sexually assaulted, just hours after students had protested for the reconstitution of the Sensitisation, Prevention, and Redressal of Sexual Harassment (SPARSH) committee. The attack took place despite the presence of security guards and CCTV cameras, forcing students to ask: what does ‘security’ really mean if it fails them when they need it most?

“The administration may cite the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) as proof of its commitment to student safety, but for many, it is just a formality,” says S. Vani, 25, a student. Survivors hesitate to come forward, fearing retaliation or further harassment. “Only 20% of actual incidents are ever reported to the ICC,” chimes in Ada Varghese, 25, another student. “Victims know the accused will be informed almost immediately. That alone makes them think twice. What if speaking up only makes things worse,” she wonders. By regulation, the ICC must include faculty, non-teaching staff, students and an external NGO representative. Victims are required to file a written complaint within three months, after which the accused is given 10 days to respond. The inquiry is supposed to conclude within 90 days, as per University Grants Commission norms. But these procedures, students argue, often discourage them from reporting cases. Trisha Singh, 25, another student of the university stresses the need for better training, not just in handling cases but in supporting survivors with empathy and sensitivity. “Following procedural steps isn’t enough. Students need to feel safe enough to voice their concerns without fear of backlash,” she says. For many, the larger issue of campus safety remains unresolved. “Blocking off certain areas or installing dysfunctional cameras isn’t a solution. We shouldn’t have to question our safety in our own university. It is a problem that can’t be ignored any longer,” adds Varghese.

Centre gives clearance for Mamnoon airport in Warangal

Hyderabad: The Central government has accorded approval for Mamnoon airport at Warangal. The Telangana government has been appealing to the Central government to accord permission for construction of an airport at Mamnoon since long. There was a condition that construction of a new airport from 150 kms distance from Shamshabad airport would not be permitted. In November 2024, the Telangana government had approached the Airports Authority of India (AAI) stating that Hyderabad International Airport Limited (HIAL) had issued ‘No Objection Certificate’. Accordingly, instructions were issued to hand over 253 acres to AAI for development of Warangal Airport. At present.

'If you want Priyanka Chopra to die on your set, I'll send her, but you'll be responsible': How PC's mom handled sarcastic remark by 'very scary' Dostana director



Actor Priyanka Chopra's mother, Madhu Chopra, recalled how cantankerous director Tarun Manshukhani used to be. Priyanka worked with him on the film Dostana, but they had their differences, and she was wary of upsetting him. In an interview, Madhu Chopra recalled the trepidation that Priyanka felt when she fell ill one day, and had to take some time off. She had her mother ring Tarun up, and he reacted sarcastically. This made Madhu stand up for her daughter with a stern declaration. It was also during Dostana that Priyanka had differences with costume designer Manish Malhotra.

Madhu Chopra spoke to Lehren Retro about the incidents, and said, "Tarun, as I know him today, was not the

same Tarun. He was a very scary man. One day, Priyanka had a high fever. She asked for a pill, and I gave one to her. She was insisting that she'll go to work. But even after an hour or so, the fever wouldn't subside. I told her that she must rest it out and not go to work. She asked me to tell Tarun, because she didn't want to be the one to break the news to him."

Priyanka's mom said that she called Tarun up and told him that Priyanka wouldn't be able to make to work that day because she was running a temperature, and Tarun replied, "How convenient." Madhu didn't take the comment well, and told him, "If you want her to die on your set, I'll send her. But if something happens to her, but you'll be responsible for it." Madhu said that they are now friends, and that when she meets Tarun, he teases her by saying, "If you want my daughter to die..."

Priyanka has spoken previously about being bullied on set by directors, and learning over time to take a stand for herself. At a Forbes event, Priyanka said that she walked out of a film after she overheard a director's comments about her. "He picks up the phone and goes, 'Listen, people are going to come into the movies to watch her when she shows her panties. So the skirt needs to be really short so that I can see her panties. You know those people sitting up front? They should be able to see her panties.' And he said it like four times. And it's not even pretty in Hindi. It's worse," she said. In an interview with Film Companion, Priyanka had recalled pushing back against a co-star for hogging the limelight during a scene. "I have had a couple of co-actors of mine who did solo performances. They came in, and they decided this is the scene that they want to do, and everyone else have to cater to that and 'vo solo performance kar rahe hain'. They don't wait for you to finish your lines in your time, and they don't wait for you to take a pause or breath because they have decided how to do the scene," shared Priyanka.

Amitabh Bachchan explains his cryptic 'time to go' tweet to concerned fans: 'Likhte-likhte hamein neend aa gayi'.

Earlier this month, Amitabh Bachchan shared a tweet on his social media which read "time to go." His fans were quite curious what this tweet meant and they finally got a chance to ask the star about it on the stage of Kaun Banega Crorepati. In a new promo shared by the channel, the studio audience can be seen asking Big B about his tweet and what it really meant. They also tell him with love, "Aap yahan se kahin nahi jaa sakte (You can't go anywhere.)"

In the promo, Amitabh read out the tweet and then asked his fans if there was anything wrong with it. "Usme kuch gadbadi hai kya? (Is there anything wrong with it)?" One of the fans present as the studio audience asked, "Kahan jana hai? (Where do you want to go)?" Big B tried to reply as he said, "Jaane ka samay aa gaya hai matlab... (It's time to go that means...)" And immediately, one of the fans jumped in and said, "Aap yahan se kahin nahi jaa sakte (You can't go anywhere)." At this point, Amitabh directly explained what his tweet actually meant and said, "Arre bhai sahab, humko kaam pe jaane ka samay aa gaya hai (Sir, it's time to go to work)." As soon as Amitabh offered this explanation, the audience broke into applause and laughed with him. He shared that his shoot at KBC gets over late at night and by the time he gets back home, it's 1-2 am. He said his tweet was left incomplete because he dozed off in the middle. He shared, "Raat ko 2 baje humko



yahan se chhutti milti hai toh pahunchte pahunchte raat ke 1-2 baj jaate hain. Toh voh likhte likhte humko neend aa gayi. Toh vahin tak reh gaya. Jaane ka waqt... So gaye. (I get free by 2 am from here, sometimes I get home by 1-2 am. I dozed off while writing that. Time to go... And I slept)." Amitabh Bachchan has been hosting KBC for around 25 years now. The show started in 2000 and Bachchan has hosted all seasons of the show, except one which was done by Shah Rukh Khan.

A Complete Unknown movie review: Timothee Chalamet is impressive in powerful Bob Dylan biopic



Don't go about doubting Bob Dylan the singer. Or bracketing Bob Dylan the man. Many have learned this, often the hard way, through the 60-odd years that the shape-shifting artiste has been around, tweaking his past, changing it all from his looks and religion to his music, and still standing, strumming his guitar – including on what is admirably described as a "Never Ending Tour", since 1988.

Can the beautiful, beautiful Timothée Chalamet be this slippery, sullen creature with the sublime talent (who years later would skip his own Nobel Prize ceremony)? Chalamet tries, and is impressive with his guitar playing and his singing (it ain't the raspy Dylan though), and the scowl and disaffection that hang constantly around Dylan just a couple of years into fandom in the early 1960s. However, his Dylan has to lay out this disenchantment in words, again and again, for us to be in tune. Chalamet is "too pretty" – as Dylan once says of Joan Baez's songs – for the darker shades, too cool for the mercurial changes. The women, starting with Monica Barbaro as the famed Baez, are the ones who bear the wounds of his blazing, bruising, self-absorbed genius. Barbaro is particularly good as a fellow artiste who sees through Dylan's "bullshit", but can't help admire his talent or be hopelessly swept into an affair with him. Plus, she has an angelic voice as she sings Baez's songs. Elle Fanning has a thankless task as Dylan's suffering on-again, off-again girlfriend Sylvie, who houses and feeds him (even making coffee escapes the man), and via her activism, steers him towards the causes that would make Dylan the voice of his generation. Dylan doesn't seem to be much plagued by guilt in two-timing Baez and Sylvie, including with Baez in Sylvie's house.

But Fanning is nice in the scenes where she realises,

and accepts, the inescapable sparks between Baez and Dylan (or Chalamet and Barbaro) as they electrify an audience. Ed Norton as the legendary folk artiste Pete Seeger, who has an Academy award nomination, like Barbaro and like Chalamet – the film has eight nominations in all, including best film and director – is the most singular of all. Seeger, who first spots Dylan's talent when the latter visits and sings to his hero Woody Guthrie (Scoot McNairy) in hospital, has spent a lifetime "adding sand with a teaspoon" to sustain the structure of folk music in its humblest form. Dylan does the same in "shovels", only to shake the structure's "purist" base. In Norton's delicate telling, Seeger is both a man who feels cheated and one honest enough to know that his protege can't be denied. It's best said in Dylan's own words, with their thrilling power captured beautifully in the film: "Your old road is rapidly agin' / Please get out of the new one, if you can't lend your hand / For the times they are a-changin'." A Complete Unknown movie cast: Timothée Chalamet, Edward Norton, Elle Fanning, Monica Barbaro, Scoot McNairy, Dan Fogler

Emilia Perez movie review: Incredulous storyline, mediocre melodies drag this film down

Much water has flown down the bridge since Emilia Pérez first burst onto the awards landscape. However, the social media furor over posts by its star Gascón, or its incredulous storyline about a drug lord who after transitioning becomes an angelic woman benefactor, or the mediocre melodies of this unnecessary musical, have not prevented the film from lapping up 13 Academy award nominations. In the interesting times that America is living through, it's anybody's guess what the Academy's appetite remains for this film, which ticks many of the boxes the outgoing dispensation swore by. That said, there are few performances that come close in recent films to Gascón's tour-de-force act as Emilia, or as her earlier avatar Manitas. She strides in and commands every scene she is in, and not just because of her towering, unapologetic physical presence. That she is in the company of more famous Hollywood names doesn't daunt Gascón. They include Saldaña (who plays the lawyer Rita, who facilitates Emilia's transition, both physically and geographically to escape the law), Gomez (Emilia's wife Jessi, from her time as Manitas), and Ramírez (the kind of cheap climber who must inhabit such a film).

Suniel Shetty recalls going to Kargil during the war: 'Went at my own risk, was howling'



Suniel Shetty, who is still remembered for his role in JP Dutta's Border, recently shared that the film continues to have an impact on the audience. Shetty shared that when he was initially approached for the film, he refused because he had heard some tales about Dutta's temper. Shetty also shared that he visited Kargil during the 1999 war, a few years

after the film's release, and was overwhelmed when he saw a young soldier talking like his character from the film.

He shared on Chanda Kochhar's YouTube channel, "If Suniel Shetty would stay in people's minds, even long after I am gone also, it will be only because of Border." He said that it was his mother-in-law who convinced him to be in the film and shared, "I had said no to JP sir when he narrated Border to me, even though I liked the script. Somebody told me he is hot tempered and you won't get along so I said no. I don't know what JP sir thought... he needed me for that character and he spoke to my mother-in-law and said that I need him for the film." Suniel Shetty played Bhairav Singh in Border and his character was a part of the BSF. He shared that after the release of the 1997 film, he visited Kargil during the 1999 war with Pakistan. "The Kargil war was going on and I got information that the boys wanted to see me. The war was on, shelling was on so I remember signing that form saying that I will be going at my own risk and we were flown to Kargil. I went to the base camp and there was shelling going on on top," he said. Shetty recalled meeting a 19-20 year Sikh soldier who had lost one arm. He was drowsy when the actor saw him but when he woke up, he started saying Bhairav Singh's war cry from the film. "I started howling," Shetty recalled. 29 years after the original film, Border 2 is being made. The film stars Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh among others. Suniel's son Ahaan is also a part of the cast.

When Rajinikanth shared why he wouldn't remake Amitabh Bachchan-starrer Cheeni Kum: 'I crave for a National award, but...'

Almost fifty years back, the acting potential of one film institute student named Shivaji Rao Gaekwad was unearthed by veteran director K Balachander. The aspiring actor was rechristened Rajinikanth, and almost fifty years later, he has become one of Indian cinema's greatest superstars with a rich and fulfilling legacy. However, in an old interview with his mentor K Balachander, Rajinikanth opened up about one aspect of his career that he still feels needs a change.

In the interview conducted during a Directors' Union celebration event, Dadasaheb Phalke award recipient K Balachander asked his fellow awardee Rajinikanth if he craves for recognition as an actor, especially receiving a National Award for Best Actor. The refreshingly candid Rajinikanth minced no words, and simply said, "Yes, there is a craving for a National award, but it is all in the hands of the right kind of directors."

However, when questioned about his superstar legacy, and if he could act in a film like Cheeni Kum, which featured Amitabh Bachchan in the lead role, Rajinikanth was quick to brush it off, and said, "Honestly, now, my satisfaction doesn't really lie in delivering those films that taps into the artistic side of me. Now, my focus is on the big commercial ventures. My heart beats fonder for those kind of films. Of course, Cheeni Kum is a commercial film, but it is a small commercial film. My aim is to make those big-ticket commercial ventures." Undoubtedly, it is this clarity that has truly been the hallmark of his stellar 50-year career where he not only knew what worked for him, but was also fully aware of what didn't work for him. Probably why, when asked by



his guru about the films in his filmography that will stand the test of time like a Mughal-e-Azam, Veerapandiya Kattabomman and Enga Veetu Pillai, which continue to be the golden standard of Indian cinema even 50 years after their release, Rajinikanth chose films that satiated his artistic side, the commercial side, and his spiritual side. "Sri Raghavendra, Baasha, and Enthiran, I guess," said Rajinikanth, proving once again that he is a superstar of all ages for a reason. He understands the needs of commercial cinema, adapting to the evolution of the audience, technology, and filmmaking style, and most importantly... the brand Rajinikanth.

Flow movie review: A ripplingly gorgeous and lusciously resonant animated film



And we thought a cat had just nine lives! Flow, a ripplingly gorgeous and lusciously resonant animation by Latvian director Gints Zilbalodis, has its black feline not just survive a flood of biblical proportions but also lead a boatful of them out, quite Noah-like.

And we thought a cat had just nine lives! Flow, a ripplingly gorgeous and lusciously resonant animation by Latvian director Gints Zilbalodis, has its black feline not just survive a flood of biblical proportions but also lead a boatful of them out, quite Noah-like. When the waters start rising in this post-human universe, which is sometime in the past given its towering and empty stone cities, the cat finds its world washed away. The rest of Flow, which has no dialogue and doesn't need any, is about the cat finding its feet and making unlikely friends, among them a hungry-for-love labrador, a hoarder lemur, a gentle and sleepy capybara, and a noble, giant bird.

These are animals not trying to be anthropomorphic or witty or cruel or cute, and are not even drawn to whisker-

deep perfection. Mostly they are scared, unsure about what's happening, and as often happens in such situations, end up looking after each other. There is also plenty of humour, in the labrador panting to have anything thrown that he can fetch, the capybara learning to steer the boat, and the lemur ferociously guarding the knick-knacks he has collected from an abandoned home, particularly an ornate mirror. The economy of words is filled with the profusion of sound, from the many moods of the different animals to the rustle of water to the swish of the boat sails. It does tend to get repetitive after a while, but Zilbalodis still shows how so little can be so much more – literally. He is the co-writer, director, producer, editor and cinematographer, and can boast two remarkable Academy Award nominations, for Best International Feature as well as Best Animation.

Remembering Boris Spassky, and the Cold War-era 'Match of the Century' that defined him



GNS News Agency, March 4

In 1972, the Russian played the legendary 'Match of the Century' against American grandmaster Bobby Fischer in Reykjavik, Iceland — a chess battle that ended up becoming a proxy for the Cold War. The match was built up as a clash of cultures and personalities. Fischer was brash and headstrong. A prima donna. A poster boy for American individualism, for American exceptionalism. Spassky on the other hand was more suave and laid-back, seen as an exemplar of the might of the Soviet state-sponsored chess machinery. In reality, both grandmasters did not fit this billing. Spassky was not the Soviet folk soldier he was seen as, while Fischer was far from a model American. The World Chess Championship of 1972 nonetheless defined their two legacies, and how they are remembered till date. Entering 1972, the Soviets had a 24-year monopoly on the world championship title, with Spassky just the latest in a line of Soviet champions stretching back to 1948. Spassky had defeated compatriot Tigran Petrosian in 1969 to earn the title.

Thus, when Bobby Fischer, someone who had long been critical of the Soviet style of settling for early draws (or so he claimed), won the candidates' tournament to set up a challenge to Spassky, the world was bound to take notice. Yet, for some time, it was unclear whether the match would even take place — in no small part due to Fischer's repeated demands for more money. However, even as Fischer kept the world on tenterhooks, he trained hard in Pasadena, California, almost like one would for a boxing match. He hired Harry Sneider as a trainer. He swam, cycled on a stationary bike, played sports like table tennis for aerobic fitness and worked on the strength of his grip ("So my opponent can feel my might when I shake his hand"). Spassky, on the other hand, went about his job like he was going to enter a tricky business negotiation. He landed in Iceland's capital 12 days before the match without a fuss. Fischer landed much later. He landed in New York three days before the first game was set to be placed, but was spooked by the paparazzi at the airport. It took a phone call from US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and a British businessman James Slater raising the prize money amount for Fischer to finally board the flight to Iceland. If Fischer was being difficult before, he became almost insufferable after landing in Iceland.

He showed up late for the first game, claiming he was caught in traffic. After his first move, he started moaning

about the cameras, and the noise they were making even though the equipment was 150 feet away. Then he made an uncharacteristic mistake and lost. Fischer then forfeited the second game after being unable to convince the organisers to have the cameras removed from the playing hall. But the third game was held in a small table tennis room, behind the actual playing hall, to placate Fischer.

Because of all of Fischer's shenanigans — before the Match and during — Spassky as the reigning world champion could have simply walked away, or thrown a fit about having to constantly adjust to his opponents whims. But he chose not to, something that till date defines his persona among chess fans. As Garry Kasparov wrote after Spassky's passing: "His rise as a prodigy, conquest of the crown against the invincible Petrosian on the second attempt, and decades of elite play are too often lost in the shadow of his dramatic title loss to Bobby Fischer in 1972 and the circus Fischer turned it into. But Spassky always wanted to play, and he handled the situation with impressive dignity".

Spassky's grace was perhaps best exemplified at the end of Game 6, considered to be one of the greatest exhibitions of chess till date. After conceding defeat to his prodigious rival, Spassky stood up and applauded his rival along with the rest of the spectators. Fischer was so touched by the gesture that he rather uncharacteristically praised Spassky's sporting spirit to his entourage. "To be able after an important defeat in 1972 to stand up and applaud the opponent Fischer who just performed a masterpiece, tells a lot about the person. And in times when people still did such things sincerely, there were no (social media) Likes existing," wrote former world champion Vladimir Kramnik on X. As Fischer started to show his strength on the board and won game 13, the Soviet delegation started to raise a stink about the American using "non chess" methods to rattle Spassky. Spassky himself said nothing, even as his entourage clutched at straws. They removed a team member, a second called Ivo Ney, from their team, suspecting him to be a mole. Then, they alleged that the chairs had been wired to disrupt Spassky with electromagnetic fields. This led the organisers to bring in a chemist and an electrical engineer to the scene along with the Icelandic police. The lighting in the arena was inspected. Chairs were X-rayed. Air samples were tested. None of those tests found anything. Except two dead flies in a chair, which led to an iconic headline in The New York Times: "Who killed those two flies — and why?".

Spassky eventually conceded the crown by a phone call to the chief arbiter after game 21. In those days games could be postponed for a second day if a player could write down his move in a sealed envelope and hand it to the arbiter. But this came at a price for Spassky, who was reportedly banned from flying abroad for two years after he returned to the USSR. Decades later, Spassky would say: "I was happy to lose the championship. My years as champion were the worst years of my life."

More than just a name: Kerala pacer Eden Apple Tom stuns Vidarbha in Ranji Trophy final

GNS News Agency, March 4

The moment Eden Apple Tom was listed in Kerala's team sheet, everyone became an onomastic, digging the roots of the name. Curiosity around his name swirled: "Is it Eeden or Aiden, or Edhan or Edan?" "Is he from a religious background?" "Who is Apple, his second name, or his father's name?" Convoluted associations with Garden of Eden and Eden Gardens too were not far behind. Eden himself must have been asked to detail the etymology of his name a hundred times, by his friends, teammates, teachers, colleagues, coaches and journalists. He had to clarify: "My name is Eden. And Apple is my father's name." The name, phonetically spelled, is Adhan, the Malayalam equivalent of Eden. He ensured that the onlookers remembered his bowling too, that there is more to him than his name. He designed the right-arm seamer's perfect ball from around the stumps to devour Yash Rathod, Vidarbha's batting figurehead, and catalysed Kerala's second-day fightback.

The third ball of his first over of the second spell, he conjured a ball so dreamy that Rathod's lips gasped into a perfectly round 'O'. Just 66 runs away from scaling the 1000-run peak in the season, Rathod nicked a ball outside the off-stump, like a firefly drawn irresistibly into the light. He could have shouldered arms, if only he had a divine premonition of the ball's wicked path. It angled inward from around the stumps, curling a smidgeon as it reached him. But in exemplary form, the inward shape did not trick his eyes into turning leg-side. He second-guessed the away-swing bluff, the seam canting towards the first slip was a giveaway, except that he did not expect the ball to seam away so deviously late or subtly. Or that, Eden had managed to draw him further across the off stump (or where he imagined his off-stump was), without him realising it and cajoled him into edging a ball that he could have left alone. It was quick-kill. Kerala had little cushion to lay elaborate traps. So, the first two balls to him were full—the first on the fourth stump and the next on off-stump, tailing into him. The third ball, Rathod listened to the crack of doom. Eden Nagpur: Kerala's players celebrate a wicket on the first day of the Ranji Trophy final cricket match between Vidarbha and Kerala, at Vidarbha Cricket Association (VCA) Stadium, in Nagpur. The schemer was captain Sachin Baby. Every time Eden returned to the run-up point, with hurried strides, his fingers flicking an imaginary ball, Sachin would sidle up and whisper some advice. Eden, 19 and fresh-faced, who was four years old when Sachin debuted, would vigorously nod his head like an obedient pupil would a mentor. As he broke into his long and brisk run-up, the usually quiet Baby would scream: "Mone, polikul! Son, have a blast.

A young Eden was a pacer with precious gifts that his academy coach in Dubai, and former captain Sony Cheruvathoor, advised him to relocate to Thiruvananthapuram so that he could professionally embrace the game. His father, Apple, had to quit his job in the Dubai Airport, but Cheruvathoor convinced him that relocation would be worth the sacrifice. Recollects Cheruvathoor: "I remember a young boy at the academy, (in Dubai) he might have been 8 or 9. He was quick for his age, and had a great willingness to learn. I saw some genuine talent in him and when I returned to Thiruvananthapuram, I asked him to relocate." A diamond in the rough, he required polishing. Like he was bowling off the wrong foot, the action put a lot of strain on lower back and knees. But by 15, Sony and coaches at the Love All Sports Academy sculpted him into a bowler good enough to summon the attention of then state



coach Tinu Yohannan. He was invited to the senior camp, where he impressed one and all. A year later, Tinu handed him his maiden Ranji cap, against Meghalaya. Having made a habit of making first impressions, he struck with his first ball, grabbed six wickets in the game and was adjudged man of the match. By the time he played his next game, against Gujarat, he was already a household name in his State. "From a young age, he had a lovely in-swing. But he wanted the out-swing too, and worked incredibly hard to develop it," says Cheruvathoor.

A stress fracture on the lower back decelerated his progress, but he not only recovered from a potentially career-ending injury, but also has returned without losing much of his pace and vim. Cheruvathoor credits it to his mental strength as well as the strong fundamentals of the game. He has a gliding run-up that gives him the impetus to produce nippy pace, a frictionless leap and a fluent action that sustains the momentum. He can be both quicker and bouncer—like Ajit Agarkar—than the batsmen think he could be. Akshay Wadkar felt the sting of his extra bounce. He wafted at a short ball, but it bounced more than he judged and edged behind. It was an equally important wicket, as the experienced hand was in the mood for quick runs that would have dragged Kerala out of the game. He is far from a finished product—rough edges linger, scattergun properties remain—but Eden gave Kerala a glimpse of the promised land. And ensured those that remember his name would recollect the dream ball to Rathod too.

Fanatics announces new digital sports innovation centre in Hyderabad; to boost AI initiatives and high-impact workforce growth

Hyderabad: Fanatics, a digital sports platform with 22,000 employees in more than 80 locations, have announced the strengthening of its leadership, increasing in technical hiring, and expanding its footprint within India. As part of its global expansion and commitment to enhancing the fan experience, Fanatics will double its technical workforce in Hyderabad, growing from 250 to over 500 employees within the next two years. In addition to the hiring growth, Fanatics will move into a new, larger office space in Hitec City by 2026, which will be three times the size of its current location. To lead the Hyderabad office, Fanatics has appointed Abhishek Dhasmana as vice-president and general manager. Abhishek joins Fanatics from Indeed, where he held the position of site head for the company's India development centre.

West Ham secure back-to-back wins, Leicester sink deeper into relegation zone



GNS News Agency, March 4

London: West Ham United made it back-to-back Premier League wins by seeing off struggling Leicester City 2-0 at the London Stadium With a win West Ham leapfrog Everton into 15th, level on points with Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United. Leicester, on the back of a fourth straight league defeat, are in 19th, five points from safety. Birthday boy Tomas Soucek scored his 38th goal for the Club to put the Irons ahead on 21 minutes at London

Champions Trophy 2025: 49 pc expecting India to win, but only 17 pc know Pakistan is hosting

GNS News Agency, March 4

New Delhi: After India sealed the semifinals spot in the Champions Trophy, the Ipsos IndiaBus shows 59 per cent Indians are interested in the tournament, with 35 per cent uninterested and 6 per cent being neutral.

However, excitement was seen to be brimming across target groups and demographics, among those interested. 81 per cent claimed to be excited about the tournament, men and women equally at 81 per cent, while SEC A (89 pc), SEC B (78 pc) and SEC C (77 pc) showed high excitement levels. In fact 92 per cent of those in the metros were the most excited. Even across regions, there is an interesting mix of excitement, the west (83 pc), north (83 pc), east (79 pc) and south (77 pc) had the majority super excited about watching the tournament. The 9th edition of the ICC Champions Trophy contested by the top eight ranked teams qualified from the 2023 Cricket World Cup are India, Bangladesh, New Zealand and Pakistan making up Group A while Group B has Australia, England, South Africa and Afghanistan and that is leading to all the excitement among cricket frenzy fans. In fact, at least 66 per cent claimed to be excited about the participating teams and players. For 3 in 10 it was the format and schedule of the tournament leading to the excitement. Which was further ratified by citizens with more choosing day-night matches (36 per cent), night matches (21 per cent) over day matches (14 per cent). When asked about how bright the prospects were of India lifting the trophy, the views were a mixed bag with 49 per cent highly hopeful of India winning the coveted trophy, 31 per cent were circumspect, while 20 per cent were less hopeful of India taking away the trophy, the survey data shows. Interestingly, awareness of the host country for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 was abysmally low. Only 17 per cent were aware of Pakistan hosting the tournament. 49 per cent wrongly attributed the host nation to India and 28 per cent were undecided. Even England (4 per cent) and Australia (2 per cent) were wrongly named as the host nation. Cricket is a great binding factor among citizens across demographics, regions and social strata. After all,



cricket is a religion in India, the sport with highest stickiness. World's best teams playing in the ODI format is also a big draw among cricket lovers," says Parijat Chakraborty, Group Service Line Leader, Public Affairs, Corporate Reputation, CSR and ESG, Ipsos India. "Till about December 2024, India had not confirmed its participation and was insisting on a neutral venue. And the confirmation came almost 2 months before the kick off. Awareness building would have started much later. With sponsors being roped in and in tying up of loose ends. These could be some of the reasons for low awareness among citizens," stated Chakraborty. Ipsos IndiaBus is a monthly pan India omnibus (which also runs multiple client surveys), that uses a structured questionnaire and is conducted by Ipsos India on diverse topics among 2200+ respondents from SEC A, B and C households, covering adults of both genders from all four zones in the country.

The survey is conducted in metros, Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns, providing a more robust and representative view of urban Indians. The respondents were polled face to face and online. They have city-level quota for each demographic segments that ensure the waves are identical and no additional sampling error. The data is weighted by demographics and city-class population to arrive at national average.

Australia captain Steve Smith urges umpire to withdraw run-out appeal after Josh Inglis-Noor Ahmad incident



GNS News Agency, March 4

Australia captain Steve Smith made a sportive gesture on the field during his team's high-stakes Champions Trophy group B clash against Afghanistan at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Friday. With Afghanistan forging a late lower-order comeback to move up towards a respectable total after opting to bat first, wicket-keeper Josh Inglis had the opportunity to appeal for the ninth wicket at the end of the 47th over bowled by seamer Nathan Ellis. With half-century Azmatullah Omarzai slapping a slower delivery to the mid-wicket fielder to retain a single, his partner Noor Ahmad was quick to leave the crease at the striker's end in the assumption that the over had to come to a close.

However, wicket-keeper Inglis had already gathered the ball and flicked the balls as Ahmad began to drift out from the batting crease for a change of ends after the over. While Inglis and Australia could have appealed for a re-look from the umpires for a potential run-out incident, Australia skipper Smith immediately intervened to waive off the appeal from his team's side. The incident, however, quickly drew parallels to the 2023 Ashes incident where Australia Test wicket-keeper Alex Carey's nimble glove work and presence of mind had England batter Jonny Bairstow involved in a bizarre stumping incident. Chasing 371 in the second Test at Lord's, England had entered stumps on day 4 at 114 for four. Batting on the final day, Bairstow was the sixth wicket to fall when Carey's timely action proved to be decisive for Australia in an eventual 43-run win. Bairstow was stumped by wicket-keeper Alex Carey as he walked out from the crease after a short delivery from Cameron

Green. The dismissal also sparked widespread criticism from English fans. A Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) member was handed a life ban and two MCC members were suspended in the aftermath of clashes with the Australian side.

'We're excited to try and learn and play in different conditions': Michael Bracewell on if India have advantage by playing all matches in Dubai

GNS News Agency, March 4

Bracewell India Champions Trophy New Zealand's Michael Bracewell celebrates after taking the wicket of Bangladesh's Towhid Hridoy during the ICC Champions Trophy cricket match between Bangladesh and New Zealand, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan Monday, Feb. 24, 2025. (AP Photo/Anjum Naveed)

New Zealand spinner Michael Bracewell sidestepped questions on if India have the advantage in the Champions Trophy by playing in the same stadium while other teams have to travel to and fro, saying that the Kiwis are excited to play in different conditions. Some cricketers, including South African top-order batter Rassie van der Dussen and former Australia skipper Pat Cummins, have said India are in an advantageous position as they have played all their games at one venue while other teams have had to travel to different venues in Pakistan.

"Look, it is what it is. It's been decided, and that's the way it is, and there's no point dwelling on that," said Bracewell, when asked if India have unfair advantage in Dubai. "It's part of what makes it exciting. I personally think it's coming to a different ground and trying to figure out those different conditions. Yeah, not much more to say on that other than we're excited to try and learn and play in different conditions," he added.