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Telangana student shot dead in US

Hyderabad: A 27-year-old youngster from Hyderabad pursuing higher studies in the United States was shot dead by unidentified persons in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

According to information reaching here, Praveen from Keshampet mandal of Rangareddy district was pursuing his Masters studies in a university in Milwaukee. The second year student, son of Raghavulu and Rama Devi, to sustain himself was working part-time in a star hotel there while studying.

Praveen reportedly was shot at by unidentified persons at a beach near his place of stay. He collapsed and succumbed to the bullet shots before being shifted to medical care. Praveen's family was informed about the incident by his friends and a pall of gloom descended in his village. More details are awaited.

It was not a suicide attempt, says Tollywood singer Kalpana's daughter

Hyderabad: A day after singer Kalpana Raghavender was hospitalised for allegedly 'attempting suicide,' her daughter Daya Prasad Prabhakar clarified that it was not a suicide attempt. Speaking to media person on Wednesday, Daya Prasad said her mother unintentionally took an overdose of medicine. "My mother is a singer, pursuing her LLB and PhD simultaneously, which has led to insomnia. To treat insomnia the doctors prescribed her a tablet. It was a slight overdose, but this was not a suicide attempt," she clarified. Daya Prasad further said that the family is perfectly fine. "My mom and dad are very much happy. Everybody is perfectly fine in the family. Please don't manipulate things," she added.

Indian pharma sector's value can grow 150% to 10 lakh crore by partnering with academia: PM



GNS News Agency, March 5

With proper coordination between the private sector and academia, the Indian pharma sector's valuation could grow to ₹10 lakh crore, from its current worth of 4 lakh crore, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday in a post-budget webinar on health and medical research. The Prime Minister said that making medical treatment affordable has been a priority of his government. "At present, the Ayushman Bharat and Jan Aushadhi schemes have saved more than ₹1 lakh crore for patients from the poor and middle classes, and the PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission is not only giving rise to new hospitals but is also creating a new and complete health ecosystem," Mr. Modi said. This is the ninth of a series of 12 post-budget webinars organised by the government to seek ideas and suggestions to effectively implement the initiatives announced in the Union Budget 2025-26. Healthcare could be viewed in terms of the pre- and post-COVID systems, he said. "Life-saving equipment like medicines, vaccines and

medical devices were weaponised when the pandemic was at its peak. That is why we have put forward a vision before the world: One Earth, One Health. India has constantly tried to reduce our dependence on foreign nations and emphasised the role of all stakeholders in this," the PM said.

Beyond the Health Ministry, the whole government is oriented towards making medical treatment affordable a priority, he said. "Through Ayushman Bharat, poor patients saved about ₹80,000 crore due to free treatment under the scheme. Additionally, affordable medicines from 9,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras have saved about ₹20,000 crore for the poor and middle classes all over the country," Mr. Modi said. Noting that more than 1.5 lakh health centres have been developed in close proximity to homes across the country so that testing centres and first aid is readily available, the PM said that facilities for screening serious ailments like diabetes, cancer, and heart-related issues will also be made available at these centres. Emerging technology Regarding human resources in the sector, Mr. Modi said that more than 260 new medical colleges have been opened in the last few years. "Opening 157 nursing colleges in the vicinity of the medical colleges is a huge step in the direction of medical human resources. This may be useful in fulfilling global demand, not just the domestic need," he added. The Prime Minister highlighted the role of technology in constantly making medical services accessible and affordable, noting that drones are bringing revolutionary changes in medicine delivery and testing services. "This is a great opportunity for entrepreneurs and will give a push to our efforts for universal healthcare," he said.

Revanth Reddy asks Centre to clear pending dues



GNS News Agency, March 5

HYDERABAD: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday urged Union Minister for Food and Public Distribution Pralhad Joshi to release long pending dues of Rs 1,468.94 crore pertaining to the supply of rice to Food Cor-

poration of India (FCI) during the 2014-15 Kharif season.

The Chief Minister and Civil Supplies Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy met the Union Minister in New Delhi on Tuesday. They appealed to the Union Minister to release the arrears of Rs 343.27 crore for the supply of rice from May, 2021 to March, 2022 and in April, 2022 under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana. They also urged him to release pending dues of Rs 79.09 crore for rice distribution under Non-NFSA (National Food Security Act) from June 2021 to April 2022 and extend the custom milling rice period by at least four months instead of one month to avoid hurdles in supply. The Chief Minister requested Joshi, who is also the Union Minister for Renewable Energy, to restore the 4,000 MW solar power generation permit granted to Telangana under the PM Kusum scheme earlier. He explained that the Centre had earlier granted 4,000 MW permit to Telangana but later reduced it to 1,000 MW.

Infighting in Telangana Congress escalates as leaders clash over caste discrimination, disciplinary actions

GNS News Agency, March 5

Hyderabad: On the same day after suspended Congress MLC Teenmaar Mallanna declared war against Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, senior Congress leader Madhu Yashki Goud added fuel to the fire, alleging discrimination of Backward Classes (BCs) within the party. He accused the Telangana Congress leadership of shielding Reddy and upper-caste leaders from disciplinary action, while acting against leaders from other communities.

"Congress Disciplinary Committee president G Chinna Reddy publicly accused party MLA Megha Reddy, yet no action was taken. Why this double standard?" he questioned, also slamming the exclusion of BC leaders from meetings chaired by Revanth Reddy on the caste census, stating that even he was not invited to key meetings. Meanwhile, Minister D Anasuya alias Seethakka defended the Congress leadership and dismissed Mallanna's allegations against the Chief Minister. "Congress came to power through the hard work of its cadre. Some are acting as BJP and BRS agents for political gain. We did what BRS failed to do, yet, people are being misled. If Mallanna has objections to the caste census, he should



raise them in the Legislative Council, not in the media," she countered. Congress Working Committee (CWC) member Vamshi Chand Reddy also hit back, rejecting Mallanna's claim that Revanth Reddy engineered his defeat. "It was the Congress high command's decision for me to contest from Mahabubnagar. Revanth Reddy worked hard for my victory. The BJP won due to a BRS-BJP collusion," he alleged, dismissing Mallanna's statements as a mere attempt to stay politically relevant.

Congress MLC Teenmaar Mallanna says Revanth Reddy weakening Congress to benefit BJP

GNS News Agency, March 5

Hyderabad: Suspended Congress MLC Chinthapandu Naveen, alias Teenmaar Mallanna, on Tuesday said Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy was systematically undermining the Congress and siding with the BJP. He claimed that Revanth Reddy orchestrated his suspension to suppress voices questioning his leadership and alleged anti-BC policies. For the first time after his suspension, Mallanna spoke to mediapersons at Press Club of Hyderabad on Wednesday where he targeted Revanth Reddy, stating that the latter was working to weaken Congress and had helped BJP secure victories in Malkajigiri, Chevella and Mahabubnagar parliamentary constituencies. He said Revanth Reddy pressured TPCC president Mahesh Kumar Goud to suspend him from the party. "Revanth Reddy committed a huge mistake by getting me suspended and he will pay for it dearly," he said. The former Congress leader accused the Chief Minister of sidelining BC leaders and manipulating the caste census to protect the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) quota for the benefit of the forward castes. He reminded that the caste census by the Congress government did not receive as much response as the Comprehensive Household Survey conducted by the BRS government in 2014 where even those living abroad came home to register their details. "If the caste census was conducted properly, why did the government order a re-survey? The entire process is flawed, and I challenge the Chief Minister for debate on this issue any-



where," he said. He claimed that many Congress leaders including Ministers did not participate in the caste census. Mallanna alleged that Congress's victory in Telangana was due to his relentless fight against the previous BRS government. "Congress won 42 out of 45 seats where I campaigned. Revanth Reddy may not like it, but in 2028, a BC leader will become the Chief Minister of Telangana," he declared, stating that the Chief Minister was favouring a select group of Reddy leaders while neglecting BC interests. The suspended Congress MLC also criticised the Congress government for neglecting BCs even 15 months after coming to power. "Reddys have taken control of corporations, while genuine Congress workers remain ignored," he said. He stated that senior BC leaders like V Hanumanth Rao and Anjan Kumar Yadav too were not being allowed to speak their mind.

Jaishankar meets U.K. Foreign Secretary David Lammy, discusses Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

GNS News Agency, March 5

The India-U.K. partnership is set to strengthen significantly as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visits the United Kingdom to reinforce the growing £41 billion trading relationship between the two nations. A major highlight of this visit is the announcement of two new Indian consulates in Belfast and Manchester, a move aimed at fostering regional economic ties and enhancing investments. The U.K. has also welcomed over £100 million in new Indian investment deals, expected to create jobs, strengthen economic growth, and improve financial prospects for working individuals.

Ahead of the consulates' inauguration, Dr. Jaishankar met Foreign Secretary David Lammy at Chevening House to advance the U.K.-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Their discussions focused

on economic growth, technological innovation, and tackling global challenges such as climate change. They also addressed pressing geopolitical concerns, including Russia's war in Ukraine and the Middle East situation. Foreign Secretary Lammy emphasised the importance of India as a key partner, stating, "One of my first visits as Foreign Secretary was to India because deepening our partnership for our shared growth and security is a key part of this Government's Plan for Change." He further said, "Dr. Jaishankar and I are supercharging our £41 billion trading relationship with India, after trade talks were relaunched in Delhi. It is the floor, not the ceiling of our ambitions that will benefit both our economies. The opening of new Indian consulates in Belfast and Manchester demonstrates the growing links between our peoples and how we are working together to deliver growth not only in London, but right across the U.K."

Pawan Kalyan nominates Konidela Nagababu as Jana Sena candidate in Andhra Pradesh MLC polls

GNS News Agency, March 5 Hyderabad: Jana Sena party has nominated its general secretary Konidela Nagababu as the candidate for the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council elections in the Legislators' quota. The nomination of the Jana Sena candidate was announced by the party president and Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Wednesday.

Konidela Nagababu is currently serving as the general secretary of the Jana Sena Party. He was asked to file the nomination papers immediately. The party office was also instructed to prepare the nominations papers immediately, according to a JSP spokesperson said.



Harish Rao exposes Chandrababu lies on water sharing



GNS News Agency, March 5

Siddipet: Former Minister and senior BRS leader T Harish Rao on Wednesday exposed the lies of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, who had claimed that he always supported the Kaleshwaram project and that he saw AP and Telangana as his two eyes. Terming his statement as baseless, Harish Rao said Naidu had written multiple letters to the Central Water Commission (CWC) and other central organisations seeking to stop the Kaleshwaram project and other irrigation projects proposed by the Telangana government on Krishna and Godavari rivers. Stating that Naidu was trying to appease the people of Telangana and the government as he was preparing to take up the Godavari-Banakacherla project, Harish Rao said Naidu was planning to divert 200 TMCft of water from

Godavari to Penna basin, which was objectionable. Rao demanded that Naidu write a letter to the CWC and the union government asking them to clear Kaleshwaram project's third TMC component, Sitarama Sagar, Sammakka Sagar and Vardha project on Godavari, the Palamuru Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Project, Dindi Lift Irrigation Project and lifting of 40TMC through Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation project on Krishna river if he was really committed to the interests of Telangana and its people.

Pointing out that Naidu was trying to justify AP utilising surplus water in the Penna basin, Harish Rao said governments in erstwhile AP had built similar projects earlier in Penna basin and diverted the water from Krishna, which fuelled the Telangana movement. Naidu also conspired to make central government organisations send back DPRs of various irrigation projects in Telangana, he said. Since the BJP-led government would not survive without the support of TDP, the Centre was supporting all the moves of Naidu while Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy remained a mute spectator. Revanth Reddy would not be able to get permissions for projects in Telangana confronting Naidu. "Why was Revanth Reddy not meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other ministers and officials on this issue if he really had any commitment?" he asked, adding that Revanth Reddy had also appointed a person, who worked with Naidu earlier, as the Irrigation advisor of the Telangana government. Rao also released letters written by Naidu to the CWC and other organisations seeking to stop the irrigation projects in Telangana, exposing his lies.

Telangana Inter Exams Begin Across the State with Enhanced CCTV Surveillance and Strict Monitoring!

GNS News Agency, March 5

Hyderabad: The much-anticipated Intermediate exams have officially commenced across the state, bringing with them heightened security measures, including advanced CCTV surveillance at all exam centers. On Wednesday, first-year students appeared for their Second Language Paper-1 exam under strict supervision to ensure a fair and transparent examination process. The examination timings have been set from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM, giving students three hours to complete their papers. To ensure a smooth entry process, students were allowed into the exam centers one hour before the exam, starting from 8:00 AM. OMR sheets were distributed promptly at 8:45 AM, allowing students sufficient time to fill in essential details before beginning their exam. Authorities also

permitted students arriving up to 9:05 AM to enter the exam hall, ensuring that minor delays did not hinder their ability to take the exam. On Thursday, second-year students will begin their exams, following the same strict guidelines and surveillance measures. To prevent any form of malpractice, students appearing for the Intermediate exams are strictly prohibited from carrying watches, mobile phones, calculators, electronic gadgets, or any printed material inside the examination hall. This measure aims to maintain the integrity of the exam process. Authorities have set up a special Command Control Center to monitor the entire examination process. The center ensures real-time surveillance with smart monitoring technology, adding an extra layer of security to prevent any misconduct.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Kullu's eco-warriors

Kullu, the 'Valley of Gods', is witnessing a grassroots shift toward sustainable tourism. With Himachal Pradesh reeling from recurrent landslides, cloudbursts and glacial lake bursts, the unchecked expansion of tourism infrastructure has worsened environmental degradation and increased disaster vulnerability. In response, gram panchayats in the Banjar valley have taken a bold step, enforcing construction norms under the Panchayati Raj Act to regulate tourism development. This initiative is crucial to curbing the unchecked concretisation along the Tirthan river and in the Jibhi valley, which has polluted water bodies, disturbed biodiversity and disrupted traditional settlements.

Local governance is proving to be a vital force in protecting fragile ecosystems, but these efforts need institutional support and sustained policy commitment. The Himachal Pradesh government's collaboration with the JNDP on a climate change development report is a welcome move, but reports alone are not enough. Meaningful change requires concrete policy measures — stricter zoning laws, improved waste management and early warning systems for glacial lake bursts. Additionally, local infrastructure needs cannot be ignored. The lack of road connectivity to Raghupur and Saryolsar Lake limits sustainable tourism efforts, making eco-friendly alternatives, such as the proposed aerial ropeway in Kullu, a necessity. Despite adverse weather, Himachal recorded 1.6 crore tourist arrivals in 2023, marking a 6 per cent increase from the previous year. While tourism is an economic lifeline, unregulated expansion in ecologically sensitive areas like Kullu threatens long-term sustainability. The proactive stance of Banjar's panchayats offers a replicable model for other regions. When local governance takes ownership of environmental protection, sustainable tourism becomes a reality.

'12 years have passed, I still find myself without a home': Gurgaon homebuyers take fight against builders to streets

GNS News Agency, March 5

Our life savings were invested in these flats, but we're still without a home — the lament echoed at Delhi's Jantar Mantar earlier this week as hundreds of homebuyers of Greenopolis in Gurgaon's Sector 89 gathered to protest. "I invested my entire life savings in buying this flat in the hope that I will spend my retired life peacefully. But I've just been running around for the last 10 years without any resolution," said Vipin Khanna (59), a homebuyer.

Khanna's predicament is akin to over 1,600 homebuyers who had booked their flats in Gurgaon's Greenopolis in 2012 but are yet to receive possession after waiting for almost 13 years. What makes their situation even more precarious is the fact that one developer, who was in a joint development agreement, has declared insolvency. "I dedicated my hard-earned savings to this project. Twelve years have passed, and I still find myself without a home. With mounting medical expenses, it has become increasingly challenging for me to manage the financial burden... the prospect of obtaining the flat seems increasingly bleak," said 81-year-old Harvinder Singh Anand.

At the protest site, residents dressed in white T-shirts shouted slogans of 'Nyay do, Nyay do'. Some carried placards, one of which read: 'Greenopolis housing scam — 13 years of waiting and still no homes'. They have a list of demands: Immediate possession of their homes, which are ready, and a court-backed completion timeline for the rest of the project; strict action against builders Orris Infrastructure Pvt Limited and Three C for delays; and compensation for the emotional and financial distress caused to them. In 2012, the homebuyers had booked houses in Greenopolis. Developers Orris (who owned the land) and Three C got into a joint development agreement wherein 65 per cent of the over 1,860 flats were to be allotted by Three C and the remaining 35 per cent were to be allotted by Orris.

Under the Construction Linked Plan, homebuyers paid around Rs 1,245 crore — which was around 85 per cent of their total property price — to the developers after the basic structure of the towers was complete. Over Rs 860 crore was given by Three C buyers, and around Rs 400 crore by Orris homebuyers. The basic structure of all the towers was complete by 2016, and seven of the 28 towers in Greenopolis were almost finished. However, shortly after this, construction stalled.

The developers started pinning the blame on each other. While Orris claimed Three C had cheated the homebuyers and Orris by not completing the project, the latter pointed fingers at the buyers for the delay, claiming they had defaulted in making timely payments to the tune of Rs 118 crore. Stuck in the middle were the 1,600-plus buyers — over 1,200 Three C allottees and over 450 Orris allottees — who have been shuttling between the Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority (HREERA), the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court to fight for their rights. After Three C declared bankruptcy in 2020, Orris said it would complete the Greenopolis project and hand over the flats to all the homebuyers.

Then, on November 25 last year, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted searches at 14 locations in Delhi-NCR at the premises linked to the promoters and directors of Orris and Three C in relation to a Rs 500-crore real estate "fraud". The central probe agency initiated its investigation based on two FIRs registered by the Economic Offences Wing of the Delhi Police. The EOW FIRs were based on complaints from homebuyers alleging a fraud of hundreds of crores. The buyers had alleged Orris and Three C colluded to hatch a criminal conspiracy and siphoned off their money. "During the search, several incriminating documents related to diversion, layering of funds, property documents, and other asset details of the aforesaid entities such as sale deeds, registration deeds, etc., various digital devices like laptops, hard drives etc., were recovered and seized. Several documents were also recovered from secret lockers kept in the office premises of Orris Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd.," the ED said in a statement on December 3, 2024. At present, the bank accounts and lockers belonging to the promoters of the companies have been frozen, and four luxury cars — Mercedes, Porsche, and BMW — have been seized from the residence of one of the directors/promoters of the Orris Group.

Trinamool deleting genuine voters from state's rolls, claims BJP



GNS News Agency, March 5

bjp, bengal fake voters, mamata banerjee, On Friday, a BJP delegation including Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari and other BJP MLAs went to the chief electoral office (CEO) and handed over a memorandum. A DAY after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is adding "fake voters", in West Bengal, the BJP on Friday alleged that the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) wants to delete voters from a particular community from the state's electoral rolls. Banerjee accused the BJP of adding fake voters from other states to the electoral rolls with the alleged backing of the Election Commission of India (EC), claiming that the party had used similar tactics to secure victories in Assembly elections in other

states. A BJP delegation including Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari and other BJP MLAs went to the chief electoral office (CEO) and handed over a memorandum.

It said, "We bring to your notice that on February 17, 2025, the Hon'ble Chief Minister Smt Mamata Banerjee, while addressing the TMC party at Netaji Indoor Stadium made it clear that steps should be taken to remove 4,000 to 5,000 voters..." It alleged, "For this, various district-level agencies, many of which have contracts with the state government, are likely to be used. The Commission must closely monitor and ensure that no such outsourced agency is used in any activity connected with the voters' list." Meanwhile, the CEO of the state said that update of the electoral rolls is being done by officials with the active participation of Booth Level Agents (BLOs) appointed by political parties. The CEO emphasised that any specific claims or objections should be directed to the BLOs, AEROs (Assistant Electoral Registration Officers), and EROs (Electoral Registration Officers) in West Bengal. "As per RP Act 1950, Registration of Electors Rules 1960 and Manual on Electoral Rolls, concerned BLOs, AEROs, EROs, DEOs, and CEOs in any State/UT work for the updation of Electoral Rolls," the CEO West Bengal posted on X. "This is done with active participation of Booth Level Agents appointed by political parties. Any specific claim or objections are to be made first before the concerned 80,633 BLOs, 3,049 AEROs and 294 EROs in West Bengal," the post read.

Chief Secy's house: Top perks for members of Mann Govt pilgrimage panel

GNS News Agency, March 5

The Punjab Cabinet's approval for setting up the Punjab Tirth Yatra Samiti will pave the way for accommodating four individuals in government, entitling them to official bungalows at par with the Chief Secretary and Secretaries, along with travel allowances. At its meeting on Thursday, the Cabinet endorsed the government's proposal to establish the Samiti, which will comprise four members, including a chairperson and three other members. The chairperson will be entitled to an official bungalow allotted to Chief Secretary-level officers in the Punjab government, while the three members will be provided houses designated for Secretary-level officers.

According to the memorandum presented to the Cabinet, all four members will also receive travel allowances. However, they will not be given any salary or honorarium, as these are honorary positions. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann will appoint the four members, whose tenure will be co-terminus with that of the Punjab government, as per the Cabinet memorandum. The formation of the Samiti follows Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) recent electoral defeat in Delhi and amid opposition claims that rejected leaders from Delhi are being accommodated in Punjab. Recently, former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia has been visiting schools in Punjab, and it is learnt that former Delhi minister Satyendar Jain will also be visiting Aam Aadmi Clinics in the state. A government statement on Thursday said the Cabinet approved the formation of the "Punjab Tirth Yatra Samiti" to facilitate convenient pilgrimages for Punjab residents by air, rail, road, or other means, in coordination with various departments under the Mukh Mantri Tirth Yatra Scheme. Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Cheema told the media that the committee will identify more pilgrimage sites under the state-run scheme and ensure comfortable travel arrangements for pilgrims through various modes of transport. The government has also shifted the administrative control of the scheme from the Transport Department to the Revenue and Rehabilitation Department.

Sources said that while the Department of General Administration allots official residences, the Revenue and Rehabilitation Department has a pool of vehicles used by

Maharashtra budget session: Will Mahayuti rise above conflicts and put up a united front?

GNS News Agency, March 5

The Maharashtra budget session beginning on March 3 will be a litmus test for the ruling Mahayuti government led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis as it will have to put on a united front amid rumblings within the coalition, even as it faces the heat from the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

With 232 MLAs, the Mahayuti coalition, comprising the BJP, the Shiv Sena, and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), has the numbers on its side as compared to the MVA, comprising the Congress, the Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP), which has been relegated to 47 MLAs after a drubbing in the Assembly elections last year. However, though the Opposition has weakened, the differences that have cropped up between Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, coupled with controversies involving NCP ministers Dhananjay Munde and Manikrao Kokate, have set the stage for a noisy session.

Munde, the minister for food, civil supplies and consumer protection, has been under pressure to resign after his close aide Walmik Karad was arrested in a case linked to the murder of Santosh Deshmukh, the sarpanch of Massajog in Beed district. Meanwhile, Kokate, the agriculture minister, has been sentenced to two years in prison for his involvement in a 30-year-old document tampering and fraud case related to the acquisition of two flats under the chief minister's discretionary quota for the low-income category. Both issues are likely to be raised in the session. Differences had cropped up within the Mahayuti over Fadnavis's move to bring in discipline in governance, especially his decision to take away the powers of ministers to appoint personal secretaries and officers on special duty (OSDs). Shinde's displeasure at his party not getting the guardian ministers' posts in Nashik and Raigad had also sparked rumours that all was not well within the coalition. While Fadnavis had dismissed these differences as baseless, remarks by his alliance partners point to a subtle game of one-upmanship that the Opposition is likely to rake up during the session. Another incident that has rocked the state is the rape of a 26-year-old woman inside a state transport bus at the Swargate bus depot in Pune. Though the accused Dattatray Gade was arrested, the incident will be brought up. On the financial side, the government will have to do a tightrope walk, striking a perfect balance between populist schemes and tightening the purse strings. Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who will present the state budget on March 10, has indicated that a cautious approach to revenue expenditure vis-a-vis generation is on the cards. Ad-



the Department of Rural Development and Panchayats and chairpersons of cooperative societies, among others. A senior AAP government functionary said the scheme was moved to the Revenue Department because "religion" falls under its jurisdiction. Senior Punjab AAP spokesperson Neel Garg said the change was made to enhance the scheme's effectiveness and benefit more people. "That is why it has been shifted to the Revenue Department. The Samiti, once constituted, will ensure the scheme's benefits reach the maximum number of people. It is about monitoring," he said. Previously, Deputy Commissioners of respective districts selected the pilgrims. The Mukh Mantri Tirth Yatra Scheme, launched in 2023-24, has so far facilitated travel for around 34,000 pilgrims to various religious sites by train and bus. The government funds their travel, food, and accommodation. Pilgrims visit places such as Gurdwara Hazur Sahib in Nanded (Maharashtra), Patna Sahib, Banaras, Mathura, Vrindavan, and Ajmer Sharif. Travel is arranged in three-tier AC coaches, and the IRCTC provides accommodation in budget hotels on a twin/triple sharing basis. Meals are served during travel and at places of stay. Buses transport pilgrims from railway stations to shrines and accommodations. Other pilgrimage destinations connected by buses include Amritsar, Anandpur Sahib, Damdama Sahib, and Talwandi Sabo in Punjab; Mata Chintpurni, Mata Jawalaji, and Mata Naina Devi in Himachal Pradesh; Mata Vaishno Devi in Jammu; and Khatu Shyam Ji and Salasar Dham in Rajasthan. Night stays are organised in AC dharamshalas and yatri niwas.



dressing a party meeting last month, Pawar had said, "Financial discipline will be the priority. The guidelines of the Centre will have to be strictly adhered to and implemented." Sources in the finance department admit that fiscal discipline "remains the biggest challenge" especially as the new government will have to fulfil the poll promises made to the people. "At the same time, generous funds allocation with limited and restricted revenue generation is a cause of concern," an official said.

The state's debt has already crossed Rs 7.11 lakh crore. In the 2024-25 budget, revenue deficit was Rs 20,051 crore (0.5 per cent of GSDP). The capital outlay proposed in 2024-25 at Rs 85,292 crore was a constant compared to the 2023-24 budget. And attempts to curtail expenditure to enhance the capital outlay will be a difficult exercise. The government has reiterated that its flagship Ladki Bahin Yojana project, which gives a monthly allowance of Rs 1,500 to women in the 18 to 65 year age group, will continue. Though it has incorporated some norms to weed out ineligible beneficiaries, the annual expenditure required for this scheme will not come down below Rs 35,000 crore. Additionally, the state government plans to enhance the annual allocation to farmers under the Namu Shetkari Kisan Mahasanman Yojana from Rs 6,000 to Rs 9,000. This is in addition to the annual grant of Rs 6,000 from the Centre under the PM-KISAN scheme. The poll promise of providing free cooking cylinders and free electricity to farmers using agricultural pumps up to 7.5 horsepower is unlikely to be rolled back as any such move would invite a backlash from the Opposition. And with local bodies' elections around the corner, the Mahayuti would not want to risk displeasing its voters by withdrawing schemes. A senior NCP leader, requesting anonymity, said the proceedings will be smooth. "With our majority mandate, the budget session under Fadnavis will be smooth."

Kolkata, South Bengal to see rise in temperature in next 48 hours



GNS News Agency, March 5

West Bengal is likely to experience a significant rise in temperatures in March with prolonged dry spells and increasing heat predicted in the southern districts, including Kolkata, according to the latest weather update from the India Meteorological Department. The IMD on Saturday stated that there would be an increase of 2-3 degree Celsius in temperatures over the next 48 hours. For Kolkata, the local forecast for the next 24 hours (mid-day) indicates mainly clear skies, while the maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to be around 33°C and 23°C, respectively.

The northern part of the state, though, may see scattered rainfall in its hilly regions, it said. Weather experts say that residents of Gangetic West Bengal should be ready for stable minimum and maximum temperatures over the next five days with the intensity of heat projected to escalate from the beginning of March. "Unfortunately, there is no prospect of rain in South Bengal for the next seven days, indicating a prolonged dry spell," said an officer. Like the rest of South Bengal, Kolkata has no rain forecast, he said. Morning fog is expected in some districts of South Bengal, which may lead to low visibility. However, conditions are expected to normalize after sunrise, he added. In contrast, North Bengal's hilly districts are likely to experience light rainfall. Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Alipurduar may receive light rain on Saturday. Despite the rain, North Bengal districts will also witness an increase of 2-3 degrees in temperature over the next few days.

Goldy Brar's aide held after exchange of fire in Mohali



GNS News Agency, March 5

Gangster Malkiat alias Maxi of the Goldy Brar Gang was arrested by the Mohali police, in a joint operation with the Anti-Gangster Task Force. (File Photo) Gangster Malkiat alias Maxi was arrested by the Mohali police, in a joint operation with the Anti-Gangster Task Force. An alleged member of the Goldy Brar and Goldy Dhillon gangs was arrested in Punjab's Mohali on Saturday after he got injured following a brief exchange of fire with the police.

Gangster Malkiat alias Maxi was arrested by the Mohali police, in a joint operation with the Anti-Gangster Task Force, from near Ghaggar bridge on the Zirakpur-Ambala Highway, the police said, adding that they also recovered a .32 bore pistol from him. Malkiat was in jail following his arrest in another case and was brought on a production warrant when the incident occurred. "In an attempt to flee from the custody, he opened fire on the police team, in self-defence and retaliatory fire by the police team, Maxi sustained a bullet injury in his left leg fire and has been shifted to Civil Hospital, Mohali for medical treatment," Gaurav Yadav, Director General of Police (DGP), Punjab, said on X. He added that Malkiat, a resident of Rodala village in Rajasansi near Amritsar, is involved in an extortion racket led by Brar and Dhillon. In January this year, they allegedly targeted a Mohali-based property dealer and demanded Rs 50 lakh from him as extortion money. Malkiat has a criminal history with extortion cases and cases under the Arms Act registered against him, the police said.

Miscreants fire gunshots in Ambala court complex, none injured



GNS News Agency, March 5

Ambala court complex The preliminary investigation conducted by the police revealed that the miscreants were suspectedly aiming at an accused who had come to the court complex for a hearing in a criminal case. Three miscreants entered the Ambala court complex in Punjab and started indiscriminately firing on Saturday. Nobody sustained injuries in the incident. The preliminary investigation conducted by the police revealed that the miscreants were suspectedly aiming at an accused who had come to the court complex for a hearing in a criminal case. According to eyewitnesses, three young men came to the court complex's entry gate in a black car, got out and opened fire. Three gunshots were fired, creating panic in and around the court complex. The suspects fled from the spot soon after. The Police Control Room was informed about the incident. Teams from the intelligence wing and crime branch (Ambala) reached the court complex and inspected the spot. Two empty bullet shells were seized from the area.

A pushback against online abuse



GNS News Agency, March 5

In Kerala, trolls and abusers may fall silent, at least for the time being, thanks to a recent incident involving a courageous actor in the Malayalam film industry. On January 6, the actor lodged a police complaint against 30 people for allegedly posting derogatory remarks beneath one of her posts on social media. The next day, she filed a complaint against businessman Bobby Chemmanur, calling him the "leader" of "social media hooligans". The actor alleged that he had harassed her with sexual remarks on social media but also off it, during the inaugural function of one of his jewellery stores. After she objected to the remarks and refused to attend the inauguration of other outlets of the Chemmanur Group, she received obscene comments from several accounts. It seemed to her like a targeted attack. The police pressed non-bailable charges against Mr. Chemmanur and arrested him from his tea estate in Wayanad within two days of the actor filing the complaint. The arrest was dramatic. A group of young men claiming to be Mr. Chemmanur's fans attempted to stop the police vehicle, alleging that the businessman was being unfairly targeted, after a local court denied his bail application and sent him to judicial custody for 14 days. The police also arrested a 60-year-old man, who was one of the 30 people who allegedly abused the actor online.

As the probe gathered pace, many of the offensive comments under the complainant's older posts, and in some cases the profiles used to post such comments on her profile, began to disappear. While the Kerala High Court granted bail to Mr. Chemmanur, it made him apologise for his theatrics which involved a reported refusal to sign the bail bond. The actor's decision to legally take on harassers on social media is laudable. Over the last few years, there has

been a growing number of instances of targeted online harassment against women in various fields, especially politicians, journalists, and celebrities. While the worst attacks are invariably launched against opinionated women, sometimes all it takes is the posting of a photograph to attract abuse.

The complainant wrote that cruel comments, sexual innuendos, and a planned campaign by certain social media profiles are enough to take lives these days. Many people, including celebrities facing serious allegations, religious and business groups, and political parties seeking to silence those raising uncomfortable questions, have weaponised online armies to push their detractors into submission. They are known to deploy hundreds and thousands of fake accounts to intimidate their targets and even drive them off social media. Activist Rahul Easwar, who habitually defends on news channels men facing serious allegations of sexual harassment and assault, waded into the issue by questioning the actor's sartorial choices. Accusing him of orchestrating a cybercrime against her to manipulate public opinion and trivialise her complaint, the Malayalam actor then filed a complaint against Mr. Easwar. She argued that his comments would prevent more women in similar situations from lodging complaints.

The high-profile arrest sent out the important message that online bullying will not be tolerated. The swift action taken by the police and the fear that it has possibly created could act as a strong deterrent against online harassment in the future. Women face a particularly violent and sexualised form of abuse online, sometimes even in the form of rape and death threats, which is why the actor's firm stand has been lauded widely. However, some people argue that the arrest of the businessman was an attack on the freedom of expression. This is a wilful and wrongful conflation. The freedom of speech does not translate into a freedom from the consequences of such speech. Freedoms come with reasonable restrictions. It is possible to cause great harm to people without being anywhere close to them physically, and therefore, freedom of speech comes with great responsibility. Only stringent and sustained action against both well-known and faceless online harassers can ensure that the social media sphere is reclaimed as a space for creativity, respectful engagement, and sane debates and reasoning, as it used to be, rather than as one where vituperative modes of interaction hold sway, which is unfortunately the case now.

It's Russian roulette in the skies

Over 70 years ago, Ian Fleming created the fictional character of a secret service agent called James Bond, code named 007, who had the licence to kill. On September 1, 1983, a Korean Airlines jet, flight 007, on a scheduled flight from New York to Seoul via Anchorage, was shot down by a Russian Air Force Sukhoi fighter plane when the Korean flight had deviated from its flight path due to a navigational error. All 246 passengers and 23 crew were killed. One of the passengers was the daughter of Hans Ephraimson-Abt, who began an organisation to aid the victims of air accidents. His initiative resulted in a big push at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to publish rules regarding conflict risk. But this was shot down by Russia and its allies in ICAO.

Cases of misidentification On July 3, 1988, an Iran Air plane, flight 655, was shot down by a United States Navy warship, USS Vincennes, over the Strait of Hormuz. All 290 passengers were killed when the ship's missile brought down the plane which was misidentified to be a fighter plane. During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), U.S. patrolling required civilian aircraft to transmit the Identification Friend or Foe mode code. Apparently, the warship crew identified the Iranian aircraft to be a fighter and orders were issued to shoot it down. On November 22, 2003, a DHL Cargo plane took off from Baghdad for Bahrain. As the flight was making a rapid climb out, a surface to air missile launched by terrorists struck the left wing between the engine and the wing tip. The crew lost all hydraulics and because the fuel tank was full, there were no fuel vapours to explode in the exposed fuel tank. The crew controlled the flight using only differential engine thrust and managed to carry out a safe landing, displaying exceptional skill. This writer had the privilege of attending a special presentation by the crew at the Flight Safety Foundation IASS 2004 seminar at Shanghai, China. On February 27, 2019, just after Balakot, when fighter planes of the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Pakistan Air Force were engaged in a dogfight, an IAF Mi-17 helicopter was shot down by a surface-to-air missile of the IAF's air defence system. Six personnel lost their lives in what was a serious error. Here again, the helicopter was wrongly identified as a foe. On July 17, 2014, a Malaysia Airlines flight, MH17, from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur with 283 passengers and 15 crew, was shot down by Russian-backed forces with a surface-to-air missile while flying over eastern Ukraine. All these examples highlight the issue of misidentification.

Post September 11, 2001, there are specific procedures to be followed in the event of track deviation due to weather, or a failure of navigation signals. Specific radio procedures are implemented for crew to comply with, else air force fighter jets may shoot down a civilian aircraft if perceived to be flying in a suspicious manner. On February 16, 2017, an Indian airline flight, Jet Airways flight 9W 118, with 330 passengers and 15 crew members, from Mumbai to London, was cruising at 36,000 feet. It flew over a few flight information regions without maintaining radio contact with the air traffic control of the region. The plane had not deviated from its assigned track. When it entered German airspace north of Cologne, the German Air Force deployed two of its Eurofighter Typhoons to intercept the Indian plane. Had the Jet Airways crew not responded to the Germans on an emergency frequency, they could have been shot down. India's safety regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), did a cover up terming it as a malfunction of the aircraft's communication system. If it was really a communication failure, the aircraft crew should have been using the necessary transponder code and ground



stations would have known that it was an aircraft facing communication failure. Fighter jets would not have been deployed to intercept it.

Conflict zones, their dangers The case of an Azerbaijani airliner, while on a flight from Baku in Azerbaijan to Grozny, in Russia, on December 25, 2024, but which crashed near the Kazakhstan city of Aktau after being diverted, has been the result of another event where a Russian anti-aircraft defence system may have caused the loss of lives. Of the 67 passengers on board, there were some survivors. For a state to get away with it by just saying 'sorry' does not bring back the precious lives lost. The aircraft had veered from its scheduled route due to fog. There is also the issue of GPS spoofing and false signals or a loss of signals that affect navigation. More than 500 people have lost their lives due to civil airlines being shot down. With growing wars and conflicts, flying over or near conflict zones is becoming dangerous, especially when there are countries which do not respect international borders and there are rogue elements who cause trouble by interfering with GPS signals.

The Indian regulator's silence This brings the focus on a serious issue. Do airlines in India have comprehensive training in place for pilots to recognise jammed signals and do the airlines have standard operating procedures in place for taking over the navigation with alternate methods? There are reports of GPS errors or failures in the airspace over Pakistan, Afghanistan and Myanmar. With a rapid expansion of flights and with large numbers of aircraft being inducted, do airlines in India have enough experienced pilots? For example, Air India operates many of its non-stop flights to the west coast of the United States on routes that are avoided by American carriers. There are also reports of some leased aircraft with Air India not being equipped for extended flights over mountainous terrain. We hear nothing from the DGCA on what preventive measures it is taking in these cases. We have had three passenger aircraft shot down by the Russians or Russian-linked agents. We have had the U.S. Navy shooting down a passenger airliner. We have had a cargo aircraft shot by a terrorist group with missiles supplied by either Russia or the U.S. as conflicts in West Asia have involved one or the other super power aiding sides in the conflicts. The large-scale use of drones and defence forces using missiles to shoot down flights make the skies really unsafe for passenger aircraft while flying over conflict regions. There is another danger. Skill levels have dropped as there is now rapid training which has resulted in degraded monitoring to assess pilot proficiency. The world has to wake up and take cognisance of this new danger. Indian aviation may be expanding rapidly but, at the same time, there is no urgency or compulsion to ensure the quality of pilots' flying skills. As James Reason's Swiss cheese theory explains, the holes in the cheese are lining up.

Krishna water dispute enters crucial phase:

Andhra Pradesh seeks Supreme Court verdict

Hyderabad: The long-standing legal battle over Krishna river water sharing between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh has entered a crucial phase. With the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II) set to hear further terms of reference starting on February 19, Andhra Pradesh has once again approached the Supreme Court for a verdict on the writ petition it filed in November 2023.

The Andhra Pradesh government, which has been opposing the further terms of reference issued by the Centre, has sought a swift Supreme Court verdict before the Tribunal makes any decisions. It has requested the Supreme Court to expedite their plea, stressing the urgency

of the situation.

A division bench comprising Justice Suryakant and Justice Koteswar Singh will take up the hearing on February 13. The bench has directed the Telangana government and the Centre to be prepared with their respective contentions.

Previously, the Supreme Court had declined Andhra Pradesh's request to stay the Tribunal's proceedings. All eyes are now on the upcoming SC hearing and the subsequent Tribunal proceedings as they will play a decisive role in determining the future of water sharing between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Mangaluru bank heist: One of 3 arrested is missing link for 2016 Navi Mumbai robbery

GNS News Agency, March 5

One of the three men arrested from Tamil Nadu this week in connection with a Rs 10-crore cooperative bank heist in Mangaluru, Karnataka, is a missing suspect in a 2016 robbery in Navi Mumbai, sources said. While the key suspect arrested in the January 17 bank robbery in Mangaluru – Murugandi Thevar, 36, has been identified as an accused in the August 2016 robbery at Popular Finance at Seawoods in Navi Mumbai, a second suspect arrested by the Mangaluru police – Yosuva Rajendran, 35, – was linked to the 2016 robbery but not arrested. "Several members of the Mumbai gang involved in the 2016 robbery at the Popular Finance are involved in the Mangaluru robbery," said sources familiar with investigations. Court records from Mumbai for the 2016 armed robbery indicate that 12 people, including Murugandi Thevar, were arrested for the crime. The 12 are currently under trial for offences under the Indian Penal Code sections for dacoity, criminal conspiracy, the Arms Act and the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA). All of them have been released on bail.

However, the court records also indicate that the Maharashtra Police were looking for Yosuva Rajendran alias Prakash as he was suspected to be involved in the 2016 robbery but he remained elusive. "One of the accused Yosuva Pakya @ Prakash is still absconding," the state prosecutor told a special court for MCOCA cases in 2023 during a bail hearing. Thevar who was arrested on February 27, 2018 for the Navi Mumbai robbery was released on bail on September 2, 2021. Thevar drove from Mumbai to Mangaluru after court appearance. On January 15, two days before he was involved in the Mangaluru robbery, Thevar made an appearance in a Mumbai court in connection with the 2016 robbery case, records indicate. Kotekar bank robbery, mangaluru, karnataka news, A CCTV grab of one of the accused at a toll plaza escaping after the crime. After his court appearance in Mumbai, Thevar is alleged to have driven 900 km to Mangaluru in a Fiat car with some of some of the gang members to execute the latest robbery. He is alleged to have changed the original Maharashtra number plate to a fake Karnataka number plate on entering Karnataka. The route of the car and images of the car and its driver captured at toll plazas during the 900 km journey and its subsequent exit from Mangaluru played a significant role in the cracking of the case along with intelligence inputs and technical analysis, sources said.

"We were able to recover the car used for the crime – the Fiat car. It has a Maharashtra registration. The main accused Thevar drove the car from Mumbai to Mangalore and he drove the car back to Tirunelveli," Anupam Agrawal, Mangaluru Police Commissioner, said on January 20 after the arrest of Thevar, Yosuva and a third accused Kannan Mani, 35. "In this case a Mumbai-based gang has been found to be involved. Three persons who are natives of Tamil Nadu and living in Mumbai have been arrested. They have come with some of their associates and committed the robbery. After the robbery they escaped to Tamil Nadu via Kerala," the police commissioner said. Prior to the Navi Mumbai robbery, Thevar was also accused in a 2013 armed robbery case where Rs 30 lakh was allegedly stolen from the accountant of an investment company in Mulund, Mumbai. Thevar was acquitted in this case in June 2016. Within two months of acquittal, he was allegedly involved in the Popular Finance heist. Similar modus operandi in Navi Mumbai, Mangaluru robberies in a similar modus operandi as the latest Mangaluru case, a gang of around six masked men armed with weapons barged into the Popular Finance office in Navi Mumbai around 3 pm on August 6, 2016 and took away 20 kg of gold and Rs 9.5



lakh in cash. They escaped in a white Maruti Swift car that was allegedly driven by Thevar. In the Mangaluru case, a gang of six armed and masked men arrived at the bank at around 1 pm on January 17 and took away an estimated 12 kg of gold and cash valued in the range of Rs 10 crore. The three suspects – Murugandi, Yosuva and Mani – were arrested three days later in Tirunelveli. "Our teams went to Mumbai, and after collecting information went to Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu. Using technological and human intelligence we were able to narrow down to two offenders who were the kingpins of the gang," said commissioner Agrawal. Stolen gold in Mangaluru case effectively recovered Unlike the Navi Mumbai case where the police managed to recover only around 2 kg of stolen gold after the 12 arrests that were spread over five years, the swift investigation of the Karnataka Police has led to the recovery of almost all the gold stolen from the Mangaluru cooperative bank. The investigators in the Popular Finance robbery case recovered the majority of the gold – 1,490 grams – from Muthukumar Cherman Nadar, who initially offered to be a witness but was later found to be an alleged member of the bank robbery gang who received the stolen gold from his gang leader Arputaraj Nadar. Although 2.5 kg of gold was alleged to have been given to Thevar during the distribution of the loot, only around 185 grams of gold was recovered, according to court records. The Mangaluru police commissioner said this week that "two gunny sacks in which they had taken away jewellery" had been recovered. Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Thursday that almost the entire stolen property had been recovered. He also said the police were making efforts to find the others involved in the crime. "There are six people who are suspected to have been directly involved in the robbery. Three have been arrested. Nearly Rs 10 crore to Rs 11 crore of gold and cash was stolen and almost all of it has been recovered," Minister Parameshwara said. Sources said that police were looking at the role of local informants who alerted the gang about the weak security situation at the Kotekar cooperative bank and the amount of gold. In the Popular Finance case of 2016, one of the arrested, Dharmaraj Nadar, is alleged to have tipped the gang about the prospects of robbing the firm. The third accused in the Mangaluru case – Kannan Mani – who was fired at by the Mangaluru police on January 21 when he allegedly tried to flee while being brought to the city – is also reported to have criminal antecedents. The role of a Keralaite is also being investigated in the Mangaluru case, sources said. "They may be involved in other crimes. They are professional bank robbers and it is evident from the way the crime was carried out. But with whose help they have done it is to be investigated," the Mangaluru Police Commissioner said earlier this week.

Mumbai mangroves, flamingo habitat to be restored under Amazon's \$1.2 million project

GNS News Agency, March 5

Amid growing threats to Mumbai's flamingo habitat along Thane Creek, Amazon's Right Now Climate Fund has announced a \$1.2 million investment aimed at restoring mangrove forests and mudflats. The initiative, undertaken in partnership with Hasten Regeneration and guided by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), aims to rehabilitate key feeding sites and remove plastic waste from the creek, ideal for drawing flamingos and other migratory birds into the region. A key aspect of the project is the installation of trash booms to prevent plastic waste from entering the Mumbai basin. These booms will trap non-biodegradable waste, particularly plastic, which will then be collected, segregated, and recycled. The initiative aims to remove at least 100 kg of plastic daily, with a target of 150 tonnes over three years, while improving bird habitats along Thane Creek.

More than one million migratory birds, including flamingos and over 180 other species, rely on these wetlands. However, unchecked plastic waste, human encroachment, and environmental neglect have worsened the habitats, raising concerns among conservationists and local communities. Mangrove restoration is critical for ecological conservation, as these ecosystems store significantly more carbon per hectare than tropical forests. Mumbai's mangroves act as natural barriers against coastal erosion and storm surges while providing essential habitats for wildlife. Amazon India has partnered with Hasten Regeneration, a climate-based solutions organization, and the Srushti Conservation Foundation (SCF) to execute the restoration work. "The preservation of Mumbai's flamingo habitat is paramount, not only for the biodiversity it sustains but



also for the communities whose livelihoods depend on it. By joining forces with Hasten Regeneration on this landmark project, we aim to safeguard Mumbai's flamingo habitat for future generations," said Abhinav Singh, vice-president of Operations, Amazon India.

Hasten Regeneration and SCF have highlighted the urgency of the initiative. "This collaborative effort between Amazon and Hasten Regeneration is a game changer for the Mumbai basin. The project cleans up the polluted banks of Thane Creek, one of the most polluted waterways in the world. We are also creating a positive social impact by employing women to replant mangroves in critical stopover sites for flamingos on their migration route," said Sheeba Sen, co-founder of Hasten Regeneration's India branch. The initiative is part of Amazon's broader conservation efforts in India, where the company has committed USD 15 million from its Right Now Climate Fund to support environmental projects. Similar initiatives have been launched to enhance biodiversity, reforest degraded land, and promote sustainable urban ecosystems.

PCMC adjudged best municipal corporation in Maharashtra in mid-term review of 100-day program

GNS News Agency, March 5

The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) has emerged as the best-performing municipal corporation in Maharashtra in the mid-term review of the state's 100-day programme, an initiative by the Chief Minister to assess the progress of municipal corporations and other field offices across the state. Among the 22 municipal corporations evaluated, six were shortlisted based on their performance and presentations by the Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA). From these, the Principal Secretary, Urban Development-2, selected PCMC and Thane to present their achievements before the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister. Following the final evaluation, PCMC secured the first rank, with Thane in second place. PCMC Commissioner Shekhar Singh said, "PCMC has set a high standard, and we will continue striving for impactful solutions that improve the lives of our citizens. With the final

100-day review scheduled for April, the mid-term evaluation award has increased our responsibility and we are determined to maintain our top position in the end review by addressing existing gaps and ensuring the successful implementation of all planned initiatives to provide good governance to the citizens of the city." The PCMC's success is attributed to its focused efforts in multiple areas, including "digital governance, infrastructure improvements, sanitation, office waste disposal, innovation and public grievance redressal," according to a statement issued by the civic body. A key initiative was the launch of a fully accessible website that complies with the highest accessibility standards, ensuring ease of use for persons with disabilities. The website now provides real-time updates, 100% RTI compliance, and better access to citizen services, enhancing transparency and efficiency. The website has been integrated with Digi-Locker.

Kerala-made mechanical elephants are making their way into temples in South India



GNS News Agency, March 5

For the fifth edition of the Dubai Pooram at the Etisalat Academy Ground in Dubai on December 2, 2024, four elephants were paraded in all their festive regalia. Gently swaying, shaking their heads, flapping their ears and swishing their tails, these jumbos were a sight to watch. One thing, though, these mechanical elephants were made by two Kerala-based companies. Parading elephants in religious processions is a matter of pride for organisers and participants in Kerala. These parades are usually eventless, but of late, attacks by captive elephants, (especially in the first two months of 2025), have caused five deaths in Kerala. Despite protests, elephants are being used in such high stress events, which have noise of fireworks and loudspeakers, milling crowds of people and the mistreatment, which often trigger these attacks. A few temples in Kerala have voluntarily moved to mechanical elephants possibly because rules for parading an elephant in a temple have become strict as a result of the attacks.

Chalaky-based Four He Arts Creations is one of the first companies in Kerala to make these mechanical elephants. The three elephants at the Dubai Pooram were made by them. The four childhood friends — Prashant Prakashan, Santo Jose, Jinesh KM and Robin MR — made their first elephant, Kuttappayi, around 15 years ago. Built over six months, Kuttappayi was six-and-a-half feet tall. By the time Kuttappayi, with his bobbing head and swaying trunk, a swinging tail and flapping ears was ready, it was Santo's sister's wedding. Just for a lark, the friends decided to place Kuttappayi on a stage at the venue. "He became the main attraction of the wedding! People then wanted to rent Kuttappayi for their functions, exhibitions, shop inaugurations etc in and around Chalaky," says Prashant. After that the four friends made motorised dinosaurs, The Jungle Book and The Hulk-themed sculptures, which they do even today. Workers engaged in making of mechanical elephants at Four He Arts Creations in Chalaky. Cut to the present. The rudimentary Kuttappayi is a thing of the past. The friends have graduated to making mechanical elephants to be paraded in temples, be put on show at resorts and other commercial places. So far they have made 46-odd elephants, not only for clients in India, but also Dubai, Singapore, Kenya and the United States. Four of their jumbos are part of a circus in Spain. Not only are these cruelty-free, they are low maintenance and can be rented out.

Prashant and his friends were recently in the news as People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), in association with sitarist Anoushka Shankar, donated the mechanical elephant Kombara Kannan made by Four He Arts Creations, to the Kombara Sreekrishna Swami temple near Irinjalakuda, in Thrissur. Prasant Prakashan, Santo Jose, Jinesh KM and Robin MR with Kombara Kannan So far they have made three elephants for PETA, which the organisation has donated to temples in Kerala. From the road, the semi open-air production unit looks small. But a peek inside reveals a space large enough for a few 'elephants'.

A 'mould' is being readied, while a technician works on the head of an elephant. Its trunk is a series of metal pieces being fine tuned to give it flexibility and a couple of other workers are painting details on a headless 'elephant'. "There are no ready elephants right now. So far we have made elephants for six-odd temples in Kerala itself!" When they started it was just the four of them, now they have more than a dozen workers.

Apart from Four He Art, Anamaker aka Sooraj Nambiatt, in North Paravur, 34 kilometres from Kochi, has also been making mechanical elephants. The day we meet, Sooraj is overseeing work on a 10 foot mechanical jumbo for a temple in Kottayam. Although he had been making sculptures of popular captive elephants since 2007, Sooraj's foray into robotic jumbos is as recent as last year. He has made two elephants for PETA. A worker puts together material that will go on to become a section of the head of a mechanical elephant. At Sooraj's studio, the 10-footer headed for Kottayam, is getting ready. The utsavam season is a hectic time for these elephant makers. Robotic elephants

While Prashant and friends make mechanical el-

phants without venturing into likenesses of captive elephants, Sooraj, a post graduate in Fine Arts from RLV College, Tripunithura, makes elephants in the likeness of captive elephants if the customers so demand. "Customers ask for the face of say Pampady Rajan, elephants have distinct characteristics which people want for these. But of course you can't call these elephant by the name of a living one. We improvise... so we have Robotic Raman," says Sooraj. In 2024, this elephant was the fourth mechanical elephant at the Dubai Pooram, and he was fondly called Dubai Raman. He made a mechanical replica of an elephant which recently died, Arjuna, for a temple in Mysuru.

Prashant says, "We make generic elephants because people are superstitious about making sculptures of things/people who are still living." Four He Arts Creations got its first order for the Dubai Pooram in 2018 thanks to a video of Kuttappayi the organisers saw online.

Although the Dubai Pooram order for three elephants was placed in 2018-19, the elephants were eventually ready in December 2020. The three elephants were paraded at the Pooram that year. The Dubai Pooram is the Dubai-version of the famed Thrissur Pooram. "These electricity-powered elephants are made of fibre and are usually shipped internationally in containers. The elephant is 'cut' into four segments — the head, the body, front legs and hind legs. They are then assembled at the destination. For instance, we went to Dubai for the purpose, but could not go to either Tampa in the US or to Spain because we did not get our visas in time," says Prashant. He did however go to Kenya to do a study on an African elephant for one they are making for a temple there. Sooraj Nambiatt of Anamaker with one of his elephant sculptures. While the eight foot elephants weigh under 300 kilograms, the 10-footers weigh under 500 kilograms. The prices for these range from ₹3.5 lakh to ₹5 lakh (at Four He Arts Creations and Anamaker). The rates are fixed depending on the movement of body parts — the head, the eyes, flapping of ears, the trunk (swaying/spraying water), tail, and limbs — these can be customised. A motorised elephant with all features is the most expensive. The detailing on the elephants, right down to the eyelashes and hair on the tail is stunning. These can bear the weight of up to four people sitting on them. These are mounted on wheelbases for ease of movement. Kombara Kannan's journey about to start from the workshop to Kombara Sreekrishna Swami temple. "We can even build one entirely of rubber, but that would cost around ₹7 lakh. It would feel very natural!" says Santo.

Made of fibre, mesh, rubber, foam and metal, it can take anywhere from a month to 45 days to build a motor-powered jumbo. Work first starts with making an elephant-shaped frame of steel square pipes and iron rods which is then covered with cement over which the fibre is poured and set. Once it sets, the mould is broken, the markings made on the body, smoothed and finished with the head being attached. "Since these elephants were not manufactured here, we have had to experiment with materials and processes. Most of what we use is now locally sourced except the electrical/mechanical components which are bought online," says Santo. Even now they continue to experiment with material. While the body is made of fibre, the ears are made of 'rubber fabric' that resembles a hide. While Santo and Jinesh work at Apollo Tyres, Chalaky, Prashant and Robin work full time at Four He Arts Creations.

Captive elephants in Kerala have a dedicated fan following. Elephant lovers or anapremis are a force to reckon with when it comes to the popularity of the elephants paraded in temples. Some of the popular 'stars' have run amok and attacked people during these festivals. Mechanical elephants are seen as diluting tradition; the makers have been getting a backlash. "We are not forcing temples to buy elephants from us. They are coming to us for these," says Prashant. Interestingly Prashant and Sooraj have customers from outside Kerala, especially North India. The Kombara temple has not used a live elephant for its temple procession since 2015 due to the cost and the suffering of captive elephants. Ravi Namboothiri, the temple president, says of accepting the mechanical elephant, "In honour of our decision to never hire or own an elephant for our rituals and festivals, we are absolutely thrilled to accept a mechanical elephant [from PETA]. All of God's creations deserve love and respect!" Sooraj says, "Maybe it is time we moved on to mechanical elephants. The treatment meted out to them is not the best. Elephants may have plenty of fans, but they are not treated like pets. They might be fed on time and bathed, and taken care of but are these elephants treated well? I have seen the dark side of this." Once upon a time, he adds, there were 1,000-odd captive elephants in Kerala, many of whom were paraded in temples, he adds, "but today there are barely 200 or so left, and most of these are more than 50 years old. How long can [real] elephants be paraded anyway?"

Tuhin Kanta Pandey | The calm bureaucrat



GNS News Agency, March 5

Anyone who knows the incoming Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) chairman, either as a reporter or as a former colleague, inevitably recall his calm demeanour and commitment to work. For Saroj Sarangi, now retired as the medical officer of the Jagatsinghpur district of Odisha, the news of Tuhin Kanta Pandey's appointment as the next SEBI chief was of much joy. He told The Hindu about the appointment bringing immense value considering his efficiency and fluid expertise in dealing with public matters. The 1987 batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Odisha cadre succeeds Madhabi Puri Buch. While Ms. Buch brought in her experience from the corporate world to the regulator's office, she also faced conflict of interest allegations in the conduct of a SEBI investigation against the Adani Group for stock price manipulations.

In contrast, Mr. Pandey borrows from a near four-decade career in public administration that had him serving as a district collector and magistrate of Odisha's Sambalpur district to being recently made Revenue Secretary in addition to his position as Finance Secretary. However, his most notable run was at the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM). During his five-year stint there, he oversaw the privatisation of then struggling national carrier Air India and the IPO of the state-insurer Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). Mr. Pandey's five-year tenure at DIPAM is the longest of any secretary at the department since its formation in 1999. He was a student of Economics at the Panjab University (Chandigarh). He went on to attend the University of Birmingham for his MBA. Odisha to Delhi and back, again. In his four-decade long career, Mr. Pandey has moved back and forth between Delhi and Odisha — each time holding crucial social and economic departments. Early in his career, Mr. Pandey worked as the executive director of the Odisha State Finance Corporation (OSFC) and managing director of Odisha Small Industries Corporation (OSIC). This was before he took charge of Sambalpur district. He then moved from Odisha on central deputation to New Delhi, as the Deputy Secretary at the Department of Commerce and later to the regional office of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO). Later, on his return to the Odisha

cadre, he worked with the State's transport, health and commercial taxes departments. Mr. Pandey took over as the Principal Secretary of Odisha's Finance Department in 2016.

Retired IAS officer Pradeep Biswal, and Mr. Pandey's former colleague, recalled in an article for 'Odisha+' about him being considered an "honest, upright and decisive administrator", and a "very polite and affectionate person". Recalling his appointment as the commissioner of commercial taxes in Odisha, Mr. Biswal wrote that the "workhorse" (Mr. Pandey) started his job "most sincerely and efficiently". "He did not go for frequent field visits like his predecessors and confined himself to his office," Mr. Biswal said, adding, "He was a reformist who tried to amend the archaic provisions in the acts and rules to fit the requirements of his time". Mr. Sarangi, the retired medical officer of Jagatsinghpur district, termed Mr. Pandey's conduct as that of a "gentleman". Creating value and privatisation The sale of Air India and the entry of LIC into the bourses continue to be among the major highlights of his career. Air India's sale was the first in Prime Minister Narendra Modi government's privatisation efforts. The national carrier was back then making losses of ₹20 crore a day. Mr. Pandey had underlined at an industry event last year that it was important for well-managed companies to get listed to accelerate growth. Pointing to the economy projected to continue growing over a longer period of time, Mr. Pandey explained, "This will mean that it will require both the capital markets and national markets doing all they can in order to achieve this growth."

Mr. Pandey also focused on raising returns from Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) by increasing their accountability. This was amidst slowing privatisation in the past few years. On generating better returns, he had said in February last year that the combined market capitalisation of CPSEs, banks and insurance companies had grown six times in the preceding three years to ₹58 lakh crore. The Central government's equity holding had risen four times to ₹38 lakh crore. "There has been huge value creation in PSEs which has been due to robust performance, growth prospects, capital restructuring, consistent dividend policy as well as a calibrated disinvestment strategy, amid a positive Indian economy context," he added.

Starting in turbulent times Mr. Pandey would be commencing his tenure as the chief of the markets regulator mired in a bearish setting as foreign institutional investors (FIIs) continue to withdraw their money from India's markets. At a post-budget press conference, Mr. Pandey, as the finance secretary had argued that FIIs were not hopping from one emerging market to another. He said whenever there was global uncertainty, "they were ready to go back to the U.S., where they belong." Acknowledging the existence of demand-supply issues that needed to be filled, he dismissed them as temporary and reassured that the Indian economy was resilient.

PCMC adjudged best municipal corporation in Maharashtra in mid-term review of 100-day program

GNS News Agency, March 5

The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) has emerged as the best-performing municipal corporation in Maharashtra in the mid-term review of the state's 100-day programme, an initiative by the Chief Minister to assess the progress of municipal corporations and other field offices across the state.

Among the 22 municipal corporations evaluated, six were shortlisted based on their performance and presentations by the Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA). From these, the Principal Secretary, Urban Development-2, selected PCMC and Thane to present their achievements before the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister. Following the final evaluation, PCMC secured the first rank, with Thane in second place.

PCMC Commissioner Shekhar Singh said, "PCMC has set a high standard, and we will continue striving for impactful solutions that improve the lives of our citizens. With the final 100-day review scheduled for April, the mid-term evaluation award has increased our responsibility and we are determined to maintain our top position in the end review by addressing existing gaps and ensuring the successful implementation of all planned initiatives to provide good governance to the citizens of the city." The PCMC's success is attributed to its focused efforts in multiple areas, including "digital governance, infrastructure improvements, sanitation, office waste disposal, innovation and public grievance redressal," according to a statement issued by the civic body.

A key initiative was the launch of a fully accessible website that complies with the highest accessibility standards, ensuring ease of use for persons with disabilities. The website now provides real-time updates, 100% RTI compliance, and better access to citizen services, enhancing transparency and efficiency. The website has been integrated with Digi-Locker, Aaple Sarkar Portal and IGR Website to provide integrated services. Traffic management was another priority, with PCMC identifying 25 key junctions where congestion was a major issue. Of these, nine junctions, including Mukai Chowk, were improved, using "a data-driven approach involving traffic simulations and PCU analysis". Engineering measures such as "dedicated turning lanes, speed-calming features, and non-engineering measures such as bus stop and DP relocations are being introduced to improve vehicular movement and pedestrian safety," officials said. Sanitation and public hygiene will also see major advancements, with PCMC focusing on the development of model toilets at seven major city entry points, including Nashik Phata, Mukai Chowk, and Pimpri Main Market. These facilities will be equipped with disabled-friendly features, 24x7 surveillance, sanitary pad dispensers, and caretaker staff training, ensuring better hygiene standards.

Additionally, the corporation worked on disposing of old condemned office waste, including the disposal of outdated heavy vehicles and heavy machinery, generating revenue while streamlining waste collection processes.

The PCMC also strengthened public grievance redressal mechanisms by enhancing platforms such as Lokshahi Din and Jansamvad and linking them to a common complaint ticketing mechanism. The introduction of AI-based grievance management has helped in better categorization, prioritization, and resolution of complaints, reducing response time to an average of 15.7 days.

With 100% compliance on grievance redressal portals, the city has set a benchmark in citizen engagement, the release stated. The AI-based grievance data analysis of more than 3.5 lakh grievances on Smart Sarthi Platform in the past five years is helping in predictive analysis to



move from a reactive governance to an intelligently active governance where data insights will be driving structured long-term action rather than just firefighting. Citizens are being given the facility for automatic department selection and automatic location coordinates while lodging their complaints based on the complaint's content to reduce the problem of reallocation of complaints from one department to another due to the wrong selection of the concerned department and location by the citizen. This will reduce reallocation and decrease complaint disposal time.

Access to clean drinking water and sanitation was another focus area. PCMC is ensuring the installation of drinking water facilities across offices, schools, and hospitals, while also enforcing strict hygiene maintenance protocols for 152 office toilets, including mandatory cleaning and frequent inspections.

Government offices and public spaces are being modernised with the development of waiting areas, queue management systems, and Braille-enabled signage. These initiatives aim to improve accessibility and streamline public service delivery. Technology has played a crucial role in PCMC's governance improvements. The corporation has introduced AI-driven illegal hoarding detection to curb unauthorised advertisements and enhance revenue collection. Additionally, predictive analytics for grievance redressal has enabled better complaint tracking and faster response times. GIS-based property tax reforms through drone mapping have also been instrumental, helping the PCMC identify 2.53 lakh unassessed properties, leading to an annual revenue increase of Rs 350 crore. Additionally, the newly launched City Hub for Data and Communication (CHDC) intends to leverage the power of Data Driven Decision (D3) making across eight departments — property tax, medical, education, building permission, water tax, environment, etc, using new age tools of AI and ML. Additionally GIS-ERP system of PCMC is being integrated with the Centre's Gati-Shakti portal to ensure automatic dynamic updation of the infrastructure development on the GIS portal and Gati Shakti portal for better future Infra planning, the administration said.

The Udyog Sarathi initiative was strengthened to provide a single-window system for industrial grievance redressal, improving coordination between businesses and the administration. Additionally, 402 CCTV cameras were installed in industrial zones to improve security and enhance monitoring.

The review, held in Mumbai on February 27, was chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, in the presence of Chief Secretary Sujata Saunik and other senior state and field-level bureaucrats, officials said. The final evaluation in April will be based on a third-party independent audit, which will assess on-ground implementation across all focus areas. With the government laying strong emphasis on the 100-days programme, the PCMC is now focused on further accelerating its efforts to retain the top position in the end-term review.

Father of Maharashtra girl in coma in the US gets visa to visit daughter

GNS News Agency, March 5

neelam shinde, us visa, hit and run, Neelam, 35, met with an accident after her bike was hit by a vehicle on February 14, and was admitted to a hospital with serious injuries to her head, hands, legs, and chest. Father of a student from Maharashtra's Satara district, who is in a coma in the United States of America after a road accident, on Friday got an emergency visa to visit his daughter and is all set to take flight soon. "The US Consulate has granted a visa to Tanaji Shinde, father of Neelam, who is hospitalised in California. He along with nephew will fly soon," said Sanjay Kadam, uncle of Neelam. The family of 35-year old Neelam was struggling to get an appointment for a visa at the US Consulate for the last ten days after they were informed about the accident on February 16. Family members and friends reached out to the Union and state government via Union minister Murlidhar Mohol, NCP(SP) MP Supriya Sule and few others asking them for help in getting Neelam's father a visa. The US Consulate on information from the Indian and state government gave a special visa appointment for Tanaji Shinde. "I am thankful to the union and state government. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis also helped us for visa appointment. Now, I want to rush to meet my daughter and focus on her recovery," said Tanaji Shinde. Union minister of state for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol said, "I am very glad that the father of the Maharashtra girl hospitalised in the US has got a visa. Thanks to the Union External Affairs ministry and chief minister Devendra Fadnavis for personally looking into the matter."

He said the family had approached him during his Janta darbar and their case was immediately forwarded to the concerned office. "We have also reached to Maharashtra citizens in California to provide all possible help to Neelam and her family members during the tough time. Neelam is



associated with National Aeronautical Space Agency (NASA). We wish her a fast recovery," said Mohol. Sule tweeted, "Grateful for the swift help in securing a visa for Tanaji Shinde, enabling him to be with his hospitalised daughter, Neelam Shinde, in the U.S. during this critical time. Thank you to union external affairs minister Dr S Jaishankar, US Consulate for your prompt help."

Neelam, 35, met with an accident after her bike was hit by a vehicle on February 14, and was admitted to a hospital with serious injuries to her head, hands, legs, and chest. According to her family, they were told about her accident on February 16 by her roommates, and they have been trying to get an emergency visa for her father since then. She had to undergo immediate surgery for which the hospital sought consent through an e-mail and asked the family members to come to the United States. According to her family, Neelam went to California for her five-year Master of Science course, and is in her final year. Neelam's family lives in Vadaqan near Umraj in Satara, and her father stays with her uncle after her mother passed away last year due to illness. Her brother works with a financial firm in Pune.

Kurdish PKK militia declares ceasefire, heeding jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan's call



GNS News Agency, March 5

"The outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militia declared an immediate ceasefire a news agency affiliated with the group said, heeding jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan's call for disarmament, in a major step toward ending a 40-year insurgency against the Turkish state. Ocalan on Thursday (February 27, 2025) called on the PKK to lay down its arms and dissolve, a move that President Tayyip Erdogan's government and the opposition pro-Kurdish DEM party have voiced support for. If successful, the move could have wide-ranging implications for the region, while ending a conflict that has killed more than 40,000 people since the PKK, now based in the mountains of northern Iraq, launched its armed insurgency in 1984. The group said in a statement it hoped

Ankara would release Ocalan, held in near total isolation since 1999, so he can lead a process of disarmament, adding that the necessary political and democratic conditions need to be established for the process to succeed. "We, as the PKK, fully agree with the content of the call and state that, from our front, we will heed the necessities of the call and implement it," the group said, according to the Firat news agency.

"Beyond this, issues such as laying down arms being put into practice can only be realised under the practical leadership of Leader Apo," the group said, using its nickname for Ocalan, adding it would halt all hostilities immediately unless attacked. The DEM party urged the government on Friday (February 28, 2025) to take steps towards democratisation, saying its response was critical. The government has said it would not negotiate with the PKK and that all Kurdish militias, including in Iraq and Syria, must lay down their weapons. While welcoming Ocalan's appeal as positive, the U.S.-allied Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which Ankara deems an extension of the PKK, has said it did not apply to them. Ankara has repeatedly called on the SDF's armed wing to disarm since the fall of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad last year, warning that it would face military action otherwise. Ocalan's call, prompted by a surprise proposal in October from an ultra-nationalist ally of Erdogan, has been welcomed by the United States, the European Union and other Western allies, as well as by Turkey's neighbours Iraq and Iran.

Ending Russia's war in Ukraine 'can't be peace that rewards aggressor', U.K.'s Starmer says after talks with President Trump

GNS News Agency, March 5

President Donald Trump said Thursday (February 27, 2025) that talks to end Russia's invasion of Ukraine are "very well advanced" but cautioned that there is only a narrow window to get a deal done to end the grinding war. Mr. Trump made the comments as he hosted Prime Minister Keir Starmer at the White House for talks in which the British premier made his case that American leadership would be critical to maintaining the peace in Ukraine should the three-year war end. Mr. Trump also expressed confidence that Russian President Vladimir Putin won't press to restart the war if a truce can be reached. "I think he'll keep his word," Mr. Trump said of Mr. Putin. "I've spoken to him. I've known him for a long time now, we had to go through the Russian hoax together."

The mention of "Russia hoax" is a reference to the FBI and Justice Department special counsel investigation that examined whether Mr. Trump's 2016 presidential campaign illegally coordinated with Russia to sway the outcome of the U.S. election. Special counsel Robert Mueller found that although the Trump campaign welcomed Russia's help in the form of the release of hacked emails stolen from Democrats, there was insufficient evidence to prove that the campaign had colluded with Moscow. Mr. Starmer's trip, coming a few days after French President Emmanuel Macron's own visit to Mr. Trump, reflects the mounting concern felt by much of Europe that Mr. Trump's aggressive push to find an end to the war signals his willingness to concede too much to Putin. Mr. Trump's rapprochement with Russia has unsettled America's historic allies in Europe. They have found themselves on their heels with Mr. Trump returning to the White House with a determination to dramatically make over U.S. foreign policy to correspond with his "America First" world view. The Trump administration held talks last week with Russia without Ukrainian or other European allies represented. And this week, the U.S. refused to sign on to resolutions at the United Nations blaming Russia for the war, which began three years ago when Moscow invaded. The drifting White House view of Ukraine under Mr. Trump is leading to a tectonic shift in transatlantic relations. Mr. Starmer, on Thursday (February 27, 2025), following private talks with Mr. Trump, applauded his push to end Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but said that "it can't be peace that rewards the aggressor." "History must be on the side of the peacemaker, not the invader," Mr. Starmer told reporters, with Mr. Trump by his side.

The White House is pushing back on the notion that Mr. Trump is ignoring Europe or is too eager in his push for settlement talks with Mr. Putin. "He hasn't conceded anything to anyone," Vice President J.D. Vance said. "He's doing the job of a diplomat." At a White House meeting Friday (February 28, 2025), Mr. Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy are expected to sign off on a contentious agreement that would give the U.S. access to Ukraine's critical minerals, which are used in the aerospace, defense and nuclear industries. Mr. Zelenskyy had chafed at a deal without specific security guarantees from Washington. Mr. Trump was noncommittal about any com-



ing American security guarantees and underscored that Russia would think twice about attacking Ukraine should the U.S. build an economic footprint in Ukraine to extract critical minerals. "We are a backstop because we'll be over there, we'll be working in the country," Mr. Trump said. But Mr. Trump also offered a measure of caution, suggesting that a deal might be at hand but the window to complete it is narrow. "If it doesn't happen quickly, it may not happen at all," Mr. Trump warned. If a truce can be reached, Mr. Starmer and Mr. Macron have agreed to send troops for a potential peacekeeping mission to Ukraine to ensure that fighting between Ukraine and Russia doesn't flare up again. But White House officials are skeptical that Britain and France can assemble enough troops from across Europe, at least at this moment, to deploy a credible peacekeeping mission to Kyiv. Mr. Zelenskyy, while en route to Washington, met on Thursday (February 27, 2025) with Ireland's Prime Minister, Micheál Martin, who said he told Mr. Zelenskyy that Ireland is open to helping, including sending peacekeepers to Ukraine.

Mr. Zelenskyy and European officials have no illusions about U.S. troops taking part in such a mission. But Mr. Starmer and others are trying to make the case that the plan can only work with a U.S. backstop for European forces on the ground — through U.S. aerial intelligence, surveillance and support, as well as rapid-response cover in case of breaches of a truce. Mr. Trump is also looking at the moment as an opportunity to potentially reopen economic relations with Russia after three years of U.S.-led sanctions to punish Moscow for the invasion. Mr. Starmer is hosting a Sunday (March 2, 2025) meeting in the United Kingdom of international leaders that will focus on Ukraine, and Mr. Zelenskyy is expected to attend. The Prime Minister also announced plans this week for the U.K. to bolster defence spending, something that should sit well with Mr. Trump, who has been critical that European allies are spending too little on defense. Mr. Starmer's government will increase military spending to 2.5% of gross domestic product by 2027, years earlier than expected, and aim to reach 3% by 2035. Beyond the war in Ukraine, Mr. Starmer said the talks would home in on "a stable economy, secure borders and national security," as well as cooperation on AI and other cutting-edge technology. He would stress that Europe must "play its part on global defense and step up for the good of collective European security."

Olive Ridley turtle population growing 'steadily': report

GNS News Agency, March 5

A 16-year-long assessment of trends in turtle populations in India says the numbers of the Olive Ridley species suggest a "steady or growing" population. However, rising sand temperatures due to climate change are causing a large proportion of these turtles to be females "raising questions" on the long-term viability of the population. The report, spanning studies from 2008 to 2024, has been prepared by the Dakshin Foundation and is a long-term monitoring project carried out in partnership with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, and several State forest departments. It provides important information about population trends, threats, and conservation along India's mainland and island coasts. Along with the Olive Ridley, the most populous of marine turtles, the study encompasses other species of sea turtles found in the Indian territory such as the leatherback turtles of Andaman and Nicobar islands and the green turtles of the Lakshadweep islands.

Sea turtles are long-lived, late-maturing, and highly migratory species. Any changes in their populations occur over years or decades, making long-term monitoring essential for understanding population trends and environmental impacts. A striking natural phenomenon that evokes considerable public interest is the 'arribada' or mass nesting of the Olive Ridley turtle, when tens or hundreds of thousands of female turtles come ashore to nest simultaneously. Gahirmatha and Rushikulya in Odisha are two of the larg-

est 'rookeries' or nesting grounds worldwide, with other similar sized ones found only in Mexico and Costa Rica. This month, Rushikulya witnessed one of the largest arribadas in recent years, with 400,000 to 500,000 turtles nesting in a span of just a few days. Some sections of the beach were so tightly occupied by the turtles that there was barely any room to walk.

"The overall trend from nearly two decades of monitoring is that the Ridley population is stable or increasing. The fact that arribadas don't occur in some years is puzzling as our offshore monitoring indicates that there are large numbers of turtles in the water. However, it may not be a cause for immediate alarm. Nevertheless, we must remain wary of threats to both coastal and oceanic habitats," Professor Karthik Shankar, who led the study and is associated with the Dakshin Foundation and the IISc, said in a statement. Since the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, leatherback turtle nesting has steadily increased in Little Andaman Island. Telemetry studies, which analyse their migratory patterns, show that from 2011-2014, these turtles travelled as far west as Madagascar and Mozambique, while others headed as far east as Western Australia. In the Lakshadweep, an expanding green turtle population has brought about unexpected ecological changes, especially in the seagrass meadows, which are currently being overgrazed. Turtle populations continued to face threats from causes such as coastal development, pollution and climate change.

When I sit in a dugout in front of 20,000 people... you kind of have to pinch yourself: Mumbai Indians head coach Charlotte Edwards

GNS News Agency, March 5

She has an English T20 tournament named after her. After establishing herself as one of the all-time greats of women's cricket, Charlotte Edwards took to coaching with the same passion that drove her to make 10,273 international runs. She broke the record for the highest ODI score in women's cricket as a 17-year-old. More than a decade later, she led England to two World Cup triumphs in the same year! She guided Mumbai Indians to victory in the inaugural WPL. She is also the coach of Sydney Sixers, Southern Brave and Hampshire. Edwards spoke to The Hindu during the first leg of the WPL's third season at Vadodra. Excerpts:

How do you find your journey with Mumbai Indians in the WPL?

I absolutely love it. It has been one of the real highlights of my career in terms of playing and coaching. We always hoped there would be a WPL. Then to be part of that first edition with Mumbai Indians, it is what dreams are made of really. It was great to go through an auction for the first time, and then to get that team together within a short amount of time. What I am really pleased about is the way the Indian uncapped players have used their opportunity. The way Saika Ishaque played for us in the WPL's first season and then going on to play for India, and S. Sajana hitting that six first ball in the second season. Now these are life-changing moments for these people. When I sit in a dugout in front of 20,000 people in the night, here, or Bengaluru last year or before that in Mumbai, these are special moments. It has been fantastic, you kind of have to pinch yourself. When they were rivals: Edwards relished her battles with 'unbelievable bowler' Jhulan Goswami. 'I feel very fortunate now to work with her [at Mumbai Indians] and, you know, call her my friend,' she says. | Photo credit: Sandeep Saxena When they were rivals: Edwards relished her battles with 'unbelievable bowler' Jhulan Goswami. 'I feel very fortunate now to work with her [at Mumbai Indians] and, you know, call her my friend,' she says. | Photo credit: Sandeep Saxena

What made you join Mumbai Indians?

I don't think you can't accept an offer from Mumbai Indians. You know, it was the one franchise that I wanted to be part of. When I think about the IPL, I think of the success Mumbai has had over the years.

Were you approached by some other franchises as well?

Clearly, there was a lot of interest around that time. But Mumbai showed their interest pretty early. Things moved pretty quickly.

We are seeing a lot of teenagers making their debut at the WPL. And some of them are getting big money, too. The WPL has changed the girls' lives in India. It certainly is exciting. We are going to hopefully do even more over the next few years, because the game is only going to get bigger. Coach's dream: Nat Sciver-Brunt's humility and work ethic make her a joy to train with, says Edwards. | Photo credit: Mumbai Indians Coach's dream: Nat Sciver-Brunt's humility and work ethic make her a joy to train with, says Edwards. | Photo credit: Mumbai Indians Women's cricket probably didn't seem like it was going to be big when you started out... I had to work alongside playing. All the players in the England team were amateurs. When I made my debut in 1996, I paid for my own blazer. The game transformed massively over the last five years or so. When I was playing ten years ago, you know, the game was moving. I was a professional cricketer back then. I think there were just 15 professionals in England at that time. It has been extraordinary really to see the rise of the game. There wasn't much of women's cricket when I began. I just loved the game and played with boys. Then, thankfully I found some women's cricket and then my rise to the top and playing for England happened very quickly. And before long, you hit that 173 not out against Ireland in the 1997 World Cup at Pune. It was a hot day. And I managed to score my highest interna-

Trump, Putin and the Ukraine war: A high-stakes power play

GNS News Agency, March 5

United States President Donald Trump has never been one to shy away from grand declarations, but his latest pledge — to end the Russia-Ukraine war within 100 days if re-elected — ignited a firestorm of controversy. His dramatic clash with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office at the White House has further escalated tensions, setting off a diplomatic earthquake with global repercussions. In an extraordinary turn of events, what was expected to be a high-profile meeting between Mr. Trump and Mr. Zelenskyy ended in a spectacular breakdown. Mr. Trump reportedly told Mr. Zelenskyy to be "thankful" for American support, accusing him of "gambling with World War Three." The atmosphere turned so hostile that a planned joint press conference was abruptly scrapped, and Mr. Zelenskyy was asked to leave the White House.

The fallout was immediate. Mr. Trump later remarked that Mr. Zelenskyy "can come back when he is ready for peace", while the Ukrainian leader took to social media, rallying support from European allies. Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, among other western leaders, reaffirmed unwavering support for Kyiv, making it clear that Ukraine's fight for sovereignty is non-negotiable. The dramatic breakdown of talks raises a critical question: Is Mr. Trump's promise of peace a bold diplomatic manoeuvre? Or is it a reckless gamble that could alter the global order in ways that the world is not ready for?

For more than two years, Ukraine has endured a brutal invasion that has devastated its cities, displaced the country's millions and rewritten Europe's security calculus. While Mr. Trump's assertion that the war can be resolved within 100 days sounds appealing, it is grounded more in political rhetoric than diplomatic reality. From a military standpoint, Ukraine's resistance has been formidable, but Russia remains deeply entrenched in occupied territories. Moscow continues to wield military and economic resources to sustain its war effort, despite staggering human losses — over 4,30,000 casualties among Russian troops, according to western intelligence reports. Mr. Trump's previous claim — "I could end the war in 24 hours" — has only reinforced concerns that his approach is dangerously simplistic. Even his closest advisers have been vague on specifics. A retired lieutenant general, Keith Kellogg, a key Trump foreign policy aide, recently reiterated the 100-day timeline but failed to outline how exactly such a feat would be achieved. Would Mr. Trump pressure Ukraine into territorial concessions? Would he engage in a behind-the-scenes bar-



tional score at the tender age of 17.

What are your earliest memories of cricket?

Playing in the back garden with my brother, watching my dad play on a Saturday afternoon. You know, that was cricket for me. And now, I am sitting in a dugout in India in the best competition in the world. Bygone era: The women's game was very different when Edwards arrived on the scene in 1996. 'All the players in the England team were amateurs,' she says. 'It has been extraordinary really to see the rise of the game.' Bygone era: The women's game was very different when Edwards arrived on the scene in 1996. 'All the players in the England team were amateurs,' she says. 'It has been extraordinary really to see the rise of the game.' India is a special place for me. I really enjoyed playing here as a player. And I loved travelling around the country as a player. Now I get to do it all again as a coach.

The best Indians that you have played against?

Jhulan Goswami. She was an unbelievable bowler and someone I had a lot of good contests with over the years. And I really enjoyed that. I feel very fortunate now to work with her [as the bowling coach at Mumbai Indians] and get to know her, and, you know, call her my friend.

As for the batters, there have been Mithali Raj and Harmanpreet Kaur [now the captain at MI]. Smriti Mandhana just came in before I finished, but once I saw her play, I was like, wow, this girl is going to be so good. I enjoy watching her bat. And Yastika Bhatia is not far behind. I also like to watch Ellyse Perry, Beth Mooney and Phoebe Litchfield. You also played with some brilliant players in the England team, such as the two Taylors, Claire and Sarah... Claire Taylor was definitely one of the best I have played with. Sarah was the most talented player, without a doubt. Some of the things she could do as a keeper was unbelievable and she has played some of the best innings I have seen. I was very fortunate to play with some great players back in the day and now I get to coach some of the great players, which is even better. You have played with and coached Nat Sciver-Brunt, who some consider the best female cricketer in the world.

She is just an unbelievable player, but also a great person, a very humble person. We have had a great time with her at MI. Even when I first saw her, she had an unbelievable work ethic. So it is no surprise to me that she has gone on and done great things in the game and will continue to do great things. I think people haven't quite given her the credit for her bowling. Best in the world: As England captain, Edwards won two World Cup titles, across different formats, in 2009. [You were the captain of England for 10 years. Winning those two World Cups in 2009 must have been special... It will always be special. To win the 50-over World Cup in Australia and then to win in the T20 back at home at Lords — probably no better venue to do it. Those were very special months really for us as a side. To be the captain of that team... those were some fantastic moments.

What is the state of the women's game back home now?

Really positive. We have gone to a county structure now. There are eight professional county teams, with another 10 professional teams in Tier 2. And The Hundred has been great for women's cricket, attracting family crowds.

India needs accelerated reforms to reach high income status by 2047: World Bank report



India must accelerate reforms to achieve high income status by 2047, which would require an average annual growth rate of 7.8 per cent, the World Bank's new India Country Economic Memorandum said Friday. The report called for a shift from "business as usual" to "accelerated reforms", by focusing on productivity growth, reviving and sustaining investment, creating quality jobs, and strengthening growth fundamentals in low income states.

Very few countries have made the transition from middle to high income economies in less than 20 years, while more, including Brazil, Mexico, and Turkey, have remained "trapped" in the upper middle income group, the report said. "If you look at countries that became upper middle income in the past three decades, only a handful managed to graduate to high income. These include Chile, Romania, Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia. A large group never managed to make that leap. So, what does that mean for India? Reaching very ambitious goals requires equally ambitious reforms and relentless implementation capabilities," Aurelien Kruse, World Bank's lead economist in India, said.

For India to become a high income economy by 2047, gross national income (GNI) per capita would have to increase by nearly eight times from \$2,540 in 2023, the report estimated. In 2023, countries with GNI per capita above \$14,005 were high income, whereas those between \$4,516 to \$14,005 were upper middle income, according to the World Bank's classification method. "To meet this target, given the less conducive external environment, India would need to not only maintain ongoing initiatives but in fact expand and intensify reforms," the report said. In a business as usual scenario, investment will peak at 37 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2035 and growth will average at 6.6 per cent each year. With accelerated reforms, on the other hand, the share of investment in GDP will reach 40 per cent by 2035 and the economy will grow at 7.8 per

cent, the report said. The rate of gross capital formation to GDP was 31.4 per cent in 2023-24 at current prices. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) on Friday revised the real GDP growth rate for 2023-24 to 9.2 per cent and has estimated growth in 2024-25 at 6.5 per cent.

The report called for further financial sector reforms to ensure efficient credit allocation and minimize risks, including deepening the corporate bond market and facilitating greater access to credit for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). It also stressed targeting greater public investments in sectors that crowd-in private investments, like agriculture and allied activities, urban development, and transport. Auguste Tano Kouamé, World Bank's country director for India, said more reforms are needed to boost private investment. "The reforms that have been made till now are very good. They've helped achieve a lot. But they're clearly not enough," Kouamé said. The report said that lowering tariffs and addressing barriers to trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) would further drive economic growth. Opening up the economy to imports to integrate into global value chains (GVCs) would also lead to productivity gains and increase in exports, it said. "Some segments of the economy are characterized by significant market concentration and a relatively large state presence, which is likely to discourage market entry," the report added, referring to sectors such as petroleum, computer and communications equipment, and cement. For good quality jobs, the report recommended targeting stronger growth in labor-intensive sectors and scaling up MSMEs.

"Traditional market services and intermediate manufacturing have a high capacity to absorb less-educated workers and strong backward linkages with downstream manufacturing units," it said. Traditional market services include hospitality, commercial trade and communications, and can benefit from better road and power infrastructure and lower barriers to the entry of new firms. "For the intermediate manufacturing sector, policies targeting labor regulations and land availability along with improvement in quality of logistics infrastructure will be critical," the report said. It also highlighted the need for state-specific policies to bridge income disparities and drive inclusive growth. "In the absence of large-scale inter-state migration, inclusive growth will require greater income convergence across states. States are not converging in terms of per-capita incomes. A differentiated policy approach rather than a 'one size fits all' is required. Less developed states should focus on strengthening the fundamentals of growth, while relatively more developed states could prioritize the next generation of reforms," it added.

No trade deal without "substantive commitment" on cars from India: EU official

The European Union (EU) has indicated that the grouping will not sign a trade agreement without "substantive" market access given by India for the sales of European made cars, an EU official who was part of the delegation visiting India said on Friday, following meetings with Indian government officials over the prospects of a free trade agreement. This statement comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced that India and the EU plan to sign a free trade agreement (FTA) this year, with von der Leyen describing 2025 as a "historic opportunity" and an "inflection point" in their relations. "For the EU, cars, wines, and spirits are examples of sectors that are very important for European industry, and these are areas that we need to see reflected in a trade agreement between the European Union and India. I would even go as far as saying that without substantive commitments on cars, there will not be a trade agreement between the European Union and India," the official said.

The emphasis on automobile exports to India comes as the European Union's auto industry is facing a crisis. According to French automotive consultancy Inovev, annual European sales of sedans and SUVs have slumped from an average of 18 million units between 2017 and 2019 to between 13 and 15 million between 2020 and 2024. Moreover, in October 2024, Germany-based Volkswagen announced plans to close at least three of its German factories. At the Trade and Technology Council (TTC) meeting on Friday, the official said that semiconductors were highlighted as an area requiring deeper and more focused discussions. "Our interest in semiconductors is very much aligned. But there are also concerns regarding export controls, for example, in the United States, and how these controls may develop in the future," the official said. The



EU official also said that both sides were keen to advance work on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC). "Both the EU and India are very interested in progressing work on this corridor between India and Europe. Even though the middle section is, of course, more gridlocked due to the known situation in the Middle East, there is agreement and understanding to work from both ends of the corridor—the European and Indian sides—and to really double down on this project," the official said. The official stated that agriculture remains a contentious topic between the two sides but that the European Union has "offensive" interests in the sector. "Countries have sensitivities, just as we have sensitivities in agriculture. But the key thing here is that we should never throw the baby out with the bathwater. We have many interests—offensive interests—in agriculture. We have a strong trade surplus in this sector. We are very good at producing food and processed agricultural products, particularly from France, Italy, and essentially all our member states. So, we remain fully focused on securing a good deal for Europe," the official said.

Carnage in markets, indices plunge 1.9%, investors lose Rs 9 lakh crore in a day

The Indian stock market has witnessed another blood-bath on Friday, with key indices crashing by 1.9 per cent and wiping out a staggering 18 per cent of investor wealth since September last year. The relentless sell-off has left investors reeling, with the Sensex plummeting 14.72 per cent (12,638 points) and the Nifty tumbling 15.6 per cent (4,091.35 points) since their record highs on September 26, 2024.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have been at the forefront of the selling spree, pulling out a whopping Rs 2.13 lakh crore worth from stocks since October last year. This massive outflow has put additional pressure on the already battered markets. As investor confidence continues to erode, the big question on everyone's mind is: when will the bleeding stop? Will the market find a bottom soon, or will the sell-off continue to wreak havoc on investor wealth? Will retail investors sell and keep away? On Friday, domestic stock markets continued their downward spiral, tracking weak Asian stocks amid continued concerns over tariff threats from the US President Donald Trump and also ahead of the release of India's domestic gross domestic data (GDP) for FY2024-25 and October-December 2024 quarter. The general slowdown in the economy has also impacted the sentiment. Asian markets were the most affected by tariff news on Friday which led to a sharp correction in all the major Asian indices. The Japanese Nikkei index fell 3 per cent, followed by the Korean Kospi at 3.39 per cent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng at 3.28 per cent. But between November 1, 2024, and February 27, 2025, the Indian indices Sensex (-8 per cent) and Nifty (-9 per cent) registered the biggest fall of over 8 per cent, Nikkei fell 2 per cent, Kospi less than 1 per cent. All other indices were up: Hang Seng (12 per cent) Dow Jones (up 3 per cent), Euro Stoxx 50 (up 12 per cent) and Shanghai Composite (up 1 per cent). Crude oil prices witnessed gains overnight as tariff concerns led to a sharp rally from lower levels. Gold

has been gaining ground in the last five months. The BSE's Sensex crashed 1,414.33 points, or 1.9 per cent, to close at 73,198.1 on Friday. In just one day, investors lost Rs 9.08 lakh crore in market capitalisation.

The broader Nifty 50 tanked 1.86 per cent or 420.35 points, to end at 22,124.7. Mid and small cap stocks continued to remain under heavy selling pressure. The BSE Smallcap index plunged by 2.33 per cent and BSE Midcap index fell 2.16 per cent. All major sectoral indices ended in negative territory on Friday. Nifty Auto declined 3.92 per cent and Nifty IT fell 4.18 per cent. While the calendar year 2024 saw the entry of retail investors in large numbers, they are now sitting on huge losses—whether its direct purchase or through mutual funds. Net asset values of fund houses have fallen sharply. Mutual fund and insurance companies, who are big investors in the market, have seen their wealth eroding. The equity mutual fund sector witnessed a significant decline in assets under management (AUM) in January, as a broad fall in the domestic stock market led to market-to-market losses. The net AUM of equity mutual funds plummeted by Rs 1.1 lakh crore, or 3.26 per cent, on a month-on-month basis, to Rs 29.46 lakh crore as of end-January 2025, highlighting the vulnerability of mutual fund investments to market volatility. With small-cap stocks coming under pressure, net AUM of small-cap funds fell by Rs 23,665 crore, or 7.19 per cent, to Rs 3.05 lakh crore as on January 31, 2025, compared to Rs 3.29 lakh crore on December 31, 2024. Mid-cap funds also witnessed their assets shrinking by Rs 26,600 crore, or 6.65 per cent, to Rs 3.73 lakh crore as of January 31, 2025, compared to Rs 3.99 lakh crore as at December 31, 2024, according to latest data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI). "Stock markets dislike uncertainty, and uncertainty has been on the rise ever since Trump was elected the US president.

Alia Bhatt shares her 'first attempt at favourite food' with mother Soni Razdan



Alia Bhatt's creative pursuits go beyond acting and running her kids' apparel brand—she has now stepped into the world of cooking. In a recent YouTube video, Bhatt shared her mother Soni Razdan's special mac and cheese recipe, a dish she and her sister Shaheen Bhatt grew up eating and consider the ultimate comfort food. Flanked by Razdan, Bhatt first boiled water with a pinch of salt before adding uncooked pasta. As the pasta cooked for eight to 10 minutes, the mother-daughter duo got started on the white sauce.

In a separate pot, they added a bit of olive oil before melting the butter to prevent it from burning. Next, they stirred in the flour, ensuring it didn't form clumps. Once the mixture thickened, they poured in the milk. Razdan then

took over, whisking quickly to emulsify all the ingredients. They continued stirring until the sauce started bubbling, signalling that it was nearly ready. By this time, the pasta was done. After draining it, they reserved some pasta water to adjust the sauce's consistency later. Next, they added grated cheddar cheese and salt to the sauce, stirring until the cheese melted completely. Razdan then sprinkled in a pinch of nutmeg, while Bhatt crushed some black pepper for seasoning. Once the sauce reached the perfect texture, they mixed in the cooked pasta. Transferring the mixture to a baking dish, Bhatt topped it with extra cheese before baking it for a few minutes until the top turned golden and bubbly. After letting it cool, the duo finally dug in—smiling with satisfaction at their homemade treat.

Five tips to find what really brings you joy outside of work

Not long ago I attended a concert. It was a band that I had been waiting a while to see and so I was excited to be there in the crowd. Part way through, they played my favourite song and I noticed that I felt something different. It felt like a pinnacle moment where the emotion of joy felt expansive and unstoppable. In that moment, I felt more alive with all my senses of my surroundings heightened and yet so much more connected to the core of who I know myself to be. I first set out to write about finding joy, as if joy was out there in the world waiting for us to find it. However, the story of the concert shows us that this is not the case. Not everyone likes the band that I saw and not everyone in the concert had the same experience as me. This tells us that joy is more personal, an inside job, rather than something to find outside ourselves.

The psychologist Chris Meadows suggests that joy is a feeling that comes from viewing an event in our lives as being meaningful to us or good for us. Joy is not just a singular experience, there are different types of joy, according to Meadows. In his study of joy he writes about the muted experience of "serene joy", which aims at restoring or maintaining equilibrium in the body. Then there is "excited joy", which is linked to pursuing goals. "Individualized joy" is felt while alone while "affiliative joy" is shared with others. Meadow's study into the phenomenon of joy suggests that social experiences of joy occur more often than solo ones and result in what we know as bonding experiences. "Anticipatory joy" occurs when the fulfilment of a goal is imminent and then "consummatory joy" happens when the goal has been achieved. There is also an element of feeling blessed or that what has been achieved has exceeded expectations. In addition to the thought processes that lead to joy, there are many other elements that need to be in place. Safe, familiar surroundings are key in enabling us to be present in the moment to support relaxed equilibrium. When we feel safe and relaxed, we are more able to laugh and play and explore new ideas. Playfulness that's aimless but results in fairly predictable outcomes, allows us to switch off our inner critic and focus on the good feelings of being in the moment with joy. This brings a sense of ease in that whatever happens, requires very little effort on our part.

Here are five tips on how to find what brings you joy in its many forms:

1. Be present

"Be in the moment" is easy to say but harder to do. Joy exists in the present, therefore, we need to be there to experience it. This might mean that sometimes we need to ditch the phone and not video something to post or watch later as doing that prevents us becoming immersed in the here and now. This is about making our own experience



more important than the "likes" of others.

2. Listen to your inner voice

Next, turn up the volume on your inner voice. As joy is unique to each of us, we need to hear our own voice to find out what will bring us joy. To do this, it helps to create specificity around the goals that we aspire to in the future so that we are clear about what we want to achieve. I love the theme tune for The Pirates of the Caribbean and want to be able to play it on the piano. To make this goal specific, I need to decide what my success criteria is. It might be, I want to play to the end without stopping, or I want to get to the end without stopping and to play all of the notes on the sheet music without mistakes. Only I can know whether I would feel more joyful by achieving the second goal over the first. Being specific means we will clearly know when that goal fulfilment is either imminent or achieved. So, the more specific we are the better. The same goes for looking at the experiences that have brought us joy in the past. By reflecting on these experiences, we can learn things about ourselves that lead to us being able to create more joy.

3. Don't listen to your inner critic

It helps to switch off your inner critic, or at least turn the volume on this down. It is not possible to be playful and feel safe and free, while we constantly are censoring ourselves. So, tell the inner critic that it is OK for you to be you.

4. Find your tribe

These are people who enjoy the same things as you. Being with other people who are like us enables us to feel freer to express ourselves in ways that are congruent with who we are.

5. Tune into the little things

Finally, pay attention to the little things, as they actually are the big things. Joy comes from the most unexpected places. By noticing when we feel joy we can create more of those experiences in our lives so that we can truly experience that joie de vivre (the joy of living).

Reliance Jio Chairman Akash Ambani shares 'simple funda' to ace work-life balance; wife Shloka Mehta cheers on

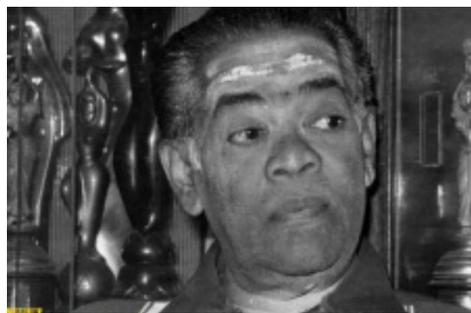
Chairman of Reliance Jio Infocomm Akash Ambani on work life balance during Mumbai Tech Week event. Chairman of Reliance Jio Infocomm Akash Ambani speaks during the Mumbai Tech Week event, in Mumbai Reliance Jio Infocomm Limited (RJIL) Chairman Akash Ambani, the elder son of Mukesh and Nita Ambani, recently attended Mumbai Tech Week, where he shared insights on the future of technology and AI in India. In conversation with Dream Sports CEO Harsh Jain, he spoke about maintaining work-life balance and the crucial role of family support.

Ambani expressed gratitude for growing up in a close-knit family that instilled strong values, where work was never seen as something to be balanced but rather as an integral part of life. "Growing up, we saw our parents—not just my father but also my mother—not only balancing family and work but making both the biggest priorities of our lives," he said. This philosophy has guided him through his decade-long journey at Reliance. To him, the question of balancing work and family doesn't arise since both remain the biggest priorities of his life. He goes by a simple funda: "As you grow older, your priorities change, but you want to make sure that your priorities are something that is meaningful to make your life what you imagine it to be," he said as the camera panned to his wife Shloka Mehta giving him a



thumbs-up in support. During the rapid fire round, Ambani also expressed gratitude towards his wife for being understanding of his demanding work schedule, which often keeps him working beyond 12 hours. Rima Bhandekar, senior psychologist at Mpower Helpline, Aditya Birla Education Trust, told indianexpress.com that continuous hustle without adequate breaks is unsustainable. "Rest is just as important as work. Taking meaningful breaks, engaging in activities outside of work, and seeking personal fulfilment can enhance productivity and overall life satisfaction," she said.

Malayalam cinema's comedy virtuoso who became embroiled in #MeToo controversy decades after his death



There was a time, long before the era of Mohanlal and Mammootty, when the face of Malayalam cinema was Prem Nazir, often referred to as Nityaharitha Nayakan (Evergreen Hero). With an unparalleled career that saw him play the lead in around 720 films — including two instances where he starred as the protagonist in 30 films in a single year — Nazir shared the screen with nearly 80 heroines. However, his most celebrated on-screen partnership was with Sheela; appearing in 130 films opposite each other, a feat that earned them a Guinness World Record for the longest screen partnership. If any other pairing came close to matching their popularity, it was Nazir and Adoor Bhasi. Ensuring that their films offered a guaranteed source of laughter, with Bhasi frequently cast as Nazir's trusted sidekick, the duo became one of the most beloved on-screen pairs in Malayalam cinema.

Renowned for his comedic roles — particularly slapstick and exaggerated humour, with a distinct emphasis on expressions and dialogue delivery — Bhasi had an uncanny ability to light up audiences' faces whenever he appeared on screen; but his off-screen life told a different story. Given that Malayalam films, like their counterparts in other Indian industries, often blended genres and featured mandatory comedy tracks (an early form of what would later be termed "masala films"), Bhasi became an indispensable presence in Malayalam cinema from the 1960s to the '80s. Cinema Anatomy | 5 years of Trance: Fahadh Faasil, Nazriya Nazim's misfire on pseudo-prophets that showed how not to make an 'Everything Everywhere All at Once' film

Born as Bhaskaran Nair on March 1, 1929, to EV Krishna Pillai, a distinguished writer, satirist and member of the Sree Moolam Assembly of Travancore, and Maheshwari Amma, his maternal grandfather CV Raman Pillai was a pioneering figure in Malayalam literature, recognised as one of India's foremost novelists and playwrights. After his father's untimely passing, Bhaskaran, along with his mother and siblings, left the Rosscoote Bungalow in Thiruvananthapuram — which his grandfather built — and relocated to Krishna Pillai's native village of Peringamad in Adoor. He completed his schooling there before returning to Thiruvananthapuram for higher education and career opportunities. However, it was during this period that he found his way into the world of theatre, which ultimately led to his cinematic debut in 1953 with a minor role in Thiramala, starring Sathyan.

It was, however, his performance in director Ramu Kariat's Mudiyanaya Puthran — penned by Thoppil Bhasi — that propelled him to fame, with his name being credited as "Adoor Bhasi". He soon received the opportunity to work with Prem Nazir in Jnaanandari (1961) and also won hearts with his performance. The film also featured comedian Bahadur in a key role and in several scenes, Bhasi shared the screen with him, showcasing their exceptional on-screen chemistry, which became iconic later. From Ninamaninja Kalpadukal, Thacholi Othenan, Bhargavi Nilayam, Porter Kunjali, Murappennu, Sihanarathi Saramma, Anarkali and Kalithozhan to Iruttinte Athmavu, Nagaram Nanni, Cochin Express, Yakshi, Lakshaprabhu, Asuravithu and Mooladhanam, Bhasi demonstrated his comedic prowess, excelling with impeccable timing and infusing a child-like innocence into his performances, in almost every film he appeared in. Adoor Bhasi's maternal grandfather CV Raman Pillai was a pioneering figure in Malayalam literature. Adoor Bhasi was born as Bhaskaran Nair on March 1, 1929, to EV Krishna Pillai and Maheshwari Amma.

By the 1970s, he had become an indomitable figure in Malayalam cinema, frequently collaborating with leading stars, particularly Nazir, to create memorable films. During this era, he also ventured into playback singing, with tracks like "Oru Roopa Nottu Koduthal", "Thallu Thallu Pannassu Vandil", "Kuruvi Petti" and "Velutha Vaavinnum Makkalkkum" being some of his most popular ones.

Although audiences loved Bhasi in comedic roles, given how effortlessly he acted them, he also expanded his repertoire with nuanced and grey-shaded roles in films like Itha Oru Manushyan and Karimpana, both directed by IV Sasi. His versatility was further recognised when he won his first Kerala State Film Award for Best Actor for his portrayal of Morris, an Anglo-Indian loco pilot, in KS Sethumadhavan's Chattakkari (1974). His performances in films such as Lottery Ticket, Cross Belt, Oru Penninte Katha, Anubhavamang Paalichakal, CID Nazir, Taxi Car, Punarjanmam, Aromalunni, Picnic, Alibabayum 41 Kallanmaarum, Kadathanaattu Maakkam, Allaaduddin Albhutha Vilakkum, Ormakkayi and April 18 further cemented his place in the industry. He also bagged a Kerala State Film Award for

Second Best Actor for his role in the movie April 18.

It was his performance in director Ramu Kariat's Mudiyanaya Puthran — penned by Thoppil Bhasi — that propelled Adoor Bhasi to fame. By the 1970s, Adoor Bhasi had become an indomitable figure in Malayalam cinema.

During the late '70s, Bhasi expanded into filmmaking, helming three movies: Aadhya Paadam (1977), starring Kamal Haasan and Sridevi; Achaaram Ammini Osharam Omana (1977), featuring Sheela, Prem Nazir and Jayan; and Raghuvamsham (1978), with Sharada in the lead. Around this time, his performance in legendary filmmaker John Abraham's politically charged Cheriyaachante Kroorakrithyangal (1979) earned him his second Kerala State Film Award for Best Actor, further showcasing his ability to take on complex roles.

Even during the later part of his career, he impressed audiences with mature roles in films such as Aalkkoottathil Thaniye, Yathra, Pacha Velicham, Sarvakalasala, Irupatham Nootandu and Bhoomiyile Rajakkanmar, which had more depth than his usual comedic characters. Towards the end of his life, Bhasi gradually stepped away from films due to health issues, with his last film being Ragam Anuragam (1991), released posthumously after his passing on March 29, 1990. He was a lifelong bachelor.

Legendary Malayalam actor KPAC Lalitha have time and again made grave allegations against Adoor Bhasi. Adoor Bhasi won the Kerala State Film Award for Best Actor twice, for his performances in Chattakkari and Cheriyaachante Kroorakrithyangal.

In his memoir, legendary actor Marlon Brando described comedic genius and veteran filmmaker Charlie Chaplin — who directed him in A Countess from Hong Kong (1967) — as the most sadistic man he had ever encountered. Describing Chaplin as "an egotistical tyrant and a penny-pincher," Brando reportedly wrote, "Comic genius or not, when I went to London to work with him late in his life, Chaplin was a fearsomely cruel man." Similar, albeit even graver, were the allegations raised by legendary Malayalam actor KPAC Lalitha against Adoor Bhasi. Accusing him of making her life unbearable as she refused to comply with his demands, she once even went so far as to call him "a leech that refused to let her go". In an interview with a news channel — at the height of the #MeToo movement — she referred to Bhasi as her "biggest enemy".

During the late '70s, Adoor Bhasi expanded into filmmaking too, helming three films. Adoor Bhasi in front of a portrait of comedic genius and veteran filmmaker Charlie Chaplin. Lalitha also recalled a harrowing incident in which Bhasi, brought there in a car by his driver, barged into her home in Madras (now Chennai) with two bottles of liquor and began drinking without her consent. This took place while they were working on Thoppil Bhasi's Madhavikutty (1973). At the time, she was home with only her younger brother and a female helper. Alarmed by the situation, the three of them retreated to the courtyard. As the night progressed, Bhasi became heavily intoxicated, his clothes dishevelled completely and he eventually collapsed throwing up. "This happened during an era when he wielded absolute power over the Malayalam film industry. I don't think even Nazir sir had that level of influence. Bhasi's word was final. I lost many roles simply because I refused to submit to his demands," she alleged. According to Lalitha, it was actor Bahadur, living nearby, who ultimately came to her rescue. After Bhasi passed out around 4 am, she sought Bahadur's help and he promptly stepped in, ensuring Bhasi was placed in his car and sent home with his driver. Although she eventually filed an official complaint with the Malayala Chalachitra Parishad — a once-powerful socio-cultural and welfare organisation for Malayalam film industry professionals in Madras — it went unresolved. Recalling Bhasi attempting to have her removed from Adimakkachavadam (1978) too, she shared that director Hariharan, however, stood firm and rearranged the cast so that she would not have to be paired with Bhasi.

Adoor Bhasi was a lifelong bachelor. (L-R) Cinematographer-director A Vincent, RS Prabhu of Chandrathara Productions, filmmaker Ramu Kariat, producer K Parameswaran Nair, author-filmmaker MT Vasudevan Nair, Adoor Bhasi, film distributor Chandran and writer K Padmanabhan Nair. Frustrated by the persistent harassment, Lalitha sought Hariharan's support in filing a complaint with the Chalachitra Parishad. "When I asked if he would sign my petition supporting my claims, Hariharan sir agreed without hesitation. The producer of Adimakkachavadam also signed it; something few would have dared to do. I detailed in my complaint how Bhasi was making my life intolerable and harassing me relentlessly. At the time, actor KP Ummer was the head of the organisation. Soon, I received a call from him, asking, 'Who are you to complain against Adoor Bhasi? He is like a reigner here. Who are you?' I told him the situation had become unbearable and asked if the organisation could intervene. 'There is nothing we can do,' his response was immediate. 'This is what happens when spineless people lead organisations. I will do what I can,' I retorted bravely," she added. Though actors like Kaviyoor Ponnamma later expressed scepticism regarding the allegations, refusing to believe that 'Bhasi would do such things', Lalitha's accusations were difficult to dismiss, particularly since she named key people who were aware of her ordeal, lending credibility to her claims and making them impossible to ignore.

'Why is Bipasha Basu sitting at home without work?': Mika cites karma after accusing her of costing him Rs 10 crore in overheads



It has been almost five years since Bipasha Basu was last seen in an acting role. She last starred in director Bhushan Patel's web series, Dangerous, which also featured her husband, actor Karan Singh Grover. The project was backed by popular singer Mika. "Why do you think they are out of work now? God is watching everything," said Mika, in an interview with Pinkvilla, as he shared his rather bitter experience of working with the couple. "See, I liked Karan a lot, and I wanted to back a film that would push my music in the forefront. I just wanted to make a low-budget film, around Rs 4 crore," said Mika, who shared that he approached Vikram Bhatt to write the story because he couldn't afford him as the director. "We roped in director Bhushan Patel, who had previously helmed Alone, which featured Bipasha in a double role." Mika shared that he was only contemplating to make the series with Karan, and another heroine, but Bipasha wanted to be part of the film.

"The shoot was set in London, and the budget increased from Rs 4 crore to Rs 14 crore. And the drama created by Bipasha ensured that I would always regret getting into production," said the singer, who went on to explain what unfolded during the shooting of Dangerous. "It was a team she was comfortable with, and they were playing a couple, who had to feature in kissing scenes. Suddenly, she was throwing tantrums saying she won't do this or she won't do that, etc..." said Mika.

The musician also shared that he never defaulted on their payments, but it wasn't easy to complete the dubbing process too. "Someone always had a sore throat. If it was Bipasha who was sick at one time, it was Karan at another," said Mika, who minced no words in calling out actors who didn't accord smaller producers the same respect they give the marquee filmmakers. "When some out-of-work heroines are thinking their luck is bad, it is important to note that they should respect producers who come with opportunities. They are your god. They might be happy playing minuscule roles in a Dharma Productions film, but won't respect small-time producers, who are paying the same amount of money." Citing himself as an example of not allowing success to get to his head, Mika said, "I have zero attitude. Even recently, I went to Bengaluru to sing for Devi Sri Prasad in Pushpa. If Pritam calls me at 6 am to sing a song, I will do it too. That's why I am where I am. This success doesn't come overnight, and you have to love your work."

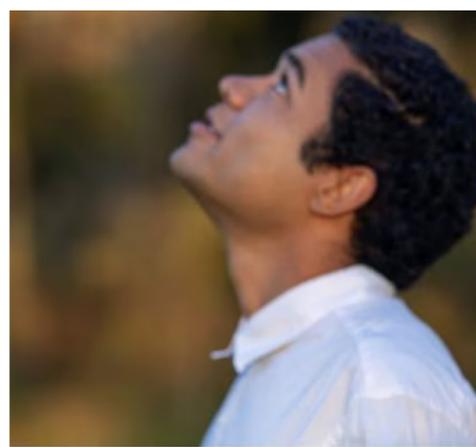
Nickel Boys movie review: Style is the substance in RaMell Ross's 'Best Picture' Oscar nominee

Some films tell stories, others make you live them. Nickel Boys, directed by RaMell Ross, firmly belongs to the latter — a film that doesn't just adapt Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel The Nickel Boys, but absorbs you into its world. It is not a conventional historical drama; it doesn't follow the familiar beats of an inspiring tale of resilience or a neatly wrapped-up tragedy. Instead, it unfolds like a series of lived experiences, moving through time, memory, and trauma with a quiet, devastating inevitability. It is as much about what is left unsaid as it is about the visceral realities of Nickel Academy, a reform school in 60s Florida, modelled after the real-life Dozier School for Boys — a place that disguises its horrors beneath a veil of discipline and order.

Ross, best known for his documentary Hale County This Morning, This Evening, which earned him an Academy Award nomination, brings a filmmaker's curiosity to this adaptation. He isn't interested in simply recounting events but in making the audience feel them in a way that is raw, immersive, and sometimes unsettling. The result is a film that operates like an art installation — every frame a painting, every moment carefully constructed to communicate more than just plot. Set in the racially charged America of the 60s, Nickel Boys follows Elwood Curtis (Ethan Herisse), an idealistic African American teenager inspired by the teachings of Dr Martin Luther King Jr. Elwood is an optimist, a book lover, a dreamer who believes in education and social upliftment. His nana says it best: "He spends more time reading than anything else." This single line gives us everything we need to know about Elwood — his quiet ambition, his belief in education, and his hope in the words of MLK that justice will come. But the world Elwood believes in does not believe in him. One mistake — being in the wrong place at the wrong time — lands him at Nickel Academy.

There, he meets Turner (Brandon Wilson), a more pragmatic and street-smart boy who understands the unspoken rules of survival within the school's walls. While Elwood clings to hope and morality, Turner urges caution, knowing all too well that righteousness has no place in a world governed by power and cruelty. Their friendship becomes the emotional core of the film, a fragile bond formed in the most harrowing of circumstances. Ethan Herisse as Elwood and Brandon Wilson as Turner in a still from 'Nickel Boys'. This is not a traditionally structured film. In adapting Whitehead's novel, Ross does not rely on a straightforward narrative. Instead, he crafts a sensory experience using visual storytelling, sound design, and editing to immerse the audience in the boys' reality. The camera often operates in a POV style — not just from a character's literal perspective but in a way that makes the audience feel present in the space, experiencing what it means to be Black in a white supremacist institution. The film does not just depict injustice; it forces you to sit in it, to feel its weight.

This directorial choice will be polarising. Some viewers may find the approach distancing, even frustrating, as the film demands patience. At 140 minutes, it is a slow burn, and while the deliberate pacing serves the film's meditative nature, there are moments that feel stretched. Ross's background in photography is evident in how Nickel Boys is shot. Each frame feels meticulously composed, like a painting in a gallery — you take in some instantly, while others take time to process. The cinematography does not simply capture events; it communicates emotions, history, and perspective with a clarity that feels almost tactile. A shot from RaMell Ross's movie 'Nickel Boys'. A shot from RaMell Ross's



movie 'Nickel Boys'. Equally striking is the film's use of sound, or rather, its restraint. The score, composed by Alex Somers and Scott Alario, is minimal, often retreating into silence, allowing the sounds of the environment — the rustling of trees, the distant cries of boys, the dull thud of punishment — to fill the space. This choice makes the film feel even more immersive, as if the audience is being forced to sit in the same suffocating quiet as the boys at the Academy. Herisse, best known for Netflix's When They See Us — another Black Lives' story — delivers a heart-breaking performance as Elwood, embodying both the innocence of a boy who believes in justice and the slow erosion of that belief. His portrayal is not showy; he does not deliver grand speeches or have overt expressions of agony. Instead, his pain is in his posture, his silences, the way his eyes shift when he realises the world does not work the way he thought it did. There is a moment — just a flicker in his eyes — where you see his realisation that justice, as he imagined it, does not exist for him. That moment says more than any monologue ever could. Brandon Wilson, as Turner, is just as compelling, offering a performance that feels lived-in, raw, and utterly authentic. His chemistry with Herisse is undeniable, and their relationship is the beating heart of the film — filled with unspoken understanding, moments of defiance, and the shared knowledge that their fates are hanging by a thread. The supporting cast, particularly Anjunja Ellis-Taylor as Elwood's nana — a woman carrying the weight of history and the guilt of not giving her grandson the justice he deserves — and Hamish Linklater as the cruel superintendent, add further layers to the film's emotional depth. Ellis-Taylor, with minimal screen time, leaves a lasting impact, while Linklater delivers an appallingly restrained performance, embodying the kind of bureaucratic evil that is all the more terrifying because of its banality. For all its brilliance, Nickel Boys is not an easy sit. It does not offer the kind of catharsis that many viewers might expect from a historical drama about injustice. There is no rousing speech, no satisfying revenge. Some may even find the film's approach too abstract, and its refusal to follow a conventional narrative frustrating. There are moments where the film demands patience, where it lingers longer than expected, refusing to move at the pace of traditional cinema. But even for those who find the film difficult, its impact is undeniable. Few films manage to balance style and substance successfully, but here, style is the substance. The cinematography, sound, and editing are not just technical choices; they are the film's way of communicating what words alone cannot.

Tapas Nayak's work in Tamil film "Rasavathi" wins Best Sound Design Award at London International Film Festival

Chennai: Critically-acclaimed filmmaker Santhakumar's Tamil film "Rasavathi: The Alchemist," featuring actors Arjun Das and Tanya Ravichandran in the lead, has won the award for Best Sound Design at the London International Film Festival 2025. Santhakumar, whose earlier films too have come in for critical acclaim, took to his X timeline to make the announcement. He wrote, "Rasavathi" (The Alchemist) won the "Best sound design" award in the LONDON international film festival. Congratulations Tapas Nayak. #Rasavathiâ• Sound Engineer Tapas Nayak's work in Rasavathi won the Award defeating nine other films from around the globe. The other nominees that competed with Rasavathi for the award were "Nobody wants to shoot a woman", "Black, Queer & Done", "Perfect Meal - My dear", "Let's eat together", "The Chocolate Club", "Culture Vs War. Liberov", "The Therapy", "We will not be silenced", "Dawn At Gougane Barr."

Apart from the category of Best Sound Design,

"Rasavathi: The Alchemist" had also gained nominations in five other categories. They were Best Director of a Foreign Language Film, Best Foreign Language Film, Best Editing of a Foreign Language Film, Outstanding Actor in a Foreign Language Film and Outstanding Actress in a Foreign Language Film. However, the film managed to win only in the Best Sound Design category. Apart from Arjun Das and Tanya Ravichandran, the film also featured a host of actors including Sujith Shankar, Ramya Subramanian, G.M. Sundar, Reshma Venkatesh, Sujatha and Rishikanth. The critically acclaimed film had music by SS Thaman. Interestingly, "Rasavathi" was the third film for which Santhakumar had joined hands with Thaman. The film had two cinematographers in Saravanan Elavarasu and Sivakumar. V J Sabu Joseph handled the film's editing work. Sathish Krishnan was the dance choreographer for the film, which had art direction by Sivaraj and sound effects by Sethu. Tapas Nayak was in charge for sound mixing.

Dramatic battle between Blake Lively, Justin Baldoni turns into tornado

Los Angeles: The dramatic battle between Hollywood actress Blake Lively and actor-director Justin Baldoni is turning into a tornado. It is revealed that Blake Lively has hired a PR crisis manager with deep government ties as her legal battle with Justin, reports 'Variety'. The actress, who is suing and being counter sued by her 'It Ends With Us' director and co-star, is quietly working with Nick Shapiro, the CIA's former deputy chief of staff and senior advisor to former director John Brennan. "The litigation team for Ms. Lively retained Mr. Shapiro to advise on the legal communications strategy for the ongoing sexual harassment and retaliation lawsuit occurring in the Southern District of New York", said a member of the actress' legal team at Willkie Farr & Gallagher. As per 'Variety', in December, Lively filed a letter with the California Civil Rights Department in which she claimed that Baldoni sexually harassed her during the film's production in 2023. The CRD letter, which also included allegations of Baldoni waging a 2024 smear campaign against Lively, became the basis of a New York Times report, kicking off a legal back and forth involving a group of more than a dozen people and companies. On New Year's

Eve, Baldoni and nine other plaintiffs, including his crisis publicist Melissa Nathan, sued the New York Times for \$250 million for libel. Blake Lively then sued Baldoni and the group for violating federal and California state law "by retaliating against her for reporting sexual harassment and workplace safety concerns". The director then sued the actress and her husband Ryan Reynolds for \$400 million for civil extortion, defamation and other actions. In a related suit, Baldoni's former publicist Stephanie Jones is suing Baldoni and Nathan for breach of contract among other claims. Jones provided the text messages to Lively's legal team sometime after parting ways with Abel in August 2024 in a move that raised eyebrows. Lively's lawyers say they received the text messages via a subpoena to Jones' PR firm Jonesworks. It remains unclear on what grounds Jones would have been required to turn over correspondence involving former client Baldoni or former employee Abel given that no lawsuit had been filed at the time. In yet another lawsuit, Texas-based digital entrepreneur Jed Wallace filed a multi-million dollar suit against Blake Lively in federal court for defamation.

Savita Punia and hockey: A reluctant goalie who fell in love with the game



GNS News Agency, March 5

A bone chilling night in the winter of 2008. Street, dark. Bus stop, secluded. Exhausted and edgy, Savita Punia waited for a Hisar-bound bus while guarding her two jumbo bags — one, a goalkeeping kit and the other with her clothes stuffed in it. Only 17, Savita was returning to her home in Jodhkan, Sirsa, from Kurukshetra after appearing in the selection trials for Haryana's hockey team. The clock showed 8 — she had to be in Hisar four hours ago, from where her father was to pick her up. But the bus she took from Kurukshetra that afternoon had broken down, leaving Savita stranded in the middle of the highway, near Kaithal, more than 125 km away from home. "Before boarding from Kurukshetra, I had called my father from an STD booth," Savita says — those were the days when the cellphone was still a luxury. "He was to pick me up from the Hisar bus stop around 4.30 pm and from there, we were to drive down to Sirsa. We had a second-hand car, so it wasn't reliable for long distances." Savita waited on the highway that night, with no way of letting her father know of her situation. A bus finally showed up. Savita saw no empty seats and there was barely any place to stand but she thought she would manage. "It was around 8.30 pm. I requested the conductor to help with my luggage," she says. The conductor stared at her and smirked: "Ladki ho. Ek bulao, dus aaenge (You are a girl, you will have many to pick you up)." Alarmed, Savita didn't step in despite not knowing when the next bus would be, if there would be one.

Luckily for her, another bus swung by minutes later. This time, an elderly woman who had witnessed Savita's harrowing experience, "stood in front of the bus with both arms outstretched, asked a gentleman to keep my luggage on the carrier and ensured I got a seat. Finally, at 10.30 pm, I reached Hisar," Savita says. Savita Punia Savita with her parents Mahender and Lilavati. "Every night before I sleep, I thank them in a prayer," she says. Her father Mahender Punia says, "She cried a lot after reaching home. We cried a lot, not knowing what had happened to her." That night, Mahender bought his daughter a cellphone and his family a better second-hand car so that she would never have to travel alone again.

Savita knows her episode isn't uncommon, especially during the early years when young girls travel alone in trains and buses to far-off venues to play hockey. "We have come a long way in other areas, but safety shouldn't be a reason for a child to worry about her future in the sport," she says. "If not for the support of my family, I might have quit after that incident." Instead, the player who considered quitting that night — or thought she would say goodbye to hockey after just one match — played her 300th international on February 24. Not bad for someone who never went looking for hockey. Hockey simply happened to her. Savita stands next to an arrow pointing towards 'Punia Niwas', a pretty white bungalow in the middle of sprawling green fields. It's her first visit home in months. She has less than 48 hours with her parents — "every night before I sleep, I thank them in a prayer," she says — before she leaves for Vancouver to be with her husband Ankit Balhara and her in-laws, Bhal Singh and Mumta, a former athlete. "I have reached this far because of my husband and his parents," she says. "I have seen too many women players having to end their careers after marriage. But my in-laws went out of their way to support my career." Savita Punia Savita receiving the guard of honour from her teammates at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, where she played her 300th international on February 24. Savita sits for an interview with an unusual demand: she doesn't wish to talk about her career highs. "That people know or can read online," she laughs.

This, despite seeing more good days than her predecessors. Savita belongs to a generation — that includes the likes of Rani Rampal and Vandana Kataria — that transformed women's hockey in India. Together, they ended India's three-decade-long Olympic exile, led the team to back-to-back Games and came agonisingly close to a medal in Tokyo, where they finished a historic fourth. But Savita, whose job description as a goalkeeper is quite literally to take blows for the team, wants to talk about the struggles. Or, as she puts it more eloquently, "an athlete's life." As if they are both the same.

"I am not saying the world should know my story or that it is interesting. But if a young, upcoming athlete ends up reading it, she should feel that all of this is normal, whether good or bad is a separate discussion," she says. "After all, most athletes face the same challenges. It's about the choices you make." "I don't even like hockey!" Savita had just entered her teens when she had to make her first big choice: whether to stay at home to help her ailing mother or move to a bigger town to join an English-medium school that offered a chance to play.

"There was this school in Sirsa that offered admission if we played one of the three sports — judo, badminton or hockey. I had no interest in sports and couldn't even differentiate between a team sport and an individual game," she says. "Yet, I accepted the offer to appear for the selection trials only because it would mean going to a better school. I was in a government school, and playing a sport would give me a chance to get enrolled into an English-medium, CBSE school." But she faced a quandary. Moving out would mean leaving behind her mother Lilavati, who suffered from "such severe arthritis that she couldn't even comb her hair or eat by herself."

"By Class 5, I had to learn to do all the household work... A to Z, everything. My father was already overburdened. He cooked, fed mummy, took care of me and my brother and then went to work. So, the first thought I had when it came to leaving was, 'Who will perform the daily chores at home?'" Savita with grandmother Savita with her grandmother. Savita was 13 when she left home to enroll into an English-medium school in Sirsa. But Mahender, who worked as a pharmacist at the Sirsa Primary Health Cen-

tre, was clear about what needed to be done. Egged on by her father, and nudged by her grandfather Ranjit Singh — he had watched a hockey match during a trip to Delhi in his youth — a 13-year-old Savita, "dressed in a salwar-suit", appeared for the trials barefoot. After a gruelling audition — with shuttle runs, frog jumps and the 800m, where she came first — Savita was admitted to the school. "And thus began my hockey journey." A journey so full of challenges that the teenager had almost made up her mind that she would give up.

The first was the sudden shift from Hindi medium to English. "I started fearing books. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to compete with my classmates and couldn't even converse with them. I wanted to learn but lacked the courage. Slowly, I got into a shell," she says. In the hostel mess, the sight of dalia, bhindi, and dal with tomato and onion made her homesick. And then, there was the nagging concern about the situation at home, with her mother's health. Every other day, Savita made excuses to bunk school and go home, which her teachers promptly rejected. During classes, she would stare outside the windows and plot escape plans. "It continued like this from 2003 to 2005. I was scared of books, barely had any interest in hockey and had no goal."

One Friday, she was informed that her father was coming to pick her up the following day. "It was the happiest day of my life. I packed everything and was ready to leave. The next morning, I trained very well and happily, assuming it was my last day there. Daddy came, picked me up and we left for home." Then, a twist. "The moment I reached, mummy told me that daddy had gone behind my back and made a deal with the coach in school. Apparently, the coach told him I had the potential to be a very good goalkeeper because of my height (5' 8"). Daddy even paid him Rs 18,000 as fees!"

Savita At 34, after several highs and lows and three international goalkeeping of the year awards, Savita has set her sights on the Los Angeles Olympics. The amount was twice what Mahender Punia earned in a month. Savita spent the whole night crying. "I kept yelling, 'yeh kya kar diya (what have you done)'. I don't even like hockey! Mummy calmed me down and asked me to just try." Savita agreed reluctantly, but she resented the sport, a feeling that would stay for long. "I thought I would try it once — just once — and then leave hockey for good."

The farther Savita ran from hockey, the deeper the sport came looking for her. In 2007, when Savita received her maiden call-up for the national camp, her father distributed laddoos in the entire neighbourhood. "And in my head, I was thinking, 'I am very close to leaving hockey. Bas ek baar India khelna hai (I will play an international match once) and that's it,'" she laughs. She had to wait for another year to get picked in the Indian team — for a test series against the Netherlands and Germany. It has been 17 years but Savita still can't believe that she was picked. "There were seven goalkeepers in the trials. I never thought I would be among the top two who were to be in the team," she says. "At the time, the way the selection system worked was very different." These days, there is a method to a team selection, though not always perfect. There is a core group that trains together all year long and players are chosen from that bunch following selection trials. Coaches, too, are more sensitive, and take time to explain selections and exclusions individually to players.

Back in 2008, however, the system was less empathetic. "After the trials, the selectors used to sign on a sheet. Within 15 minutes, the entire group had to assemble and they would announce the team," Savita says. Dipika Murthy, the first-choice goalkeeper, was injured so it opened the door for others. Savita didn't think it would be her. But they first called the name of Marita Tirkey, followed by Savita's. "For a second, I thought I had misheard. Everyone was surprised — even I was. I double-checked to see if my name was on the list. I asked them, 'Can I tell my family?'" The next second, she was on a call with her parents, breaking the news. "Dad said something I'll never forget. 'It feels like you are reborn.'" But even amidst the flood of emotions, the thought of leaving the sport wasn't far away. "I was still in the same phase. Bas ek baar hi khelna hai." Then, something happened which ensured a lifelong bond with hockey. Savita's brother, Bhavishya, was reading out the newspaper coverage of her selection to their grandfather, stressing on the part where he was credited for pushing her towards the sport. "My grandfather always remained aloof. He had seen many tragedies in the family in the form of untimely deaths of some of the members. Growing up, I never saw him happy," Savita says. "But when the article got published and my brother read it to him, he broke down and said, 'Ranjit Singh Punia has an identity because of Savita.'" He went on to make her a promise: that he would save the newspaper copy, learn how to read within a year so he could read for himself his name and Savita's. "Imagine, this one sport changed the mindset and pushed the oldest member of my family towards literacy," she beams. "I felt that if hockey could make him forget all the bad times and get motivated to do something, then I would never leave this sport. I'll continue playing till it is physically possible. Ab dil se khelna hai (Now I'll play my heart out)." Finally, Savita started falling in love with hockey. But now, the sport was testing her love. Unlike the cricketers, India's hockey players have never been paid any match fee. If you were a woman player a decade ago, there would only be a few job opportunities outside the Railways. But unluckily for Savita, even that door was shut. For 10 years, from 2008 to 2018, as Savita played — with no match fee and no employment — she took India to newer heights. "I always thought I would fulfil all my wishes once I got a job, so I never asked for anything from my father; I didn't want to burden him. If he gave me Rs 50, I would take that; if he gave me give 500, I would take that," she says. "But mothers can't hide their emotions. So mummy would keep telling me, 'What if you get injured, what about your future then?'" It got so dire at times that Savita would even have to think twice before buying a cup of tea, especially when travelling outside India. In 2018, when she was given the Arjuna Award, Lilavati had just one question for her daughter. "She asked, 'Does this mean you'll now get a job?' Mummy didn't know what the Arjuna Award was. She just knew a job would secure my future... But at that moment, I started crying." Weeks later, she applied for a coaching role with the Sports Authority of India (SAI) when a vacancy came up. And with that, a decade of struggle ended. "I wish this doesn't happen to anyone else. It's a long time to remain without a job, not everyone's parents will be able to support a career," says Savita, who continues to be a SAI coach. As she dealt with financial instability, Savita simultaneously found herself caught in the touchy politics of the dressing room. Savita admits her first big break came only because former India goalkeeper Yogita Bali got injured. But in the dressing room, some of her teammates grudged her place in the team.

Karun Nair hits second Ranji Trophy Final century against Kerala in career-best season



GNS News Agency, March 5

Vidarbha batter Karun Nair continued his purple patch in the Ranji Trophy 2024-25 final as he backed up his first-innings 86 with his 23rd First-Class century against Kerala at the VCA Stadium in Jamtha, Nagpur Batting in the second innings on day four of the contest, after Vidarbha earned a 37-run first-innings, lead the previous evening, Nair walked in at number four after Kerala removed the openers within the first 14 deliveries. Building another fortifying partnership with Danish Malewar with whom he shared a match-defining 215-run stand in the previous innings, Nair denied Kerala the chance of a comeback with his stroke-filled hundred off

184 balls.

The century was the second hundred for Nair in a Ranji Trophy final across four appearances since his debut season in the tournament for Karnataka in 2013-14. In the previous innings, Nair also went past 8000 FC runs in his 152nd appearance. The right-handed batter has also tallied 800-plus runs for the first time in a Ranji Trophy season. The 33-year-old Nair who returned to the spotlight after a whirlwind Vijay Hazare Trophy campaign last month, finishing with 752 runs and five hundreds in seven innings, was also among the runs in the second phase of the Ranji Trophy. Nair smashed a hundred in Vidarbha's last league game against Hyderabad and backed it up with his 22nd First Class century in the quarterfinal victory over Tamil Nadu. Nair played the final in his maiden First-Class season in 2013-14 as Karnataka beat Maharashtra to claim the title. In the following season, Nair emerged as the Player of the Match in the summit clash as he cracked a marathon 328 — the highest individual score ever in a Ranji Trophy final — against Tamil Nadu as Karnataka defended their title. While over 3700 runs of Nair's career has come for Karnataka, his brief India Test career between 2016-17 also saw him become the second Test triple-century of the country behind Virender Sehwag, cracking an unbeaten 303 against England in Chennai.

'I'll bat my own f***ing way': When MS Dhoni lost cool and stunned Michael Hussey thought his CSK 'coaching career was done'

GNS News Agency, March 5

Former India and Chennai Super Kings (CSK) captain MS Dhoni's approach to the game revolves around his icy cool demeanour in the face of mind-crunching pressure on the field. But if one were to encounter the odd moment and fall on the wrong side of Dhoni's generally unwavering temper, the experience could be stunning and perhaps, eye-opening. Dhoni's former teammate and current CSK batting coach, Michael Hussey, recently described an incident with wicketkeeper-batter that left him gobsmacked during his first coaching season in the IPL.

Hussey, who represented CSK from 2008 to 2013 and returned for another year in 2015, joined the franchise as a batting coach in their comeback year following a two-year ban in 2018. Steering the side to the Playoffs, CSK were to meet SunRisers Hyderabad in the Qualifier 1 match where Dhoni's men would be pitted against Afghan spin wizard Rashid Khan who was making waves in only his second season in the league. The former Australia batter would almost immediately find out that he couldn't get too technical with coaching ahead of big games.

"I love it. The talent there is unbelievable and you get to coach, 'loosely'. It is more like not to try and stuff them (players) up, with some of the greatest players around," said 'Mr. Cricket' as he reflected on his coaching journey in the Backchat Podcast. To be able to work with MS Dhoni, for example, the greatest finisher in the history of the game in my mind... I sort of used to pinch myself," Hussey added before he revealed an iffy exchange. Hussey said an exchange of data on Rashid Khan's variations would not go down too well with Dhoni during the Qualifier 1 game later on. "The night before the big game, the analyst sends me through this split screen of Rashid Khan. And it's basically when he bowls his wrong'uns, he runs in his fingers together and when he bowls his leggy, his fingers are apart. 'Ooh this is good'. But this is the night before the game though, so I'm sitting on thinking do I send this out to the batters or do I not? I sat looking at it for an hour because you don't want to put too much stuff guys' head the night before the game."

Matt Short set to miss for Australia's Champions Trophy semi-final due to injury

GNS News Agency, March 5

Matt Short, Champions Trophy Australia's Matthew Short bats during the ICC Champions Trophy cricket match between Australia and Afghanistan, in Lahore, Pakistan. (AP) Australia opener Matt Short is set to miss the Champions Trophy semi-finals after suffering a thigh injury during Friday's abandoned Group B match against Afghanistan in Lahore. The in-form opener suffered a quad injury in the field and hobbled his way to a brisk 20 off 15 balls. Skipper Steve Smith said the opener was unlikely to be fit to face India or New Zealand on Tuesday or Wednesday. "I think he'll be struggling," Smith said. "I think we saw tonight he wasn't moving very well. I think it's probably going to be too quick between games for him to recover." Jake Fraser-McGurk would offer similar skills as a replacement for Short at the top of the batting order, while young spin-bowling all-rounder Cooper Connolly is Australia's travelling reserve. "We've got a few guys there to come in to fill a job," Smith added. The 29-year-old Short had impressed in the opening match against England, setting the tone in their record-breaking chase with 63 off 66 balls, before Josh Inglis and Alex Carey carried Australia to victory. Australia will play



"But I'm sitting on this and thought I'll never forgive myself if I didn't send this through and I sent it to the batting group. I said for what it's might worth you might want to use it or just ignore it if you don't. Fat du Plessis loves that kind of stuff and he came back immediately, saying 'awesome, yeah, yeah'," revealed Hussey. Chasing 140 in the Qualifier 1 against SRH in Mumbai, CSK would crumble to 39 or four as Rashid would castle Dhoni. Though CSK would scrape home to victory by two wickets, Dhoni left Hussey thinking his coaching career was done for good. "We were like four down for nothing the next day and Dhoni's in with Faf at the other. Rashid Khan comes in first ball and bowls the wrong'un. Dhoni goes for the cover drive, hitting against the spin, bowled. You got to understand that this guy is a mega star, like bigger than god. "He comes in and looks me straight in the eye and he goes, 'I'll bat my own f***ing way, thanks' and sits down next to me. Oh, Coaching career, done! I sat for the rest of the game like a stunned mulel," Hussey recounted with a chuckle. As CSK would meet SRH again in the final and waltz to their third IPL title, a calmer Dhoni approached Hussey to clear the air. "Dhoni's a great guy and he comes up after the game and said, 'The information was great, but I needed more time and a couple of net sessions to process it'. Hussey admits it was a grueling start to his coaching career, but thankfully Dhoni "stuck with me" as the Aussie's coaching association with the franchise extends to a seventh edition this year.



their semi either against India in Dubai on Tuesday or against New Zealand on Wednesday in Lahore. They will only get to know their semifinal opponent after the Group A fixture between India and New Zealand on Sunday. Australia squad: Steve Smith (c), Sean Abbott, Alex Carey, Ben Dwarshuis, Nathan Ellis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Spencer Johnson, Aaron Hardie, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Marnus Labuschagne, Glenn Maxwell, Tanveer Sangha, Matt Short, Adam Zampa. Travelling reserve: Cooper Connolly

How Chess.com became more than just a chess app and Titled Tuesday spiced up a routine weekday

Around the time Gukesh Dommaraju became the youngest world champion in history of chess in December, Indian chess also made its mark elsewhere. On the popular Chess.com app, India overtook the USA as the "most active country" on the platform, another indicator that not just the protagonists in the thick of action, but spectators following it were also overwhelmingly from India.

Right after the three-week battle between Gukesh and Ding Liren in Singapore culminated with the teenager from Chennai become the second Indian to be crowned the world champion after Viswanathan Anand, Chess.com saw what it called a "Gukesh wave": for three straight days, the app hosted 17 million games daily — the highest daily number in 2024 — at a rate of 15 more games starting per second during peak hours. In the eye of this online chess storm was

India. The world's most populous country currently has 19.5 million registrations, says Avadh Shah, who is the India Director for Chess.com. He points out that an average of 500k new users download the app every month with nine million monthly active users and one million daily active users on average. The app — conceived in the USA in 2005 by two college friends Erik Allebest (who is currently the CEO) and Jay Severson — was named by TIME Magazine on its 2023 list of the 100 Most Influential Companies. Just how much influence the app wields in the sport became apparent in December 2024, when the world of chess was almost torn apart into two neat halves with some of the world's top players like Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura taking on the global governing body of chess, FIDE, over their participation in the Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour.