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## Hyderabad to host key meeting on India's Olympic vision and 2036 bid

Hyderabad: A two-day, high-level meeting to prepare a strategic vision for the 2029 Los Angeles Olympics preparations and also to debate India's ambitious bid to host the 2036 Summer Games will be held in Hyderabad from March 7 to 8. Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports and Labour & Employment, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, will chair the meeting to be held at Kanha Shanti Vanam here.

Sports Ministers from various States/Union Territories, senior sports administrators, key Government officials, and domain experts to exchange ideas and craft a roadmap for India's emergence as a global sports powerhouse.

## Car hits road median cashing into two shops in Bachupally

Hyderabad: A car wreaked havoc at Bachupally in Medchal-Malkajgiri district on the city suburb on Thursday. It hit the road median and went up the pavement and crashed into two shops. As per available information, the car which was allegedly being driven in a rash and negligent manner went out of control and first crashed into the road median and jumped onto the pavement at VNR College. The car was proceeding from Bachupally towards Medchal, when the incident occurred. The car driver was injured in the mishap. The Bachupally police are investigating whether the driver of the car was under the influence of alcohol. The CCTV footage from the nearby spots is being examined.

## No season should be off-season for Uttarakhand, says PM Modi

Praising Uttarakhand's spiritual significance, he expressed gratitude for being able to visit the winter abode of Goddess Ganga. "This land of Devbhoomi is filled with spiritual energy. Visiting these sacred sites and meeting all of you fills me with great joy," he said. Recalling his deep connection with the state, PM Modi said, "Because of Maa Ganga's blessings, I got the opportunity to serve Uttarakhand. I believe it was her blessings that led me to Kashi, where I now serve as a parliamentarian. I have always felt that Maa Ganga has adopted me, and today, I am honoured to visit her maternal home, Mukhwa." The Prime Minister also reminisced about his bond with the people of Uttarakhand, especially the women who affectionately send him local produce. "I fondly remember my 'didi-bhulis' (sisters) from here. They keep sending me the famous red grams of Harsil and other local products. I am truly grateful for your love," he added. Reflecting on his last visit to Kedarnath, he reaffirmed his vision for the state. "I had said that this decade belongs to Uttarakhand. Though those words were mine, I believe it was Baba Kedar who empowered me to say them. And today, with his blessings, those words are becoming a reality," he said. PM Modi emphasised the significance of winter tourism in achieving economic empowerment for the state. "Tourism in Uttarakhand has

been seasonal, with a peak during March to June. But after that, the number of visitors drops, leading to economic challenges. It is crucial to ensure that no season is an off-season. Tourism should be active throughout the year," he said. Highlighting the state's potential, he stressed that winter is the most special time to experience "Devbhoomi" Uttarakhand's true essence.

"Winter tourism here offers thrilling activities like trekking and skiing, which are truly exhilarating experiences. Additionally, many pilgrimage sites hold special rituals during this season. Even in the villages, one can witness religious ceremonies that are deeply rooted in our ancient traditions," he said. "When in winter, there is fog in most part of the nation, then in these mountains, there is bright sunlight. This can be a special event and in Gharwali, one can say 'Gham taapo pariyatan' (sun-bathe tourism)," he added. He praised the Uttarakhand government's vision for 365-day tourism, stating that it will offer visitors diverse and enriching experiences. "Our double-engine government is committed to making Uttarakhand a developed state. From the Char Dham All-Weather Road to modern expressways, railway expansion, air travel, and helicopter services, Uttarakhand has seen rapid development over the past decade," he said.

## Khalistani extremist attempts to attack EAM Jaishankar in London, tears Indian flag



GNS News Agency, March 6

Hyderabad: In a major security breach occurred during the Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's visit to London, a Khalistani extremist attempted to disrupt the security while the minister was leaving in a car.

As Jaishankar was leaving the Cahtam House venue after a discussion, a group of Khalistani extremists were seen creating a commotion outside the venue and protesting with their flags. Incidentally, A man from the group ran towards the minister's car and even tore the Indian National flag in front of the police officers.

In a video, that went viral on social media, shows the attacker aggressively marching towards Jaishankar's car shouting slogans and insulting the Indian flag, while the police officers remain hesitant to react. However, later the police took him away. The Minister had left for London on March 4 to participate in the bilateral meetings being held with the British Foreign Secretary. According to reports, the two diplomats have discussed several issues including trade, strategic cooperation, and geopolitics. Jaishankar is expected to be in London till March 9.

## KTR reiterates demand for judicial probe in SLBC tunnel accident

GNS News Agency, March 6

Hyderabad: Charging the Congress government with gross negligence, BRS working president KT Rama Rao demanded Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to come out clean on the collapse of Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel. He reiterated that only an investigation with a High Court sitting judge can be relied upon, to unearth the facts. He was reacting to a news report in an English newspaper revealing that a report titled "Tunnel Seismic Prediction - 303 Plus" commissioned by Jaiprakash Associates Limited, the company which was awarded the SLBC tunnel contract in 2005, had warned about a possible "fault zone" in the tunnel, where the possibility of collapse is high. The report also found a decrease in rock strength in this stretch and highlighted that the stretch was a water-bearing zone. The news report also cited another research paper by former Director General of Geological Survey of India Mandapalli Raju and Jaiprakash Associate's geologist Rituraj Deshmukh, which stated that the tunnelling started with poor subsurface exploration. Apparently, the then BRS government had stopped the tunnelling indefinitely, soon after seepage was discovered in the walls of the SLBC tunnel. But the current Congress government resumed the works reportedly without conducting any prior study on the structural strength. Citing the news report, Rama Rao expressed his shock over the utter disregard of the Congress government, for the safety of the workers and public money in the SLBC project. "Not one but two reports highlighted the safety issue and even earmarked the exact same place of accident as the 'Red Zone'. One of the reports stated the same just days before the accident and still the government decided to go ahead with the tunnelling work?" he said. The BRS working president pointed out that eight families are broken and in shambles, while thousands of crores public money wasted. Yet, he suspected the tunnelling was allowed for the Congress party's commissions. "We demand the truth, from you and your entire cabinet, on behalf of those eight families and others who are seeking answers and justice," he asked the Chief Minister.

## Telangana's economy slipping under Congress rule: Harish Rao

GNS News Agency, March 6

Hyderabad: Former Minister and senior BRSMMLA T Harish Rao has criticised the Congress government over Telangana's declining tax revenues, stating that the State's economic slowdown contradicts the Congress government's claims of rising prosperity.

"Mr Chief Minister, it's not Telangana rising, but rather Telangana's tax collections falling," Harish Rao remarked, urging the government to acknowledge its failures, apologise to the people and take corrective measures to revive the State's economy. In a statement on Thursday, Harish Rao pointed out that the State's GST growth rate, which consistently remained above 6 per cent in the past six years (barring the Covid-19 period) and showcased a robust growth trajectory, plummeted to just 1 per cent in February under Revanth Reddy's leadership. He cautioned that it was a symptom of a larger problem, indicating a decline in economic activity, reduced consumer spending and falling business confidence.



GNS News Agency, March 6

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday emphasised the need for year-round tourism in Uttarakhand to strengthen the state's economy, asserting that "no season should be off-season" for the region. Addressing a large public gathering in Harsil, the Prime Minister extended his condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the recent tragic incident in Mana. "In this difficult time, the unity and support shown by the people of our country have provided immense strength to the affected families," he said.

## ED searches premises of T.N. Minister Senthilbalaji's associates



GNS News Agency, March 6

Searches by the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) are underway at some premises of the close associates of Tamil Nadu Electricity Minister V. Senthilbalaji in Karur and a few other locations in Tamil Nadu. At Karur, the premises of Sankar, a PWD contractor, on 80 feet road are among those being searched by the ED officials. According to sources, about 20 personnel from Kerala and Tamil Nadu are carrying out the searches.

It may be mentioned that the ED and the Income Tax Department had raided the same premises in 2023 and 2024 in connection with an alleged money laundering case. The searches are being conducted as part of a fresh money laundering probe against Mr. Senthilbalaji and others linked to alleged irregularities in the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC) that has monopoly over liquor trade in the State, official sources said.

## BRS MLC Kavitha demands separate bills for effective implementation of BC reservations

GNS News Agency, March 6

Hyderabad: BRS MLC K Kavitha reiterated her demand that the Congress government in Telangana introduce three separate bills to increase reservations for Backward Classes (BCs) in education, employment, and local body elections, for effective implementation. She reminded that the State government itself admitted that BCs constitute 46 per cent of Telangana's population. "If they (Congress) are truly committed to social justice, they must bring three separate bills for education, employment, and political reservations in local bodies," she asserted.

Speaking to the media on Thursday, Kavitha pointed out that local body reservations fell under the State's jurisdiction as per Article 243G of the Constitution. She stated that while education and employment quotas may have legal complexities at 46 per cent, there were no hurdles in implementing political reservations which were entirely within the State's jurisdiction.

"If this government believes in Rahul Gandhi's vision of BC empowerment, they should prove it through action by introducing separate bills and avoid unnecessary legal hurdles in future," she remarked. On the recent MLC election results, the BRS leader dismissed them, stating that they did not reflect the true spirit of democracy. She stated that neither the BJP nor Congress fielded a BC candidate, while the BRS did not contest which changed the equation. "When we called for BC unity, a BC candidate emerged and put up a strong fight. Had either of the national parties genuinely backed BC representation, the outcome would have been different," she said.

Kavitha extended condolences over the killing of a Telangana citizen in the US. She urged swift government action to bring the victim's body home. "This is heartbreaking. Both the State and Central governments must act urgently. My prayers are with the family, and I stand with Indian students in the US who may be feeling vulnerable," she said, urging them to stay strong and immediately approach the Indian Embassy, whenever help is required.

## Modi offers prayers to Goddess Ganga at Mukhwa temple

GNS News Agency, March 6

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday (March 6, 2025) offered prayers at Mukhwa temple — the winter abode of Goddess Ganga in Uttarakhand district. Mukhwa is located on the way to the Gangotri temple dedicated to Goddess Ganga. Her idol is moved to Mukhwa temple from Gangotri Dham every year after the closure of its gates for winter. The Prime Minister will flag off a trek and bike rally and address a public meeting in Harshil. Mr. Modi's visit to the temple, his first as Prime Minister, is expected to boost winter pilgrimage and tourism in Uttarakhand. It comes a day after the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs headed by him approved two major ropeway projects to Kedarnath and Hemkund Sahib worth over 6,000 crore. The Uttarakhand government has initiated a Winter Tourism programme this year to promote religious tourism and boost the local economy, homestays and businesses, among others. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami extended a warm welcome to the Prime Minister in a post on X. "A hearty welcome and



greetings to the prime minister on his visit to Devbhoomi Uttarakhand, the sacred land of religion, spiritualism and sacrifice. Residents of the state are excited to receive the prime minister in Mukhwa-Harsil, a land full of spiritual and natural beauty," he said. "Certainly, this winter trip of yours will give new dimensions to the cultural, spiritual and tourism development of our state," Mr. Dhami said and hoped that Mr. Modi's visit would put Mukhwa on the global tourism map.

## Sitarama project realises KCR's vision: KTR

GNS News Agency, March 6

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao hailed the successful lifting of water from the Sitarama Lift Irrigation Project, calling it the fulfillment of a long-cherished dream of former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao. He stated that the project, initiated during the BRS regime, would serve as a lifeline for Khammam's irrigation needs. "With the suc-



cessful lifting of water from the Sitarama Project, agricultural lands under the Sagara ayacut will flourish," he said. Designed to interlink Godavari River water with the Nagarjuna Sagar Canal carrying Krishna River water, the project was expected

to revitalise lakhs of acres under the Nagarjuna Sagar Left Canal in Telangana, ensuring a steady water supply to farmers, he said, adding that the Sitarama project offered a permanent solution to the irrigation needs of Khammam, Bhadrachalam, Bhadrachalam, Suryapet and Mahabubabad districts. He congratulated the people of Khammam and lauded Chandrashekhara Rao's vision for making the project a reality.

## KCR gears up for grassroots meetings to strengthen BRS cadre

Hyderabad: Keeping up with the momentum gained from last month's BRS extended executive body meeting, party president and former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao is set to reinvigorate the party's grassroots network. Starting in the next few weeks, he will personally engage with local leaders to assess ground realities and boost the morale of party workers.

## Maharashtra govt to set up media centre to monitor news content



The government has given the administrative and financial approval for setting up the centre, the GR said. A professional consultant will be hired to collect government-related news in PDF format

GNS News Agency, March 6

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government will set up a media monitoring centre to analyse news content of the print, electronic and digital media, and has allocated a budget of Rs 10 crore for the purpose. The centre will collect and analyse all factual and misleading news reports in print and

broadcast media, and prepare a factual report, according to a government resolution (GR) published on Wednesday. If there is a misleading news, it will be clarified in real-time. If there is a negative news, clarification will be given expeditiously, it said. The requirement for the centre was felt because of the growth of publications, channels and digital platforms, and there was a need for monitoring under one umbrella on the news related to government schemes, policies is given, the government order said. The centre, to work from 8 am to 10 pm every day, will be handled by the Directorate of Information and Publicity. The government has given the administrative and financial approval for setting up the centre, the GR said. A professional consultant will be hired to collect government-related news in PDF format. The news will be bifurcated into categories like positive, negative news, departments, issues, incidents and individuals. During monitoring of the electronic media content, the consultant would provide hourly alerts about trends, mood and tone of the news content. The consultant will be hired through an e-tender process for a period of one year. The Directorate General of Information and Public Relations (DGIPR) is authorised to extend the consultant's term to two years if the work is found to be satisfactory. The term should not exceed more than three years, the GR said.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Missing teachers

The latest rationalisation exercise by Haryana's Elementary Education Department has laid bare the dismal state of public education in the state. A staggering 487 government primary schools function without a single teacher, while 294 schools have no students enrolled. If this is the picture of primary education, the state of secondary and higher education is even grimmer. The rationalisation process has resulted in the elimination of 5,313 teaching posts, despite a significant teacher shortage. The student-teacher ratio may seem manageable at 28:1, but the reality on the ground is much worse, with over 16,500 TGT and 11,341 PGT positions lying vacant. Even universities and colleges are reeling under a massive faculty shortage, with nearly half of the lecturer posts in government colleges unfilled.

Budgetary neglect further worsens the crisis. The Punjab and Haryana High Court had last year, while hearing a petition in a related matter, flagged the surrender of ₹10,675 crore in education funds due to underutilisation. If the government is unable to use the allocated funds effectively, the promise of strengthening education under the National Education Policy (NEP) rings hollow. Not surprisingly, Haryana government schools are lagging behind Punjab and Himachal Pradesh in arithmetic and literacy skills. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024 paints a grim picture — only 43.1 per cent of Class VIII students in rural government schools can perform division, a decline from 49.5 per cent in 2022. Punjab leads with 58 per cent, followed by HP at 44 per cent. Reading skills are equally concerning, with just 53.9 per cent of Class V students able to read a Class II-level text. Instead of shutting down schools and cutting teaching positions, the government must prioritise recruitment, infrastructure and funding. Otherwise, Haryana's education sector will continue its downward spiral, leaving students at a disadvantage.

## When I started putting broken pieces together, I realised God had a greater plan for me: Noella Kambli

GNS News Agency, March 6

Noella Kambli still has her dimpled smile and the sparkle in her eyes — qualities that captivated Vinod Kambli, the cricket sensation of the early '90s. He first saw her as he walked into Pune's Hotel Blue Diamond, where she worked as a receptionist, and he fell in love with her at first sight. Three decades later, even though her marriage to Kambli was not without its challenges and eventually ended after a few years, Noella has retained her radiance and vivaciousness.

While some might retreat from the spotlight and seek anonymity to heal from heartbreak, Noella took a different approach. She chose to open her heart even wider and dedicated herself to helping others. At 53, she has gained a notable reputation in Pune for her numerous charity initiatives that have significantly impacted the lives of prisoners, underprivileged women, and destitute children. The third of five children, Noella had a happy childhood in a close-knit Catholic family. With a propensity towards sports, she was a table tennis champion as well as the youngest person to represent Maharashtra in hockey at 13 and "the fastest runner in my school". In addition to winning many medals in sports, she was also a school prefect at St Anne's. A part-time job as a receptionist whilst in college, at the Koregaon Park's Hotel Blue Diamond, Pune's only five-star at the time, changed her life when Vinod Kambli came to play a match in Pune and saw her there. A whirlwind romance culminated in a beautiful marriage ceremony at the St Patrick's church in Pune in May 1994. "I was just 21 when I married Vinod. Having married a celebrity, life totally changed for me. The limelight, the extra media attention and the possessiveness of Vinod made me feel on top of the world," says Noella who, despite not knowing much about cricket, plunged into that world with characteristic enthusiasm.

"I enjoyed myself at the cricket matches, sitting there in the VIP seats cheering the loudest. Vinod was at his best those days with two consecutive double hundreds added to his career graph. I didn't know much about cricket, but love conquered it all; I still remained his best cheerleader," says Noella, who toured the world around with Kambli. Kambli's back-to-back double hundreds — 224 and 227 — in Test matches against England and Zimbabwe further cemented his place in the team and cricketing records. Life with the Mumbai southpaw became the stuff dreams are made of for Noella. "But all this crashed.....," says Noella. The magic began to unravel, and finally, the marriage was dissolved in August 2012. "As I faced the realities of life and started putting the broken pieces together, I realised that God had a greater plan for me — to do small things with great love. That is when I started my own small dream charity project," she adds. With her family's support, Noella set up Ladybird Events, a company that gives a platform to small-scale women entrepreneurs to showcase their talents by organising exhibitions for them to sell their products. Her efforts to rehabilitate prisoners earned her the designation of joint secretary of the Prison Minister of India. Her church recognised her for personally arranging transportation for over 700 homebound senior citizens to receive the vaccine during the Covid pandemic, for which she received the Maharashtra Rajya Puraskar. However, her most treasured accolade is being a recipient of the prestigious Mother Teresa Award for her social work, which she received for three consecutive years: 2019, 2020, and 2021. Noella Kambli's efforts to rehabilitate prisoners earned her the designation of joint secretary of the Prison Minister of India. Her efforts to rehabilitate prisoners earned her the designation of joint secretary of the Prison Minister of India. Fate dealt a harsh blow when Noella lost her hero, her father, in 2024. Despite this sudden and untimely loss, she says, "I still draw my strength from my late dad, whom I continue to look up to with love and admiration." Noella is a devoted family person, but she never remarried. "Remarriage was never in my plans. My complete involvement with my family and my brother's three children made me feel fulfilled and not like I was missing out on having my own kids. My nephews, David, Daniel, and Darren, mean the world to me, and I feel like their second mother." Creditably, life's ups and downs have not turned Noella bitter. "I have taken everything in my stride.

## Conman held for cheating people on false assurances of recruitment into Army



GNS News Agency, March 6

In a joint operation, the Military Intelligence (MI) unit of the Indian Army's Southern Command and the Pune city police have arrested a conman who was posing as Army personnel and cheating several individuals with false promises of recruiting them into the Army. The police identified the accused as Nitin Balaji Suryawanshi, a native of Devni in the Latur district of Maharashtra. Bharat Mahate, 23, from Hadapsar, lodged the FIR in this case at the Bundgarden police station on Saturday. Based on inputs from MI, a police team nabbed Suryawanshi from the Southern Command area in Pune on Saturday. During the investigation, the police recovered an Army uniform from his residence in Pune city. The police booked the accused under sections 318 (4) [cheating that involves inducing someone to deliver property or alter valuable securities], 204 (impersonating

public servant), 205 (wearing or carrying the garb or token of a public servant with fraudulent intent) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). As per the FIR, the accused came in contact with the complainant at the Udgir railway station in Latur in August 2024. The accused allegedly claimed that he works with the Indian Army. He also told the complainant that he recruited people into the Army, the police said.

Later, he allegedly met with the complainant in the Southern Command area of Pune. The FIR stated that the accused was wearing an Army uniform during this meeting. The accused allegedly demanded Rs 2 lakh from the complainant, promising to recruit him into the Indian Army within a month. The complainant said he paid Rs 1,75,550 to the accused over time but never received an Army job in return. Upon learning about this scam, the Military Intelligence unit focused on Suryawanshi and shared his information with the police. The investigation revealed that the accused had also cheated numerous people from Maharashtra and Karnataka by accepting large sums of money from them under false promises of securing jobs in the Indian Army. Authorities revealed that the accused has connections with a serving Army personnel. Further investigation is underway to determine if anyone from the force assisted him in the scam. The police said the accused posed as a fake Army officer for several years, frequently wandering the Southern Command area while dressed in an Army uniform. According to police sources, he had previously been involved in the private travel business.

## Pod taxi system trials begin in Thane to ease congestion, improve commuter links



GNS News Agency, March 6

Maharashtra Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik at the Arvind Pendse Auditorium in Thane during the meeting. Maharashtra Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik at the Arvind Pendse Auditorium in Thane during the meeting. In a bid to ease traffic congestion and improve transit efficiency in the Ghodbunder area, a pod taxi service is set to debut, providing crucial connectivity between the internal and main metro systems. The project, which was presented to Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik at the Arvind Pendse Auditorium of the Thane Municipal Corporation, will be introduced on a pilot basis and, if successful, expanded to serve the Mira-Bhayander Municipal Corporation. "The service is expected to alleviate traffic and significantly cut travel times for commuters," Sarnaik said following the

meeting. The pod taxi system, designed to operate on an elevated track akin to a ropeway, will provide a much-needed alternative for navigating the often-congested roads, particularly during the monsoon season when waterlogging exacerbates delays. The route is planned to span a 1.8-kilometer stretch between Bhayander Pada and Vihang Hill, with taxis moving at speeds of 60-70 km/hr, carrying up to 16 passengers at a time. The last metro stations for both the main and internal lines will converge in Ghodbunder, and the pod taxi service aims to improve access to this pivotal point. Sarnaik emphasized that the pilot project would come at no cost to either the municipal corporation or the state government. During the meeting, Sarnaik also reviewed broader development efforts in the Ovala-Majiwada assembly constituency. Additionally, a survey of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) will be conducted to identify other potential sites for pod taxi and ropeway systems. Ropeways will be prioritized in areas where they are deemed feasible, while pod taxis will be considered for other appropriate locations. "The proposal has been discussed in a cabinet meeting, and further steps will be taken once the survey is complete," Sarnaik said. The new transit system will run on electricity, with its infrastructure supported by cement girders. Steel wheels and tracks will be used to ensure durability, according to company representatives involved in the project. If the pilot proves successful, this service could play a key role in reducing congestion across this rapidly growing suburban region.

## Owners of overage vehicles can retrieve documents before scrapping: Delhi transport dept

GNS News Agency, March 6

The department had started deregistering overage vehicles in Delhi from January 2022, following directions from the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The department had started deregistering overage vehicles in Delhi from January 2022, following directions from the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal (NGT). Give at least one chance to the owner to inspect an overage vehicle before it is impounded or scrapped, the Transport Department has instructed all Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs) in Delhi in its latest order. The direction comes amid a rise in complaints against the RVSFs for not allowing the owners to retrieve valuable items and important documents from their vehicles. "Complaints are being received from the owners whose vehicles have been seized or impounded in the enforcement drive against the 'end-of-life' vehicle that they are not allowed to recover important and valuable documents or items kept in the seized vehicle," read the order issued recently.

"In view of the above, all the RVSFs associated with the Transport Department are hereby directed to give at least one chance to the vehicle owners or their authorised representatives to inspect their vehicles and recover their important documents and items," the order added. Along with all the enforcement agencies like the Delhi Traffic Police, the Transport Department had launched a drive against the overage or 'end-of-life' vehicles in October last year. The department had started deregistering overage vehicles in Delhi from January 2022, following directions from the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal (NGT). It deregistered about 60 lakh vehicles as of November 13, according to the official data. As per the directions, which aim to curb vehicular pollution, petrol vehicles that have completed 15 years and diesel vehicles that have completed 10 years are prohibited on the roads in the national capital.

## Previous complex demolished over poor construction, PWD to build houses for judicial officers on same plot in Dwarka

GNS News Agency, March 6

The Public Works Department (PWD) is planning to build Type V and VI residential flats for judicial officers in Dwarka's Sector 19, estimated to cost Rs 173 crore. These new flats will be constructed on the same land where work on building 70 flats had been undertaken earlier for the judicial officers. However, before the project could be completed and the flats allotted to the officers, work on demolishing the residential complex had to be undertaken, as several flaws had come to light, including poor quality of construction and structural cracks, among others.

"The demolition work is almost complete... Currently, work on removing malba and waste materials is in progress... The department is now planning to use the land for constructing new flats for the judicial officers... Before beginning civil work on the ground, the department has hired consultancy firms to decide on how to go about construct-



ing the residential complex," a senior PWD official said. Officials said that they plan to construct a residential complex with 52 Type V flats, 34 Type VI flats, two basements, and a sub-station. While the buildings will come up on an area of 26,387 sq m, the basements will be built on an area of 11,564 sq m. Work to construct 70 flats under the old project was awarded in 2014 with a target to complete it by February 2017. However, the contract was rescinded in 2018 because the work remained incomplete. By then, Rs 30 crore of the Rs 48 crore funds allotted for the project had already been spent, said officials. "As the project remained incomplete, the department issued a tender again for the remaining work. A contractor was again chosen, and around Rs 2.5 crore was paid. But this contractor, too, left the work incomplete and informed the department that the existing structure was unstable and cracks were developing," said an official.

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## Brazilian woman arrested at Mumbai airport with cocaine worth Rs 11 crore in stomach



GNS News Agency, March 6

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has arrested a Brazilian woman at Mumbai's international airport for trying to smuggle cocaine worth nearly Rs 11 crore, which was concealed in around 100 capsules ingested in her body.

The DRI said on Sunday that based on specific intelligence that a Brazilian national would be attempting to smuggle narcotics into India, its officials recently intercepted a woman passenger at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, where she had arrived from São Paulo. When questioned, she admitted to ingesting capsules containing narcotic drugs for smuggling them into India, the DRI said in a statement. She was then admitted to a nearby government hospital where, around 100 capsules containing 1,096 g of cocaine, valued at Rs 10.96 crore in the illicit market, were recovered from her body under a doctor's guidance. The cocaine was seized under the NDPS Act and the woman was subsequently arrested. Investigators are trying to find out information on her handler and her accomplices who were supposed to collect drugs from her, DRI sources said. The central agency has pressed multiple charges against her, including smuggling a commercial quantity of drugs, a charge that could attract 20 years of imprisonment.

## Maharashtra transport union workers protest, demand better safety

GNS News Agency, March 6

MSRTC union staffers stage a protest at Swargate bus depot on Saturday demanding stringent action over the rape that took place on February 25. Pavan Khengre MSRTC union staffers stage a protest at Swargate bus depot on Saturday demanding stringent action over the rape that took place. Members of the Maharashtra State Transport Kamgar Sanghatana held a protest at the Swargate bus station on Saturday demanding better security after a 26-year-old woman was allegedly raped at the station on Tuesday morning. Nearly 15-20 workers of the union gathered at Swargate and raised slogans in support of women's safety.

Sheela Naikwade, women chairperson of the union, said, "The incident that happened here is extremely condemnable and the decision by authorities to provide more security to women travellers is positive. But we demand that women transport workers should also be provided protection as they also have to do midnight shifts." Dilip Parab, divisional head of the union, reiterated his point that the four abandoned ST Colony buildings up for redevelopment have become a spot for drinking alcohol and smoking weed. He said this is a security issue and unauthorised car parkings and illegal tyre repair shops have also come up there. "We have raised this issue with the police earlier, but no action was taken," he added. Sohams is a Correspondent with the Indian Express in Pune. A journalism graduate, he was a fact-checker before joining the Express. Sohams currently covers education and is also interested in civic issues, health, human rights, and politics. ... Read More

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GNS News Agency, March 6

The Public Works Department (PWD) is planning to build Type V and VI residential flats for judicial officers in Dwarka's Sector 19, estimated to cost Rs 173 crore. These new flats will be constructed on the same land where work on building 70 flats had been undertaken earlier for the judicial officers. However, before the project could be completed and the flats allotted to the officers, work on demolishing the residential complex had to be undertaken, as several flaws had come to light, including poor quality of construction and structural cracks, among others.

"The demolition work is almost complete... Currently, work on removing malba and waste materials is in progress... The department is now planning to use the land for constructing new flats for the judicial officers... Before beginning civil work on the ground, the department has hired consultancy firms to decide on how to go about constructing the residential complex," a senior PWD official said. Officials said that they plan to construct a residential complex with 52 Type V flats, 34 Type VI flats, two basements, and a sub-station. While the buildings will come up on an area of 26,387 sq m, the basements will be built on an area of 11,564 sq m. Work to construct 70 flats under the old project was awarded in 2014 with a target to complete it by February 2017. However, the contract was rescinded in 2018 because the work remained incomplete. By then, Rs 30 crore of the Rs 48 crore funds allotted for the project had already been spent, said officials. "As the project remained incomplete, the department issued a tender again for the remaining work. A contractor was again chosen, and around Rs 2.5 crore was paid. But this contractor, too, left the work incomplete and informed the department that the existing structure was unstable and cracks were developing," said an official. "Following this, the engineers responsible for the project abandoned the work... They sought time to approach consultants..., the official added.

# DeepSeek's market disruption must awaken India

Artificial intelligence (AI)



GNS News Agency, March 6

DeepSeek, a Chinese company, has shaken up the global tech industry and stock markets with its low-cost artificial intelligence (AI) model. This breakthrough has forced critics to reconsider China's position vis-à-vis the United States in the race to advancement and dominance in AI and computational capabilities. DeepSeek's innovation has caught the attention of not just policymakers but also business leaders such as Mark Zuckerberg, who opened war rooms for engineers after DeepSeek's success and who are now eager to understand its formula for disruption. So what DeepSeek, which is originally not a core AI firm but a financial trading company, has essentially done is to create generative AI models that perform on a par with the current leader, OpenAI's ChatGPT, while requiring significantly lower costs for development and operations.

How does DeepSeek's Innovation affect India's dominance in IT? The core of DeepSeek's success lies in its ability to overcome the limitations of expensive computational power, giving it a significant cost advantage over competitors worldwide. This disruption is reminiscent of India's long-standing dominance in the global information technology (IT) sector, which has been built on its competitive edge through an abundant supply of skilled, English-speaking, and cost-effective labour. However, with generative AI eliminating both skill and language barriers, DeepSeek's innovation has accelerated the rise of cheaper, more efficient alternatives that can replace low-cost IT service providers at an accelerated pace, posing a serious threat to India's IT dominance.

DeepSeek's breakthrough not only strengthens China's position in AI but also opens the door for broader advancements in IT services through AI-driven automation. The Indian IT sector, which has long thrived on cost-effective labour-led service models, now faces a reality where AI can easily replace repetitive, low-value tasks that were once its competitive advantage. DeepSeek's success signals that Indian IT giants have fallen behind their Chinese counterparts in this new era of technological competition and innovation. What can organisations learn from DeepSeek? The biggest lesson DeepSeek offers to Indian IT giants is the power of research and development (R&D). DeepSeek treated AI product development as a "sidekick" rather than a core activity, yet this investment in innovation has paid off tremendously. This highlights the importance of utilising surplus capital as well as idle resources, both capital and human, towards R&D rather than merely optimising workforce efficiency. Companies should foster an environment that encourages research, experimentation, and a tolerance for failure. Instead of focusing solely on delivering immediate business objectives, organisations must cultivate a culture that goes beyond routine deliverables. DeepSeek's approach of treating AI development as a secondary initiative reflects its willingness to take risks without expecting guaranteed returns. By normalising failure as part of the innovation process, it has created a foundation for groundbreaking advancements. For Indian IT firms, the takeaway is clear: investing in R&D, even as a secondary pursuit, can lead to game-changing breakthroughs. The key is to build an ecosystem that values long-term innovation over short-term optimisation.

India lags behind in R&D investment, a critical factor for sustaining long-term economic competitiveness. India's gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD) remains below 1% of GDP, far lower than that of other major economies, including China. According to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data, China invested around 2.43% of its GDP in R&D as of 2021, underscoring India's need for urgent policy intervention in boosting domestic R&D in cutting-edge technologies such as AI. A key issue is the lack of investment in advanced research, particularly in hiring top talent, including PhDs, who are essential for driving innovation.

## 286 lions, 456 leopards died in Gujarat in two years, says Forest Minister in Assembly

GNS News Agency, March 6

At least 286 lions, among them 143 cubs, died in Gujarat over the last two years, and 58 of these fatalities were due to unnatural causes, state Forest Minister Mulubhai Bera informed the legislative assembly on Tuesday (March 4, 2025). Responding to a query by senior Congress MLA Shailesh Parmar during Question Hour, Bera said 456 leopards, including 140 cubs, also died in two years -- 2023 and 2024 -- in the state. Of the 286 lion deaths, 121 were reported in 2023 and 165 in 2024, he said.

Gujarat is the world's last abode of Asiatic lions. As per the last census conducted in June 2020, the state is home to 674 Asiatic lions, mainly the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary. In case of leopards, 225 died in 2023 and 231 in 2024, the minister said in a written reply in the assembly during the ongoing budget session. While 228 lions succumbed to natural causes, 58 fatalities were due to unnatural causes such as the big cats getting hit by vehicles or drowning in open wells, he said. Among leopards, 303 deaths were due to natural causes and 153 fatalities were attributed to unnatural reasons, Bera said. The state government has taken various steps to prevent unnatural deaths of big



cats such as appointment of veterinary doctors and introduction of an ambulance service for timely intervention and treatment of lions and other wild animals, the minister told the House. Other measures include building speed-breakers and installing signboards on roads passing through sanctuary areas, regular foot patrolling in forests, building parapet walls for open wells near forests, putting up fences on both sides of the railway track near the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary and radio-collaring Asiatic lions to track their movement, he said.

## BSNL has turned a profit, but has not become profitable



GNS News Agency, March 6

The Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) reported a quarterly net profit in FY25Q3, its first in over 17 years. While this is a significant moment for the beleaguered State-owned telecom company, there is still a long road to recovery. BSNL has achieved a profit through a combination of cost-cutting measures and a slight increase in revenue. It earned a revenue of ₹19,330 crore from operations in 2024, close to half of what it earned in 2006 (Chart 1).

Chart 1 | The chart shows BSNL's revenue from operations from 2006 to 2024 (in & crore). Chart appears incomplete? Click to remove AMP mode

The company's expenses fell drastically in 2021 (Chart 2), following a huge reduction in the employee count using early voluntary retirement schemes (Chart 3). Chart 2 | The chart shows BSNL's total expenses from 2006 to 2024 (in & crore). Chart 3 | The chart shows the number of employees at BSNL between 2014 and 2024

From 2021, there was also a sharp reduction in finance costs, such as the interest paid on loans, and depreciation and amortisation expenses too (Chart 4). Chart 4 | The chart shows the break-up of BSNL's expenses from 2006 to 2024. While cost-cutting measures have helped, the issues on the income front persist. Understandably, BSNL's once-flourishing landline business has bottomed out. However, its cellular business too has flattened out since the intro-

duction of Reliance's Jio in 2016, as the average revenue earned per user declined rapidly (Chart 5A).

Chart 5A | The chart shows BSNL's revenue from sales of wired and wireless services from 2006 to 2024 (in & crore). While its traditional broadband services have fizzled out, there is a slow but consistent uptick in its fibre-to-the-home internet business (Chart 5B).

Chart 5B | The chart shows BSNL's revenue from the sales of broadband services and Fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) (in & crore). A considerable amount of money is also made from leased lines — high-speed network for businesses — and by leasing its infrastructure (Chart 5C). Chart 5C | The chart shows BSNL's revenue from leased lines and leased infrastructure (in & crore). BSNL's market share in the wireless business — where private players make most of their money — continues to decline. From over 20% in 2005, it halved to 10% by 2022 and went below 10% in the last two years (Chart 6). Chart 6 | The chart shows the Indian wireless subscriber market share (%) between 2005 and 2024

## India imports oil worth 112 bn euro from Russia

New Delhi: India, the world's third largest oil consuming and importing nation, spent 112.5 billion euro (about Rs 1.5 lakh crore) on buying crude oil from Russia since the start of the Ukraine war, a European think tank said on Thursday.

The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) released a report on payments to Russia for fossil fuels since February 24, 2022. "According to our estimates, since the beginning of the war, Russia earned EUR 835 billion in revenue from fossil fuel exports," it said. China was the biggest buyer of Russian fossil fuel at EUR 235 billion (made up of EUR 170 billion for oil, EUR 34.3 billion for coal and EUR 30.5 billion for gas). India, according to CREA, bought fossil fuels worth EUR 205.84 billion from Russia from the beginning of the war until March 2, 2025. This comprised EUR 112.5 billion (USD 121.59 billion) for purchase of crude oil, which is refined into fuels like petrol and diesel at refineries, and EUR 13.25 billion for coal. India, which is more than 85 per cent dependent on imports to meet its crude oil needs, spent USD 232.7 billion on crude imports in 2022-23 (April 2022 to March 2023) and USD 234.3 billion in 2023-24. In the first 10 months of the current fiscal, it spent USD 195.2 billion. India, which has traditionally sourced its oil from the Middle East, began importing a large volume of oil from Russia soon after the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

## U.P. family with 130 boats earns 30 crore in 45 days during Maha Kumbh; Yogi praises 'bold decision'



GNS News Agency, March 6

A day after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath shared the story of a boatman earning ₹30 crore during the recent Maha Kumbh, the Uttar Pradesh government on Wednesday (March 5, 2025) shared details about Pintu Mahara and said his "bold decision" to expand his fleet just before the mega religious gathering changed his life. According to a statement issued on Wednesday, the 45-day Maha Kumbh brought forth many success stories, but one that stood out

was that of Pintu Mahara, the boatman from the Arail area of Prayagraj. "Pintu Mahara, a boatman from the Arail area of Prayagraj, earned ₹30 crores in 45 days. Pintu's life took a dramatic turn with one bold decision. Anticipating a massive influx of devotees, he expanded his fleet from 60 to 130 boats ahead of the Maha Kumbh," reads the statement.

"This strategic move proved highly rewarding, ensuring substantial earnings and securing his family's future for generations," the statement said. The press statement did not give other details including the cost incurred on purchasing the boat and the daily cost of running one boat. The statement came a day after Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath told the State Assembly about the earning of the family, while countering the opposition's criticism of the Maha Kumbh. Reacting to the Samajwadi Party's allegation that the boatmen of Prayagraj were "exploited", the Chief Minister told the House, "I am telling the success story of a boatman's family. They have 130 boats. In 45 days [of Maha Kumbh], they made a profit ₹30 crore... This means each boat has earned ₹23 lakh. On a daily basis, they earned ₹50,000-52,000 from each boat." The Maha Kumbh 2025 began on January 13 ended on February 26. The state government has claimed that over 65 Crore devotees visited Maha Kumbh.

## At first Manipur security review since President's Rule, Home Minister directs restoration of damaged religious places

GNS News Agency, March 6

At a security review meeting last week, Union Home Minister Amit Shah directed the Manipur administration to restore religious places that had been damaged or vandalised during the May 2023 ethnic violence in the State, a senior government official told The Hindu. The move is aimed at providing a healing touch to both the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities, the official said. In August 2023, the Manipur government had informed the Supreme Court that "386 religious institutions of both the communities suffered damage" after ethnic violence erupted in the State on May 3, 2023. The top court directed, in September 2023, that the State government should immediately identify all religious buildings in the State — including Christian churches, Hindu temples, Sanamahi temples, mosques, and any building of any other religion — and protect these religious structures from encroachment and any further damage or destruction. 'Clear roads, fence border' Mr. Shah reviewed Manipur's security scenario on March 1, for the first time since the State was placed under President's Rule on February 13. A statement by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said that Mr. Shah directed officials to ensure the free movement of people on all roads across the State by March 8, and also work on early completion of the fencing on the Manipur-Myanmar border and dismantling of the drug network in the State. Weapons recovery deadline The official said that the Home Minister had emphasised that all looted weapons should be recovered by June 30. A large number of weapons are either with civilians or insurgent groups active in the State. The presence of weapons in the hands of the public has also aided large-scale extortion and abductions in the State.



Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla had on February 20 asked civilians to surrender looted weapons, later extending the deadline to March 6, failing which strict action would follow. Around 6,000 police weapons and lakhs of rounds of ammunition were looted from armouries since violence broke out. Around 2,000 looted police weapons have either been surrendered or recovered so far. Peace teamt was also decided in the meeting that around 400 community leaders and eminent personalities will be roped in to disseminate the message of peace, and highlight efforts to usher in development in the State. On June 10, 2023, the MHA had constituted a 51-member peace committee chaired by former Manipur Governor Anusuiya Uijkey. However, members of both the communities rejected the committee. Around 250 people have been killed in the Manipur violence and scores are still missing. More than 62,000 people who were displaced from their homes are living in relief camps. The Minister instructed that the rehabilitation of these internally displaced persons should begin soon.

## Supreme Court disapproves 'long dates' in matters of liberty

GNS News Agency, March 6

The Supreme Court on Thursday (March 6, 2025) said courts were not expected to keep the matters concerning liberty after a long gap. A Bench of Justices B.R. Gavai and Augustine George Masih made the observation after being informed that the Punjab and Haryana High Court posted the hearing of a plea for temporary bail on medical grounds after two months. The petitioner's counsel said he had approached the High Court for the grant of temporary bail on the ground that his client's two-year-old daughter needed urgent surgery.

The lawyer argued the High Court, in its order passed on February 21, posted the matter on April 22. "In the matters of liberty, the courts are not expected to keep the matter at such a long date," the Bench said and permitted the petitioner to move the High Court for an earlier hearing. The Bench asked the High Court to advance the date and hear the issue at least with regard to grant of temporary bail on the medical ground of operation of the petitioner's daughter. The petitioner's counsel said he had already filed an application before the High Court, where his regular bail was pending, for the advancement of the hearing but it was dismissed. "Now, with this observation, do you think that



the High Court will reject it?" Justice Gavai asked. The Bench said if it would issue notice on the plea, the respondent would seek time to respond to it and the matter might get delayed. In the High Court, the matter could be taken up expeditiously, the Bench said. "We expect the High Courts to at least give some weightage to our request," Justice Gavai observed. The counsel said the petitioner sought interim bail before the High Court but the matter was kept for hearing along with the main petition in April.

## No response from India on Trump tariffs so far



GNS News Agency, March 6

India did not respond on Wednesday (March 5, 2025) to U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement that his administration planned to go ahead with reciprocal tariffs against India. Mr. Trump's speech came a day after Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goyal met his U.S. counterpart Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, and was due to meet U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer for talks on the first phase of a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) to be finalised later this year. The BTA was decided on during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington on February 13. India's inclusion in the list of countries that would still face reciprocal tariffs after April 2 is believed

to be a disappointment for those in the government who believed that Mr. Modi's visit, and the promise of "fair-trade terms" in the BTA, could have postponed Mr. Trump's decision. However, officials say there is still time for negotiation with the Trump administration. India's silence on Wednesday (March 5, 2025) was in contrast to countries like China, Mexico, and Canada, which have already announced counter-reciprocal tariffs on U.S. goods. China and Canada have also filed complaints with the World Trade Organisation against the U.S. measures. While Brazil has not so far responded to the reciprocal tariffs, its President Lula da Silva had defied Mr. Trump's threat over a further "100% tariffs" on BRICS countries last week, saying that such threats would not stop the emerging economies from seeking alternatives to U.S. dollar dominance, "no matter what".

All eyes are now on the statements coming out of Mr. Goyal's meetings in Washington this week on discussions for the BTA's first phase. He and U.S. officials are believed to be looking at a number of areas where tariffs can be cut. Ahead of Mr. Modi's visit last month, New Delhi had already announced tariff cuts on bourbon whiskey, wines, motorcycles, and electric vehicles. According to the joint statement issued in February, India and the U.S. will target \$500 billion in bilateral trade by 2030, more than doubling last year's trade value of about \$200 billion, by ensuring "fairness, national security and job creation".

## Karnataka police crack family kidnapping near Bandipur Tiger Reserve, arrest 4



GNS News Agency, March 6

The Karnataka police investigating the mysterious disappearance of a family of three have rescued them from a farmhouse in the Vijayapura district and arrested four men who allegedly kidnapped them from a resort near Bandipur Tiger Reserve in the Chamara Nagar district. J Nishanth, 40, his wife Chandana, and their 7-year-old son had checked into the Country Club resort on March 2 but vanished the next day. As Chamara Nagar district borders two other states, Kerala and Tamil Nadu Police had also launched an investigation along with the Karnataka Police.

The police said they arrested Mallikarjuna, 30, from the Halladagennoru village in the Kolara taluk in the Vijayapura district; Eeranna Davalat Raya, 32, from the Kembavi village in the Surapura taluk in the Yadagiri district; Siddaramaiah, 40, from the Kachaganuru village in the Hunasagi taluk; and Vishwanath, 30, from the Khanapura village in the Sindagi taluk in the Vijayapura district. The three absconding suspects are Puneet Eerappa, Snehit Eerappa, and Bheemagowda. Puneet is suspected to be the kingpin behind the kidnapping.

Chamara Nagar Superintendent of Police B T Kavitha said the resort manager reported the abduction, prompting immediate police action. Investigators tracked the kidnapers using a vehicle registration number, Nishanth's mobile tower location, and toll gate surveillance. She said financial disputes were the reason behind the kidnapping. The police confirmed that the family was being held captive in a farmhouse at the Honnahalli village in the Sindagi taluk in Vijayapura. A police officer said that according to the accused, Nishanth had availed a loan of Rs 65 lakh from Puneeth which he lost in share trading. "Despite asking to return the money, he avoided the calls and requests. The gang followed Puneeth for some time and decided to kidnap the family," a police officer said, adding that they will have to verify the version. On Thursday, the accused were produced before a magistrate to take them to police custody for further probe. Nishanth had checked into the resort stating that he was an employee of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). He was carrying a fake ID card. However, police said Nishanth had previously worked in BBMP on a contract basis but falsified the information when he checked in to the resort.

## Construction conundrum: Pune's growth brings dust, noise and daily struggles for residents

GNS News Agency, March 6

Once known for its green spaces and pleasant climate, Pune has transformed into a city filled with cranes, drilling machines, and construction dust. For many residents and workers, this progression comes with daily hardships, dust-filled air, deafening noise, and disrupted livelihoods. Those living and working near construction sites are experiencing health issues, business losses, and a noticeable decline in their quality of life. Kondhwa, a rapidly growing residential hub, has witnessed a surge in high-rise construction. The ongoing projects in Kondhwa have become a significant source of distress for residents and workers, as constant noise and dust pollution make daily life increasingly challenging. Aryan Suresh, a BBA LLB student residing at Kumar Prithvi Properties, Malik Nagar, Kondhwa, has struggled with construction occurring directly opposite his apartment. Originally from the Andaman Islands, he finds the noise from drilling machines, especially in the mornings, extremely disruptive, particularly during exams. Beyond the noise, he is also concerned about the poor air quality. "Every time I return from college, my hair is covered in dust, and I can even taste sand in my mouth. I used to eat street food but often fell ill, later realising it was due to the dust. Now, I stick to packed meals, and washing my face has become essential because of the dust settling on my skin," he said. Sharanappa Hirole, a security guard at a Kondhwa hostel, has faced challenges due to the ongoing construction. "For the past six to seven months, houses have been built in front of my home, and the roads are under repair. The dust from drilling, bulldozers, and hammers is unbearable, and spraying water barely helps it from settling on my window and bed," Hirole said. "After night shifts, I return home in the morning when the construction noise is at its peak, making it difficult to rest," he said. Approaching summer another worry

A Zomato delivery worker, who wished to remain anonymous, described his daily struggles caused by ongoing construction in Kondhwa. "Dust is everywhere, so I wear goggles and a mask on deliveries. With summer approaching, the heat will make it unbearable, but I can't risk breathing in all that dust. Some roads are torn up for repairs, and during construction hours, my bike is covered in dust within minutes. The noise is another challenge; I often struggle to hear customers over the phone," he said.

In Baner, a suburb in Pune, residents have been heavily impacted by Metro construction and the proliferation of corporate buildings, leading to persistent noise pollution and accessibility challenges for businesses. Shashikant Chakhale, a security guard stationed at a construction site in Baner for the past two years, has developed dust allergies since the project began. "Even though they water the site to control the dust, it still spreads. I have no choice but to sit here every day," he said. A salesman at Vijay Sales, a high-rise near the Metro construction in Baner, echoed similar concerns. "Customer footfall has dropped, and on some days, the noise from hammering and machinery is intolerable," he stated.

At Pashan, Anuja Bali, founder of Itti's Skill School Foundation and MyWasteMyResponsibility as well as a founder member of Warrior Moms expressed her distress. "As a healthy person, I never had any allergies or sickness. But for the last three years I have been prone to eye redness and irritation, chest congestion, continuous cough, and migraines," she told.

## Why is the BMC constructing a multi-level automated parking lot at the heritage precinct of Flora Fountain

GNS News Agency, March 6

fountain The Rs 200 crore project is being executed to decongest the roads around this area, which is mainly a business district and records heavy inflow of vehicles throughout the day. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has started constructing a new multi-level robotic parking facility in south Mumbai's Hutatma Chowk, one of the prominent locations in the city. The Rs 200 crore project is being executed to decongest the roads around this area, which is mainly a business district and records heavy inflow of vehicles throughout the day.

About the parking lot. How will it operate?

The parking lot is being built on an open land parcel at Flora Fountain adjoining the Apsara Pen Mart. This area is also a heritage precinct comprising several art deco- and gothic-styled buildings around the periphery as well as the fountain. The facility will have four underground levels that will be able to accommodate 194 vehicles. The surface area above will act as a holding area. There will be an automated platform or lift in the holding area where one will have to park the car initially. Following this, the platform will go down and take the vehicle safely to a specific parking pitch in one of the four levels. The existing plot has a 12 metre access road on the western side and another 7 metre access road on the eastern side. The vehicles will enter the facility from the eastern side and exit on the western side. The retrieval time for vehicles in the multi-level car parking system will be around three minutes.

How will it help the city?

The Hutatma Chowk area is surrounded by several important government and commercial buildings including the Bombay High Court (HC) as well as headquarters of the State Bank of India (SBI) and other financial institutions. At present, there is no car parking facility available in this place, so most people park their vehicles on the roads. This leads to a reduction of the road space, resulting in vehicular

## India's resources and ability to do things are its biggest strengths: Australian Sports Commission chief Kieren Perkins



GNS News Agency, March 6

Kieren Perkins, CEO of the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), regarded as one of the world's greatest distance swimmers, having won four Olympic medals for Australia, retired from swimming in 2000. Transitioning from swimming, he transferred his knowledge and experience to build a successful career across the consulting and banking sectors. He was President of Swimming Australia until March 2022, when he took on the role of the CEO of the ASC, the government agency responsible for supporting and investing in sport at all levels. Perkins is in Gujarat for the two-day Australia-India Sports Excellence Forum at GIFT City Gandhinagar, which began Wednesday. In an exclusive interview with The Indian Express, he talks about how India should prioritise building inclusion across sports programmes from a paralympic and gender perspective. Excerpts: Australia and India have a joint statement highlighting sports as a priority for cooperation in their bilateral relationship. How do you see this taking shape? Kieren Perkins: We have a shared love of and commitment to compete at the Olympic and Paralympic Games that Australia is hosting in Brisbane in 2032, and India is now looking forward to the 2036 games. There is a lot of opportunity for us to collaborate and share the resources and the industry that's involved in developing and delivering sport. We have a long history of it in Australia, and we are experienced; our general drive for innovation gives us a lot of value to share, but we are often not very good at scaling and doing things bigger, and that's where I think the opportunity to engage with India really, really becomes quite powerful. There's a lot of opportunity.

How do you see the Australia-India Sports Excellence forum as a platform for building sports cooperation between the two countries? Perkins: It is a wonderful opportunity to come together, meet, and start talking about our shared opportunities. Hopefully, Australia can provide insight into our knowledge and experience through what we've already done over these few days. Brisbane will be our third Olym-

## Morning temperatures plummet in Hyderabad and districts



at multiple locations. Based on the temperature data provided by noted weather forecaster from Hyderabad, T Balaji, early morning temperatures dropped to 12 degree Celsius at University of Hyderabad, 12.2 degree Celsius at Rajendranagar, 14.6 degree at Moula Ali, 14.9 degree Celsius at Gachibowli, 16.1 degree Celsius at Sivarampalle and 16.6 degree Celsius at Begumpet. Till a day ago, the early morning temperatures at these locations ranged from 18 degree C to 22 degree Celsius.

GNS News Agency, March 6

Hyderabad: Early morning temperatures dipped sharply in several parts of Hyderabad and districts of Telangana State on Thursday, with cold and chilly winds bringing down the mercury by at least 3 to 4 degree Celsius at multiple locations



congestion during the day. The main purpose of constructing this parking lot is to take the parked vehicles off the road so that traffic can flow smoothly on the road. Why a robotic parking lot?

In Mumbai, land parcels for creating parking units are usually reserved in the BMC's development plan 2034 road map. However, with the increase in vehicular ownership in Mumbai, reservation of plots for gardens and open spaces is being changed to make parking facilities. Civic officials said that in a space-starved city like Mumbai, it's much more convenient to have these kinds of facilities since they are vertical in shape. "Setting up a horizontal conventional parking lot would require larger parcels of land. While these kinds of vertical facilities could be set up on much smaller land parcels. These facilities are pretty common in the western countries and we have all the necessary facilities to operate and maintain them," a civic official told The Indian Express. "At present, there is a dearth of open spaces in Mumbai, therefore, changing the reservation of the existing gardens and parks for making them into parking lots would be unfair. At the same time, vehicular density is increasing, and if we don't find a parking solution, then the roads will become occupied with illegal parking. Therefore, setting up these kinds of facilities is the only way forward," the official added.

pic and Paralympic Games at home, as well as multiple Commonwealth Games, as India has in 2010. But we need to start to share some of that experience and then open the doors to them where we can look for commercial opportunities to develop programmes, build technology, and help support businesses on both sides that want to get involved in the sports industry to help deliver.

How can Australia's experience help India both host the games and improve the tally of medals?

Perkins: We've had to go through the process and the International Olympic Committee has a new norm process that they're doing around game selection. We've been through it, and we've been successful in sharing what we've learned and helping with that knowledge and some of the expertise that we have to support that programme a bit. We're already seeing some of that, for instance, with the sports park that's being built out here near the Narendra Modi Stadium, the architects and designers, Australians that have helped with that (Brisbane-based consultant Populous has made the master plan and concept vision). So, this is one small example of where it's already happening. To hold a successful Olympic Games or Paralympic Games, of course, you need athletes, and you need the environment to help support athletic performance and growth. That's also something that Australia has a long and strong history in where we're successful across many different sports, and our community engagement is such that we think that there's probably some opportunity to help India start to develop not only the pathway to elite level, but to give more Indian children the opportunity to play and to develop skill. This is not because we think they'll be Olympians, but just because the active physical lifestyle and the lessons that you can get from that make all of us better in our lives.

What do you feel are India's strengths and areas that can be improved upon?

Perkins: One of the obvious strengths is India's resources and ability to do things. Once a decision is made, getting on with it and actually delivering in an incredibly short time frame is very impressive. So I think India's got a clear strength and a clear opportunity there. I think the broader dynamic of how to bring together major sporting events is because it's the Olympics and the Paralympics; you need to do both. So understanding the context of the Paralympics, how that is connected to and delivering both those events is an opportunity for us to help with—also navigating the requirements that the new norm delivers around building legacy and how the games are going to create a legacy that will support future generations of Indians in their journey. And also put India on the world stage through that event. So that's something that we've experienced more recently, and hopefully, we can and will have the opportunity to help support India and their journey.

## Sameer Wankhede, who arrested Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan, set to return to Mumbai

GNS News Agency, March 6

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has set aside an order that transferred Indian Revenue Service officer Sameer Wankhede, who arrested actor Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan in a drugs case while serving in the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), from Mumbai to Chennai. On May 30, 2022, Wankhede was transferred from his posting at the Directorate General of Analytical Risk Management (DGARM) in Mumbai to the Directorate General of Taxpayers Services (DGTS) in Chennai, following which the officer challenged the transfer order, alleging bias.

Observing that the Union finance ministry and the Central Board for Direct Taxes, which opposed his plea, were "biased towards the applicant," the bench of CAT Chairman Ranjit More and Member Rajinder Kashyap last month quashed and set aside the transfer order.

As per the plea filed by Wankhede, after his tenure at the NCB, where he was involved in the arrests of NCP leader Nawab Malik's son-in-law and Aryan Khan in connection with narcotics cases, he was transferred from the NCB to the DGARM office in Mumbai, which he joined on January 4, 2022. Five months later, however, on May 30, he was transferred to the DGTS office in Chennai, where he took charge. Wankhede then made representations to the government that he be transferred back to Mumbai, citing various threats that he and his family had received. After he was not transferred back, Wankhede approached the CAT against the transfer order. Wankhede alleged that his transfer to Chennai was an "offshoot" of allegations made against him during his tenure at the NCB. He further said the NCB's Special Enquiry Team set up to probe the allegations had not given him an opportunity to defend himself, a fact upheld by higher courts. During the hearing, the government submitted that the 2008-batch IRS officer had been posted only in Mumbai since he was in service and had never worked outside Mumbai and that there had been allegations of illegal activities against him. The bench, however, observed that the officer had been loaned out to agencies during his tenure when he had worked outside the city, had a good service record and had consistently received good ratings from his seniors. The bench then quashed the order that transferred him to Chennai, meaning he would return to his posting at the DGARM in Mumbai.

## Director Ram Gopal Varma's bail plea rejected; warrant issued in cheque bounce case



GNS News Agency, March 6

Ram Gopal Varma Ram Gopal Varma had filed an appeal before the sessions court against a magistrate court's order in January which convicted and sentenced him to three months simple imprisonment. A sessions court in Mumbai on Tuesday issued a non-bailable warrant against director Ram Gopal Varma for not appearing before it in connection with a cheque bounce case. Varma had filed an appeal before the sessions court against a magistrate court's order in January which convicted and sentenced him to three months simple imprisonment. Varma, through his lawyer, sought an exemption from appearance, which was permitted. The lawyer also filed for bail and a stay on Varma's conviction. The court rejected these pleas stating that Varma can file the applications by remaining present before it. The court issued the non-bailable warrant and directed for a report to be submitted on July 28. Varma can appear before the court and file a plea to cancel the warrant. In January, a magistrate court in Andheri had found Varma guilty under the Negotiable Instruments Act. The case was on a complaint filed by a company named Shree that claimed that tax invoices of Rs 2.38 lakh were raised to be paid by Varma's firm for supply of hard disks in 2018. Two cheques issued by the firm in June and August 2018, however, were allegedly dishonoured due to insufficient funds.

## Telangana Cabinet meeting scheduled at 2 pm on Thursday



GNS News Agency, March 6

HYDERABAD: The State Cabinet meeting is scheduled to be held from 2 pm in the Secretariat on Thursday to discuss a host of issues, including BC reservations, SC sub classification, annual budget session and others. With the budget session to be conducted in a few days, the Cabinet is expected to decide on the number of days for the session, besides approving the Governor's speech. As an all-party protest is being proposed over 42 per cent reservations for BC, the Cabinet is expected to discuss the issue as well, besides ensuring legal sanctity to the caste census conducted in the State. As the resurvey is also completed, the Cabinet is likely to approve the same. This apart, there is a buzz that the Ministers could discuss the issue of new ration cards and supply of free sand for Indiramma Indlu. Furthermore, the Cabinet would also discuss the action plan for ensuring sufficient drinking and irrigation water in the summer in the State. Meanwhile, unconfirmed reports indicated large scale transfers of IAS and IPS in the State.

# ‘Karnataka has historically been a multilingual, plural, multicultural society’: author Srikar Raghavan



GNS News Agency, March 6

Rama Bhima Soma, a game with no winners or losers, becomes an interesting metaphor for democracy in Srikar Raghavan's book by the same name, which attempts to unpack the social, political and cultural histories of modern Karnataka in an original way. Raghavan, an independent writer and researcher based out of Mysuru, explains that the game, which is known by many different names, requires only a ball and has no fixed number of players, teams, designated boundaries or premeditations. This way, "every guy gets the chance to be king (hold the ball), but it is always temporary," he says, drawing a parallel between this game and Karnataka's literary and political movements.

"Here too, there was this volley of power changes where every new generation is, at once, an enemy and a friend to their predecessor," he says. Additionally, it also helped him look at writers, activists and politicians through this "web of interconnections where you are not immediately passing ethical judgments, but able to see them as they're responding to other movements of their own time," says Raghavan of the book, which was supported by the New India Foundation Fellowship and was published by Westland in 2024. Rama Bhima Soma defies genre, delving into multiple aspects of Karnataka's cultural history, ranging from the lives and perspectives of stalwarts like Kuvempu, Shivaram Karanth, U.R. Ananthamurthy, D.R. Nagaraj and M.M. Kalburgi to the rise and fall of multiple social movements, literary and cultural criticism and your meditations and experiences. "Can you tell us more about the book's origin, structure, sourcing and evolution?"

The germ of the book goes back to when I was in the second year of my Master's. I was searching for a subject

to do my thesis on, and a friend brought up the story of Saketh Rajan, a Maoist revolutionary from Mysuru who was shot dead in 2005. I had never heard of him, but he had left behind two thick volumes of a Marxist history of Karnataka: very dense, challenging, and problematic in many ways, but, all in all, a fascinating piece of textual legacy. I took that up as my subject and began reading more about the times that had created him. It gave me a window into the intense idealism of the 70s generation and a launchpad to start exploring that effervescent moment. I applied to the New India Foundation (NIF) immediately after my second year of MA. This was during the pandemic in 2020, so I had gone back home to Mysuru. They had extended the NIF deadline by two months, and I had time to draft a decent proposal. Initially, it was a history of social movements in late 20th-century Karnataka, and my first outlines of the proposed book were meant to be an interrogation of these diverse struggles: the farmers' movement, trade unionism, environmentalism, the Dalit movement, and so on. I think my academic training also contributed to these initial concerns – the hope was that these investigations could throw light on our present political moment and help us understand how we arrived here. Once I got the fellowship, I started hoarding books like a maniac, procuring all sorts of Kannada books, going to libraries, and talking to people.

But I soon hit dead ends because there was little writing about these times, and what did exist was mostly in Kannada, completely inaccessible to the anglophone world. I knew I had to interview people who had lived through these times, especially activists, and the project took on a distinct character of (translated) oral histories. I think quite a large portion of my interviewees were over sixty, people who had lived through the '70s and '80s, so I was very conscious of the fact that I was documenting a fading world. I did some online interviews during COVID, but it was during the personal interviews that the most interesting revelations came out. Apart from that, these meetings gave me access to books and ideas. I would go to these interviews, come back with books to read, and try to connect them to what I knew or thought I knew. A couple of years into this kind of research, all these conversations and readings gave me confidence that they could be arranged into an engaging narrative – I began writing chapters in earnest. Because there was so much material, I had to make some hard choices about who/what I should include. I decided to fo-

cus more on lesser-known voices from the late twentieth century while also engaging deeply with the seminal shakers and movers of the Kannada world of letters whom you brought up.

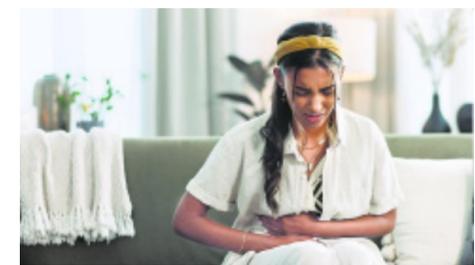
At the beginning of the book, you talk about yourself coming to Kannada a little later in life and how that feeling of being linguistically unmoored played a role in your decision to embark on this ambitious project. Can you tell us more? Yes, I had begun to feel I knew very little about my backyard. I had never read a single Kannada novel in the original, and I felt this was particularly shameful because I am a student of literature. Because I was starting from first principles, the book carries a sense of innocence and discovery. I think this worked out well because I also wanted to introduce this world to readers encountering it for the first time. In many ways, I was trying to expand on stuff I had already absorbed during my childhood in Mysuru. For instance, I write about the socialist leader Shantaveri Gopala Gowda. I grew up a mile away from a hospital named after him in Mysuru, so I knew there was this man called Gopala Gowda, but nothing apart from that. One of the first things I started researching for this book was Gopala Gowda's legacy; he turned out to be such a fascinating personality. Similarly, T.P. Kailasam was a figure my grandfather and granduncle used to talk about (they'd also sing his songs), and I had encountered him in my childhood. But again, I did not know he was this radical playwright and bohemian figure who challenged so many norms of early twentieth-century Karnataka. Another important aspect of the book was a confrontation with my own privileged upbringing, and I think the chronicles of the Dalit movement in Karnataka are perhaps some of the richest parts of the book, where I interview writers and activists like Kotiganehalli Ramaiah, Arvind Malagatti, Devanuru Mahadeva, and Du Saraswati. It was not just that I had remained aloof from the Kannada world during my childhood. I had also been sheltered from subaltern struggles for justice and dignity, whose existence and vitality I discovered only during my MA. All in all, Rama Bhima Soma was a project of uncovering and recovering histories that not many might know about. I wanted it to be a narrative history of ideas that could engage anybody in the country who was interested in the subject. I found that Karnataka is a microcosm of so many debates we're having – whether regarding economy, politics, society or language.

## All you need to know about: endometriosis

GNS News Agency, March 6

Not many people talk about menstruation. Even fewer people talk about the pain associated with it, though almost every young girl and woman has experienced some form of menstrual cramps. It is no wonder then that endometriosis, a condition that can cause extremely painful menstrual cramps, continues to be talked about only minimally and diagnosed late, despite affecting roughly 10% of reproductive age women and girls globally.

Endometriosis is a condition in which tissue that is similar to the lining of your uterus, grows outside your uterus. All women's uteruses are lined with a tissue known as the endometrium. During a menstrual cycle, this tissue lining thickens in response to hormones, in order to prepare for a fertilised egg. If the egg is not fertilised, then the tissue breaks down, and is released along with blood, during the menstrual cycle. In women with endometriosis, tissue that is similar to the endometrium, grows on or around other organs, commonly reproductive organs in the pelvis or abdomen. This tissue can grow on the ovaries, fallopian tubes, behind the uterus, in the lining of the pelvic cavity and less commonly on the bladder, intestines, rectum or elsewhere in the body. The endometrial tissue that grows outside the uterus responds to hormones, particularly estrogen, just like the uterine lining does, causing it to thicken and bleed. However, it does not shed like the regular uterine lining does during a menstrual cycle, meaning it does not leave the body. This buildup of tissue in places where it is not supposed to be, can lead to inflammation, scarring, formation of cysts, and sometimes, fibrous tissue can form, causing organs to stick to each other. Endometriosis can start at a person's first menstrual period and last until menopause, says the World Health Organization. The cause is unknown and there is no way to prevent it. Some women have no symptoms. In those who do, symptoms can range from mild to severe and generally include very intense pain during the menstrual cycle, back pain and abdominal pain, pain during sex or while using the bathroom, heavy bleeding during periods, spotting or bleeding between periods, fatigue, bloating, diarrhoea or constipation and difficulty conceiving. As per the WHO, a careful history of menstrual symptoms and chronic pelvic pain provides the basis for suspecting endometriosis. Although several screening tools and tests have been proposed and tested, none are cur-



rently validated to accurately identify or predict individuals or populations that are most likely to have the disease, it says. Doctors may perform a pelvic exam and run imaging tests such as ultrasounds if they suspect endometriosis. A laparoscopy may be performed, where a thin tube with a light and camera goes into abdomen to check for signs of endometrial tissue growth, and a small sample may be removed for a biopsy. Endometriosis can often have symptoms that are similar to those of other conditions, which can lead to a diagnostic delay. The condition can go undiagnosed or misdiagnosed for years.

What is the treatment for endometriosis?

There are currently no treatments that can cure endometriosis. However, treatment can help manage symptoms. Treatment may be based on age and severity of the condition. Medication such as painkillers may be prescribed. Hormone therapy using contraceptives (such as birth control pills) or other hormone medications may also be prescribed. Surgery options could include laparoscopic surgeries for removal of the endometrial tissue, or in what may be considered a last resort, hysterectomy or removal of the uterus. There need to be more conversations around endometriosis. As the WHO points out, "in many countries, the general public and most front-line healthcare providers are not aware that distressing and life-altering pelvic pain is not normal, leading to a normalisation and stigmatisation of symptoms and significant diagnostic delay. Patients who could benefit from medical symptomatic management are not always provided with treatments due to limited awareness of endometriosis among primary healthcare providers."

## DCA urges public to verify drug licenses of medical shops before purchasing/ public can verify drug licenses on DCA portal

GNS News Agency, March 6

Hyderabad: To curtail the practice of offenders selling spurious, counterfeit and habit-forming drugs by producing fake drug licenses, Telangana State Drug Control Administration (TSDCA) has issued an advisory to general public, wholesale and retail medical shops to verify genuineness of the drug licenses through its portal. (dca.telangana.gov.in) The genuineness of the drug licenses can be verified through the Third Party Verification system, which is available on the DCA website, the advisory said, adding that this system will ensure integrity in the supply chain of medicines and prevent entry of counterfeit drugs into the supply chain. "The DCA portal under third party verification feature enables verification of the genuineness of the drug license held by wholesale or retail medical shop/pharmacy. Public can also verify whether a medical shop or pharmacy holds a valid license issued by DCA," DG, TSDCA, VB Kamalasan Reddy on Thursday said. "Retail medical shops/pharmacies shall mandatorily verify the genuineness of the drug license held by the wholesaler or distributor (located in Telangana). Similarly, wholesalers/dealers shall mandatorily verify the genuineness of the drug license held by a retail medical shop/pharmacy on the DCA portal," the advisory said. The TSDCA has urged the general public to avoid purchasing medicines from unlicensed



sources and never buy medicines from unregulated websites or other online platforms. "Purchasing medicines from such sources significantly increases the risk to public health, as they are unregulated. It is advisable to purchase medicines only from licensed medical shops, which typically display their drug licenses, issued by DCA, conspicuously in a prominent place that is easily visible to the public," DCA in its advisory said. Selling medicines without a license is an offense, and medicines purchased from unlicensed premises are likely to be counterfeit products. The public can verify whether a medical shop or pharmacy holds a license issued by the DCA through the third-party verification process feature, DCA said.

## At the world's highest frozen lake marathon, Chennai's Major Amirtharaj NS makes a mark



GNS News Agency, March 6

Where the Greater Himalayas rise from the Indo-Gangetic plains to run along Pakistan and China lies a large salt lake on the roof of the world. The Pangong Tso in Ladakh, a sensitive border point at 13,862 feet with temperatures that plummet to -35 degree Celsius, is peopled only by a few locals, bar-headed geese, and crustaceans in its deep depths. The only constant that has survived for centuries in its thin air is Buddhism. On February 25, at this remote Shangri La, The Pangong Frozen Half Marathon was held. It covered a distance of 21.9 kilometres run in a loop on the lake, 11 kilometres up and 11 down between Merak and Maan. Organised by the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council and Adventure Sports Foundation of Ladakh, with help from the Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, it holds the Guinness World Record for being the world's highest frozen lake marathon. Among the 100-odd runners was Major Amirtharaj NS, a Chennai-raised Indian Army officer now posted there. "I hated running," laughs Amirtharaj on a phone call. "Running was part of my training at Sainik School, Amaravathinagar, the National Defence Academy and the Indian Military Academy. But it was basketball that was my first love." Commissioned into the regiment of Artillery, Amirtharaj, the son of a retired Chief Engineer, TANGEDCO, and Government school teacher says the inspiration to run came from his 63-year-old father, Sathiseelan. "I don't come from a forces background. I was all set to be an engineer but joining the Army was a childhood passion. I excelled as a sportsperson, playing basketball, volleyball and squash at academy, Division and Command-level matches, but the push for running came from my father who has completed five half-marathons at his age," says Amirtharaj who followed the drum, serving on the LoC, the North-East, Ambala and Jaisalmer.

What Amirtharaj says next about the training and simply surviving in these climes, where there is only 40% oxygen, can shock you. "Although I had been active for close to 12 years when I was first posted here, my BP shot up to 160/116. Army advisory includes only walking and no running at such altitude. Chilblains and frostbite are common. Three layers of clothing, balaclava and snow goggles leave you claustrophobic. Even to warm up, you need to walk four kilometres. The sun comes up at 9am and you have to condition your mind to get up and get out. Food is mostly tinned and you crave oxygen 24x7. Sudden death is a constant," says Amirtharaj. While the video of the run in this idyll looks exhilarating, it also seems to be the loveliest place to have a nosebleed. The marathon that saw entry restricted to seasoned runners from across the world and India was also a pitch for battlefield tourism — Galwan Valley is close — and ecological sustainability. "I came to know of the marathon in August last. I had had an ACL reconstruction but was determined to not let that get me down. A memoir and sequel by retired US Navy Seal David Goggins on mastering your mind set the pace." Training for his first marathon, Amirtharaj made sure his Army buddy Lakhwinder Singh was always by his side. "I ran six days a week ranging eight to 10 kilometres a day. The average temperature was -28 degrees. My teammates thought I was crazy but I've never felt more alive." Race day dawned cold and grey but soon had the sun and clouds contend for dominion over the scree slopes. The lake had frozen over and the run began with the wave of a chequered flag. For Amirtharaj, who clocked three hours and 10 minutes and dedicated the run to his children, the first 10 kilometres was easy. The second round was more a battle of the mind. "I wore no cleats. I ran in my sneakers and also managed to convince a coursemate, Major Vivek AR to run. And there was my buddy too. Suddenly, it became a friendship run. You had the option to slow down into a walk but to keep running without stopping was my win, more than completing the race itself," says Amirtharaj.

## TASK receives NITI Aayog praise



Hyderabad: The previous BRS government initiated Telangana Academy for Skill and Knowledge (TASK) received a huge acclaim from the NITI Aayog.

In its latest policy report – Expanding quality higher education through States and State Public Universities – the NITI Aayog featured the TASK in the State good practice. The Academy received praise for skilling students and faculty besides providing a skilled talent pool for the corporate companies. In the last 10 years, the Academy imparted training to a staggering 9.84 lakh students from 761 colleges, apart from training 18,650 faculty members. Further, it partnered with 80 industries and provided over 35,000 placements to students. To bridge the gap between industry, academia, and government by offering quality human resources and services, the previous BRS government launched the TASK as a not-for-profit organisation in 2014.

Since its inception, the TASK has been providing significant value to students by offering modules for enhancing technological, personal, and organisational skills at highly subsidised rates. The Academy has been supporting colleges by fostering environments for growth through faculty development, research projects, and systematic quality education programmes. For corporates, TASK is providing access to a skilled talent pool trained in cutting-edge technologies, facilitating their recruitment needs efficiently.

## Women's rights weakened in a quarter of all countries, UN says



GNS News Agency, March 6

Thirty years after world leaders adopted a historic blueprint to achieve gender equality, a new United Nations report says women's and girls' rights are under attack and gender discrimination remains deeply embedded in economies and societies. The report released on Thursday (March 6, 2025) by the UN agency focused on women's rights and gender equality found that nearly one-quarter of governments worldwide reported a backlash to women's rights last year. Despite some progress, including on girls' education and access to family planning, UN Women said a woman or girl is killed every 10 minutes by a partner or family member and that cases of conflict-related sexual violence have increased by 50% since 2022. The report, released ahead of International Women's Day on Saturday, also noted that only 87 countries have ever been led by a woman. "Globally, women's human rights are under attack," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a statement. "Instead of mainstreaming equal rights, we're seeing the mainstreaming of misogyny." He said the world must stand firm "in making human rights, equality and empowerment a reality for all women and girls, for everyone, everywhere." The 189 countries that attended a 1995 Beijing women's conference adopted a landmark declaration and 150-page platform for action to achieve gender equality, calling for bold action in 12 areas, including combating poverty and gender-based violence and putting women at top levels in business, government and at peacemaking tables. It also said for the first time in a UN document that human rights include the right

## Lithuania quits cluster bomb ban treaty despite outrage



GNS News Agency, March 6

Lithuania on Thursday (March 6, 2025) quit an international convention banning cluster bombs, citing security concerns over neighbouring Russia in a move that has drawn criticism from human rights groups. The formerly Soviet-ruled Baltic state of 2.8 million people has also signalled its intention to leave another international treaty prohibiting the use of anti-personnel land mines.

NATO member Lithuania has said it wants to strengthen its defences following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, fearing it could be next if Moscow succeeds. But Amnesty International has called the decision "disastrous" and Human Rights Watch said it was "alarming", with both organisations warning that it could put civilian lives at risk.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda re-elected in vote marked by Russia fears. The Lithuanian Parliament voted to leave the cluster munitions convention last July, but the country had to wait six months after submitting exit documents to the United Nations (UN) for the decision to take full effect.

It is the first country to leave the convention, which was adopted in 2008, and the first European Union country to leave a multilateral arms regulation agreement. Russia and Ukraine are not members of the convention and have both used cluster bombs in their three-year-long war. "Russia uses all the instruments available in a conventional war, and this shows that we need to take action to ensure effective deterrence and defence," Lithuania's Deputy Defence Minister Karolis Aleksa told AFP this week. "Withdrawing from the convention gives us the opportunity to increase the effectiveness of our defence against large-area targets," he said. The convention has 112 state parties and 12 other signatories, and prohibits the use, transfer, production and stockpiling of cluster bombs.

Cluster munitions can be dropped from aircraft or fired from artillery, exploding mid-air and scattering bomblets over a wide area. "The most effective deterrence and defence is when you have them in your possession and know how to use them," Mr. Aleksa said. Three Baltic states disconnect from Soviet-era grid to merge with European energy system. "A dangerous trend"

Many countries have banned cluster bombs because they pose a lasting threat, as many fail to detonate on impact, effectively acting as land mines that can explode years later. HI, a non-governmental group and founding member of the coalition against cluster munitions, asked Lithuania to reverse its move. "Lithuania's decision paves the way to a dangerous trend as it may encourage other states to reconsider their commitments to humanitarian disarmament treaties, particularly in times of heightened security concerns," HI's Alma Taslidzian said in a statement. "The Oslo Convention has proven to be effective in protecting civilians from this indiscriminate weapon," she said. But Mr. Aleksa said Lithuania would take "all necessary measures" to minimise the negative effects of cluster munitions, including planning to collect unexploded ordnance as quickly as possible after any potential military operation.

"Cluster munitions have immense destructive power, and additional attention will be paid to internal rules on their use," he said. Lithuania is also considering leaving another convention that bans anti-personnel landmines. The military and the Defence Ministry have supported the move, but government leaders have paused the decision, asking whether regional allies would take similar steps. The President's national security advisor, Marius Cesnulevicius, said in February that a final decision could take several months.

of women to control and decide "on matters relating to their sexuality, including their sexual and reproductive health, free of discrimination, coercion and violence." In the new review, which includes contributions from 159 countries, UN Women said countries have taken many steps forward on gender equality and women's rights in the past five years but that such rights still are facing growing threats worldwide. On the positive side, the report said some 88% of countries have passed laws to combat violence against women and established services to help victims in the past five years. Most countries have banned workplace discrimination, and 44% are improving the quality of education and training for girls and women, it said. Yet gender discrimination is deeply embedded, with wide gaps in power and resources that restrain women's rights, the report said. "The weakening of democratic institutions has gone hand in hand with backlash on gender equality," UN Women said. It warned that "anti-rights actors are actively undermining longstanding consensus on key women's rights issues" and seeking to block or slow legal and policy gains they can't roll back. UN Women said almost 25% of countries reported that backlash on gender equality is hampering implementation of the Beijing platform. According to the report, women have only 64% of the legal rights of men, and while the proportion of female lawmakers has more than doubled since 1995, three-quarters of lawmakers are still men. UN Women also said women aged 15 to 24 lag behind other age groups on access to modern family planning; maternal mortality ratios have remained almost unchanged since 2015; and 10% of women and girls live in extremely poor households. The UN agency said cases of conflict-related sexual violence have increased 50% since 2022 — and women and girls are victims of 95% of these crimes. UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous said that based on the report's findings, the agency has adopted a roadmap to bring the world closer to the UN goal of achieving gender equality by 2030. It calls for a digital revolution ensuring equal access to technology for all women and girls; investments in social protections, including universal health care and quality education to lift them out of poverty; and zero violence against girls and women. The roadmap also includes equal decision-making power for women and financing for "gender-responsive humanitarian aid" in conflicts and crises.

## Many Trump priorities work for India: Jaishankar in London

GNS News Agency, March 6

Citing the shifting geopolitical order, energy, tech and connectivity initiatives, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Wednesday (March 5, 2025) said that several priorities of U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration were promising for India. "I think we see a President and an administration which, in our parlance, is moving towards multi-polarity. And that is something which suits India," he said, clarifying that by practicing multi-polarity, the Trump administration was in fact promoting it. "I think, from President Trump's perspective, the one big shared enterprise that we have is the Quad [Quadrilateral Security Dialogue]," Mr. Jaishankar said, referring to the grouping of India, the U.S., Australia and Japan. Mr. Jaishankar was speaking at a session at the Chatham House think tank in London on the topic of 'India's rise and role in the world.' Each Quad member was paying its "fair share", Mr. Jaishankar said, and so there were no spats about burden sharing. Financial burden-sharing has become a central issue between the U.S. and several European countries in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military alliance. Mr. Trump "appears open to connectivity initiatives of a certain collaborative nature" Mr. Jaishankar said. "We have a deep interest in that," he added. The Minister was presumably referring to the India Middle East Europe Corridor (IMEC), which finds mention in the India-U.S. joint statement that emerged from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bilateral discussions with Mr. Trump at the White House last month. The statement also refers to other current and future connectivity initiatives, such as the newly announced Indian Ocean Strategic Venture. On energy, Mr. Jaishankar said India welcomed Mr. Trump's actions that would keep energy prices stable and affordable. Mr. Trump is a strong proponent of fossil fuels and is changing U.S. policy to drill for more petroleum and natural gas. The Trump administration's emphasis on the development of tech, and the use of tech "as a game changer in global politics" offered a lot of possibilities, according to Mr. Jaishankar. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal is currently in Washington DC, to discuss a trade deal with the Trump

## Electric shock equipment: Amnesty International calls for global controls

GNS News Agency, March 6

Amnesty International on Thursday (March 6, 2025) called for a global, legally binding treaty to regulate the production and use of electric shock equipment such as stun guns and electric shock batons. The rights monitor said the "inherently abusive" equipment was being used by law enforcement agencies for "torture and other ill-treatment" in countries including China, Venezuela and Iran. "Electric shock equipment was being used in a range of detention settings including prisons, mental health institutions and migrant and refugee detention centres," the London-based group said in a report. Amnesty International says genocide being committed against Palestinians in Gaza, Israel rejects accusation

"Direct contact electric shock weapons can cause severe suffering, long-lasting physical disability and psychological distress. Prolonged use can even result in death," said Patrick Wilcken, Amnesty International's researcher on military, security and policing issues. The study also looked at the "escalating" use of Projectile Electric Shock Weapons (PESWs) which attach to the target and can deliver an immobilising shock.

According to the report, PESWs could sometimes have a legitimate role in law enforcement but were often misused, including cases of "unnecessary and discriminatory use". "Direct contact electric shock weapons need to be banned immediately and PESWs subject to strict human-rights-based trade controls," Mr. Wilcken said. "Despite 'clear human rights risks' there are no global regulations controlling the production of and trade in electric shock equipment," he added. This lack of clarity is exacerbated in cases when PESWs are used for torture and other ill-treatment, as the reports often do not indicate whether the weapon was employed from a distance or was instead used

## Rare cyclone approaches Australian coast; schools closed, public transport halted



GNS News Agency, March 6

Early wind and rain from a rare tropical cyclone began lashing part of eastern Australia on Thursday (March 6, 2025) as schools were closed, public transport was stopped and desperate residents got around shortages of sandbags by buying potting mix. Tropical Cyclone Alfred is forecast to cross the Queensland state coast somewhere between the Sunshine Coast region and the city of Gold Coast to the south early Saturday, Bureau of Meteorology manager Matt Collopy said. Between the two tourist strips is the state capital Brisbane, Australia's third-most populous city which will host the 2032 Olympic Games. "The wind impacts, we're already seeing those start to develop on the exposed locations along our coast with gusts reaching 80-to-90 kph (50-to-56 mph). We are expecting those to continue to develop," Mr. Collopy told reporters in Brisbane. Alfred is expected to become the first cyclone to cross the coast near Brisbane since Cyclone Zoe hit Gold Coast in 1974 and brought widespread flooding. A worker repairs power lines damaged due to a fallen tree following heavy rainfall before the landfall of Cyclone Alfred, at Chinderah, in Northern New South Wales, Australia, on March 6, 2025.

A worker repairs power lines damaged due to a fallen tree following heavy rainfall before the landfall of Cyclone Alfred, at Chinderah, in Northern New South Wales, Australia, on March 6, 2025. | Photo Credit: via Reuters. Cyclones are common in Queensland's tropical north but are rare in the state's temperate and densely populated southeast corner that borders New South Wales state.

Alfred was 280 kilometers (170 miles) east of Brisbane

and moving west Thursday with sustained winds near the center of 95 kph (59 mph) and gusting to 130 kph (81 mph), Collopy said. The storm is expected to maintain its wind strength before hitting land. But the greatest fears are for the expected flooding over a wide area. Modeling shows that up to 20,000 homes in Brisbane, a city largely built on a river floodplain, could experience some level of flooding. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said 660 schools in southern Queensland and 280 schools in northern New South Wales were closed Thursday as weather conditions worsened. The federal government had delivered 310,000 sandbags to Brisbane and more were on the way, Albanese said. "My message to people, whether they be in southeast Queensland or northern New South Wales, is we are here to support you. We have your back," Mr. Albanese told reporters in the national capital Canberra. A shortage of sandbags in Brisbane, a city of more than 3 million people, led some to buy sacks of potting mix as an alternative, according to Damien Effeney, a chief executive of a rural supplies business. "I think between availability and the time that people have to queue to get sandbags, they're just making the easier choice and grabbing potting mix," Mr. Effeney told Australian Broadcasting Corp., adding one customer bought 30 bags from his store at Samford on Brisbane's northwest fringe.

Several Brisbane sandbag collection points were either empty or people had to line up for hours to collect available sandbags. A beach volleyball business complained that some of its sand had been stolen to fill bags. Brisbane streets were largely empty of traffic and supermarket shelves had been stripped bare of basics including bread, milk, bottled water and batteries. Public transport in the effected area was stopped from Thursday and hospitals were limited to performing emergency surgeries until the danger had passed. Strong winds had cut power to 4,500 homes and businesses in northern New South Wales on Thursday, officials said. Rivers were rising across the region due to rain and emergency teams expected to soon start evacuating residents from low-lying areas on the New South Wales side of the border. The coast near the border has been battered for days by abnormally high tides and seas. A 12.3-meter (40-foot) high wave recorded off a popular Gold Coast beach on Wednesday night was a record for the area, officials said.

## US indicts slew of alleged Chinese hackers, sanctions company over spy campaign

GNS News Agency, March 6

The U.S. on Wednesday announced indictments against a slew of alleged Chinese hackers, sanctioned a Chinese tech company and offered a \$10 million bounty over what Washington called a years-long spy campaign that stole information from victims across America and around the world. Federal officials accused 10 people of collaborating to steal data from their targets. Eight of the suspects worked for the company known as Anxun Information Technology, better known as i-Soon, and two worked for the Chinese Ministry of Public Security.

An indictment unsealed Wednesday described i-Soon as "a key player in the PRC's hacker-for-hire ecosystem." Officials said the targets included the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, the U.S. Department of Commerce, the foreign ministries of Taiwan, South Korea, India, and Indonesia, news organisations critical of China, the New York State Assembly.

Hackers also hit a variety of religious figures and groups, including an unidentified "large religious organization in the United States," according to the indictment and a separate statement issued by the Manhattan District Attorney's office. The indictment says i-Soon charged Chinese intelligence agencies the equivalent of about \$10,000 to \$75,000 for each email inbox it successfully hacked, with additional payments for analysing them. Also Wednesday, the U.S. Treasury said it was sanctioning a Shanghai-based company and its owner over the alleged theft and sale of data from "highly sensitive U.S. critical infrastructure networks." Treasury said in a statement that it was sanctioning the Shanghai Heiyang Information Technology Company and its founder, Zhou Shuai, for "selling illegally exfiltrated data and access to compromised computer networks." At least some of the data was later acquired by a previously sanctioned Chinese hacker named Yin Kecheng, who was implicated in the theft of data from the U.S. Treasury, the statement said.

## U.S. President Donald Trump accuses Canadian leader Justin Trudeau of using tariffs dispute to 'stay in power'

U.S. President Donald Trump accused Canadian leader Justin Trudeau of playing up a Canada-U.S. trade war to cling to power, after they spoke in a "somewhat friendly" call on Wednesday (March 5, 2025). Mr. Trump said in a social media post that Prime Minister Trudeau "was unable to tell me when the Canadian election is taking place, which made me curious, like, what's going on here? I then realised he is trying to use this issue to stay in power."

Mr. Trudeau, who announced his resignation in January, is to step down after a Liberal party leadership contest this weekend chooses his replacement. The chosen person would then become Prime Minister, and have the power to call the next federal election, which must be held no later than October - though political analysts have said it could come earlier. Canadian Prime Ministers can call elections at any point in the government's five-year term. Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Trump have had a fractious relationship since Mr. Trump's return to the White House in January, as the pair sparred over trade and fentanyl trafficking.

A frustrated Trudeau said on Tuesday (March 4, 2025.) after Mr. Trump moved ahead with imposing 25% tariffs on Canadian imports into the United States, that while he thinks Mr. Trump is a "smart guy," the tariffs are a "very dumb thing to do."

He also accused Mr. Trump of seeking to collapse the Canadian economy to make the country easier to annex. Mr. Trump has spoken several times of making Canada the 51st American state. The Republican leader's trade attacks have also been coupled with a particular animosity against the man he calls "Governor Trudeau."



in "drive stun" mode as a direct contact weapon. "Serious injuries linked to use of PESWs included penetration of the skull, eye, internal organs and testis as well as burns, seizures and arrhythmias, or irregular heartbeat," according to Amnesty. "Given the high risks of primary and secondary injuries, the use of PESWs must be set at a high threshold," Mr. Wilcken said. "These weapons should only be used only in situations involving a threat to life or risk of serious injury which cannot be contained by less extreme options," he added. The study found that at least 197 companies mostly based in countries such as China, India and the United States were involved in the manufacture or promotion of direct contact electric shock equipment for law enforcement. The U.S.-based Axon Enterprise said its TASER models, which are the most widely-used PESWs, are used by more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies in more than 80 countries. Amnesty backed by a network of more than 80 organisations globally is calling for torture-free trade treaty to regulate the trade and use of a range of law enforcement equipment. The report, "I Still Can't Sleep at Night — The Global Abuse of Electric Shock Equipment," is based on research carried out from 2014-2024 in more than 40 countries.

# When debris from space crashes to the earth, who is responsible?

GNS News Agency, March 6



Imagine going about your day when a heavy metal object suddenly crashes in front of your house. You and your neighbours are shocked. You rush out to check what has happened and struggle to make sense of the sight: a misshapen piece of hot metal, blackened by fire and soot, with a cloud of dust swirling around it. This isn't a scene from a sci-fi film. On December 30, 2024, a metal object weighing 500 kg fell in Makueni county in Kenya. Experts from the Kenya Space Agency characterised it as a separation ring from a space-bound rocket. While Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer known for cataloguing space launches and objects in orbit, and some others have expressed scepticism that the object was a part of a rocket, similar incidents in the US and Australia before have served repeated reminders of the urgent problem of space debris. Space activity is becoming more brisk as countries are launching more rockets, satellites, and spacecraft. Falling debris also challenges the laws that protect humans. The question of accountability looms largest: when debris crashes to the earth, who is responsible and how can they be held accountable? Despite being a critical issue in space governance, space debris lacks a universally accepted legal definition in international treaties. Commonly accepted working definitions come from the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee and the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). The latter refers to space debris thus: "Space debris is all man-made objects, including fragments and elements thereof, in Earth orbit or re-entering the atmosphere, that are non-functional." Given the lack of definition, legal disputes often hinge on whether a piece of debris qualifies as a "space object" under the Convention for International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects of 1972. This distinction is critical because liability attaches to space objects under the Convention, but if debris is no longer under a state's jurisdiction, responsibility becomes more challenging to enforce.

Article VI of the Outer Space Treaty 1967 forms the cornerstone of international space law. It says states bear responsibility for all national space activities, whether conducted by governmental or private entities. The 1972 Convention also introduced "absolute liability" for damage caused by space objects on the earth. Unlike fault-based liability, absolute liability requires no proof of negligence: launching states are automatically responsible for harm caused by their debris.

But enforcement remains a crucial challenge. The resolution of disputes banks on diplomatic negotiations, often

exposed another glaring gap in space governance: there are no binding rules to penalise uncontrolled reentries until damage occurs. Space agencies have condemned such risks as "reckless" but these warnings carry no legal weight without international regulations that commit countries to proactive measures. The rapid growth of satellite mega-constellations, such as SpaceX Starlink, Amazon Kuiper, and Eutelsat's OneWeb, will add more than 100,000 satellites by 2030, increasing the risk of uncontrolled reentries. Many older satellites also lack deorbiting plans, worsening debris accumulation in orbit. While small satellites usually burn up, larger objects like rocket boosters and fuel tanks often survive reentry, posing threats. In 2022, a fragment of SpaceX's crew capsule Dragon crashed in Australia. Guidelines such as the UN's rule to have satellites deorbit within 25 years are still voluntary, with only around 30% compliance, leaving thousands of decaying satellites in unpredictable orbits.

What needs to change?

The world urgently needs regulatory clarity to rescue it from the overarching problem: no mandatory oversight exists for reentries unless direct harm occurs. Without urgent reforms, uncontrolled reentries will become more frequent and the affected communities will continue to bear the costs without recourse. The world needs stronger regulations. For one, COPUOS must push for binding global regulations that require controlled reentries and penalties for non-compliant actors. In parallel, national governments should strengthen domestic policies, requiring companies to adopt debris mitigation strategies as a condition for getting launch licenses. Disposal rules should be mandatory as well as require spaceflight entities to have controlled reentries or the ability to move to graveyard orbits (where defunct satellites are moved to avoid colliding with other satellites). And these needs should be enforced through sanctions or launch bans. Second, improved tracking systems, such as expanding the US Space Fence, can improve monitoring and reentry predictions. Sustainable space practices, including debris-neutral technologies and reusable rockets, should also be incentivised to reduce clutter in orbit and enhance long-term safety. Finally, the 1972 Liability Convention must be modernised to include an independent international tribunal with binding enforcement powers. Space is not a lawless frontier but it risks becoming one without decisive action. The time for voluntary guidelines is over: global cooperation, enforceable rules, and accountability mechanisms must take precedence before the sky truly starts falling. Shrawani Shagun is pursuing a PhD at National Law University, Delhi, focusing on environmental sustainability and space governance.

# Ranya Rao's father DGP Ramachandra Rao on daughter's arrest: "Shocked and devastated"

GNS News Agency, March 6

Reacting to his daughter's arrest for alleged gold smuggling, Director General of Police (DGP) of Karnataka State Police Housing Corporation Ramachandra Rao, said that he was shocked and devastated when the incident came to his notice through the media. Ms. Ranya, the stepdaughter of DGP Rao, was arrested at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) upon arrival from Dubai on an Emirates flight on Monday (March 3, 2025) night. Acting on a tip-off about her suspected involvement in gold smuggling, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) officials stationed a team at the airport before her arrival. Upon landing, she was immediately taken into custody. Speaking to ANI on Wednesday (March 5, 2025), Mr. Rao sought to distance himself from the controversy, stating, "The law will do its job. There is no black mark on my career."

He maintained that he had no prior knowledge of Ms. Ranya's alleged involvement in smuggling activities and came to know about the arrest only through media reports. "I was also shocked and devastated when such an incident came to my notice through the media, I was not aware of any of these things, like any other father I was also shocked. She is not living with us, she is living separately with her husband, there must be some problem between them due to some family issues," he said. "Anyway, the law will do its job, there is no black mark in my career. I don't want to say anything more," he added. Ms. Ranya Rao, known for her roles in films like 'Maanikyaa' and 'Patak', was arrested by the DRI on March 3 in Bengaluru. The Karnataka government said that the law is the same for all. Congress MLA and Legal Advisor to the Karnataka Chief Minister, A.S. Ponnanna, issued a statement regarding the arrest, emphasizing that no one would receive special treatment. "She has been accused of smuggling, and the law will take its course—whether she is the daughter of the DGP, the Chief Minister, or the Prime Minister. If any official nexus is involved, the investigation will reveal it," Mr. Ponnanna said.

On March 4, 2025, Ms. Ranya was produced before a special court for financial offences, where she was remanded to judicial custody till March 18, 2025. Before being transferred to custody, she underwent a medical examination at Bowring Hospital in Bengaluru. During questioning, Ms. Ranya claimed that her visit to Dubai was for business purposes. However, DRI officials allege that she was carrying a significant amount of gold intended to be smuggled into India. According to the DRI, the gold in her possession weighed 14.8 kilograms. She remains in judicial custody as the investigation continues. The bail application of Ms. Ranya Rao, is set to be heard on Thursday.

# Arab leaders endorse a counterproposal to Trump's Gaza plan, with ceasefire uncertain

GNS News Agency, March 6

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi said Tuesday (March 4, 2025) that Arab leaders have endorsed Egypt's post-war plan for the Gaza Strip that would allow its roughly two million Palestinians to remain in the territory. Meeting in Cairo on Tuesday (March 4, 2025), the leaders endorsed a counterproposal to President Donald Trump's plan to depopulate the territory and redevelop it as a beach destination. It was unclear if Israel or the United States would accept the Egyptian plan. The summit hosted by Egypt included the Amir of Qatar, the Vice-President of the United Arab Emirates and the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia — countries whose support is crucial for any post-war plan. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres also attended.

Israel has embraced what it says is an alternative U.S. proposal for the ceasefire itself and the release of hostages taken in Hamas' attack on southern Israel on October 7, 2023, which triggered the war. Israel has blocked the entry of food, fuel, medicine and other supplies to Gaza to try to get Hamas to accept the new proposal and has warned of additional consequences, raising fears of a return to fighting. The suspension of aid drew widespread criticism, with human rights groups saying that it violated Israel's obligations as an occupying power under international law. The new plan would require Hamas to release half its remaining hostages — the militant group's main bargaining chip — in exchange for a ceasefire extension and a promise to negotiate a lasting truce. Israel made no mention of releasing more Palestinian prisoners — a key component of the first phase. A 112-page draft of Egypt's \$53 billion plan obtained by The Associated Press foresees rebuilding Gaza by 2030 without removing its population. The first phase calls for starting the removal of unexploded ordnance and clearing the more than 50 million tons of rubble left by Israel's bombardment and military offensives. Hundreds of thousands of temporary housing units would be set up where Gaza's population could live while reconstruction takes place. The rubble would be recycled, with some of it used as infill to create expanded lands on Gaza's Mediterranean coast. In the following years, the plan envisages completely reshaping the strip, building "sustainable, green and walkable" housing and urban areas, with renewable energy. It renovates agricultural lands and creates industrial zones and large park areas.

It also calls for the opening of an airport, a fishing port and a commercial port. The Oslo peace accords in the 1990s called for the opening of an airport and a commercial port in Gaza but the projects withered as the peace process collapsed. Under the plan, Hamas would cede power to an interim administration of political independents until a reformed Palestinian Authority can assume control. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, head of the Western-backed authority and an opponent of Hamas, was attending the summit. Israel has ruled out any role for the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and, along with the United States, has demanded Hamas' disarmament. Hamas, which doesn't accept Israel's existence, has said it's willing to cede power in Gaza to other Palestinians, but won't give up its arms until there is a Palestinian state. Addressing the summit, Mr. el-Sisi said that the plan "preserves the right of Palestinian people in rebuilding their nation and guarantees their existence on their land."

He said there is a need for a parallel path for peace to achieve a "comprehensive, just and lasting settlement" to the Palestinian cause. "There will be no true peace without the establishment of the Palestinian state," Mr. el-Sisi said. "It's time to adopt the launching of a serious and effective political path that leads to a permanent and lasting solution to the Palestinian cause according to the resolutions of international legitimacy." An early draft of the statement endorsing the plan called for a "permanent and just solution" for the Palestinian cause, and for the U.N. Security Council to deploy international peacekeepers in Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The mention of peacekeepers was dropped from a later draft.

# Trump warns Hamas, Gaza 'you are dead' if hostages not freed



GNS News Agency, March 6

U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday (March 5, 2025) threatened further destruction of Gaza if all remaining hostages are not released, and issued an ultimatum to Hamas leaders to flee. Strongly backing Israel as a ceasefire teeter, Mr. Trump said he was "sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job" as his administration expedites billions of dollars in weapons. "Release all of the Hostages now, not later, and immediately return all of the dead bodies of the people you murdered, or it is OVER for you," he wrote on his Truth Social platform after meeting freed hostages. "This is your last warning! For the leadership, now is the time to leave Gaza, while you still have a chance." Mr. Trump also made clear there would be repercussions for Gaza as a whole, where virtually the entire population has been displaced by Israel's relentless military campaign in response to the October 7, 2023 attacks by Hamas. "To the People of Gaza: A beautiful Future awaits, but not if you hold Hostages. If you do, you are DEAD!" His comments follow Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's warning of "consequences that you cannot imagine" if Hamas does not hand over remaining hostages seized in the October 7 attack. The first phase of a ceasefire ended over the weekend after six weeks of relative calm that included exchanges of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails. While Israel has said it wants to extend the first phase until mid-April, Hamas has insisted on a transition to the second phase, which should lead to a permanent end to the war.

But Israel has ramped up pressure not just with threats by halting all entry of goods and supplies into Gaza, renewing a hardline approach to which the previous U.S. administration of Joe Biden had objected. "Hamas has indeed suffered a severe blow, but it has not yet been defeated. The mission is not yet accomplished," Israel's new military chief

# Denmark rejects Trump's renewed push for Greenland to join US

GNS News Agency, March 6

Oslo: Denmark has strongly opposed US President Donald Trump's renewed push for Greenland to join the US, following his remarks during a joint session of Congress two days ago. Trump declared on Wednesday that his administration would "strongly support Greenlanders' right to determine" their future, adding: "And if you choose, we welcome you into the United States of America." Acknowledging the uncertainty sparked by Trump's statements, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen reaffirmed Denmark's position on Wednesday, emphasizing that Greenland's future is solely for its people to decide. "Greenland belongs to the Greenlanders. This is a position that we very strongly support from the Danish government," she said. Greenlandic Prime Minister Mute Egede firmly rejected Trump's claim, saying on social media that Greenlanders have no desire to become part of the US. Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen echoed these sentiments, stressing that Greenland will never be part of the US. "It is not, and it will

Eyal Zamir warned Wednesday (March 5, 2025). France, Britain and Germany jointly Wednesday (March 5, 2025) called the humanitarian situation in Gaza "catastrophic," and urged Israel to ensure the "unhindered" delivery of aid. South Africa said Israel's restriction of aid into Gaza since the weekend amounted to using starvation as a weapon of war.

Mr. Trump's hawkish language came after the United States confirmed unprecedented direct talks with Hamas, with the U.S. envoy on hostage affairs, Adam Boehler, discussing American hostages. "Look, dialogue and talking to people around the world to do what's in the best interest of the American people is something that the President" believes is right, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said. The United States had refused direct contact with the Palestinian militants since banning them as a terrorist organization in 1997. But Leavitt said that the hostage envoy in his role "has the authority to talk to anyone." Both the White House and Mr. Netanyahu's office confirmed Israel was consulted in advance on the talks.

Five Americans are believed to remain among the hostages. Four of them have been confirmed dead and the other, Edan Alexander, is believed to be alive. The Hamas assault resulted in the deaths of 1,218 people, most of them civilians, while Israel's military retaliation in Gaza has killed at least 48,440 people, also mostly civilians, data from both sides show. Of the 251 captives taken during Hamas's attack, 58 remain in Gaza, including 34 the Israeli military has confirmed are dead. Mr. Trump has floated a proposal to take over the Gaza Strip and displace its people, an idea that has drawn wide condemnation around the world. Arab leaders have sought support for an alternative plan they put forward that would finance Gaza's reconstruction through a trust fund. A draft of the plan seen by AFP outlined a five-year roadmap with a price tag of \$53 billion — roughly the amount the United Nations estimated for Gaza's reconstruction — but the figure was not included in the summit's final statement. The summit also called for unified representation under the Palestine Liberation Organization to sideline Islamist Hamas. Hugh Lovatt, a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said the new plan was "far more realistic than what the Trump administration is proposing in terms of being able to be operationalized." But Ghassan Khatib, a Palestinian political analyst and former Palestinian Authority minister, was sceptical whether it could realistically happen, noting the lack of details on financing and the political hurdles it would face. "It doesn't make sense to expect Israel to drop the plan of Trump and to adopt the plan of the Arabs. There's no chance."

# U.S. eyes zero tariff on cars in India trade deal as Tesla entry nears: sources



GNS News Agency, March 6

The United States wants India to eliminate tariffs on car imports under a proposed trade deal between the two nations, but New Delhi is reluctant to immediately bring down such duties to zero even as it considers further cuts, sources told Reuters. India's high auto tariffs will feature in formal talks for a bilateral trade deal that are yet to begin, said one of the three sources, all of whom were briefed on the matter, paving the way for American electric vehicle maker Tesla, which is gearing up for an India launch.

Taxes on cars imported into India are as high as 110%, which Tesla chief Elon Musk has criticised as being among the steepest in the world. The EV giant last year shelved its plans to enter the world's third-largest car market for a second time.

Mr. Musk has now found support from U.S. President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly railed against India's high taxes and in an address to the U.S. Congress on Tuesday slammed the country's auto tariffs of more than 100%, threatening reciprocal action. "The U.S. ask is for India to bring tariffs down to zero or negligible in most sectors, except agriculture," the first source said, adding the expectation on New Delhi eliminating auto tariffs was "clearer than any other." A second source said India was "listening to the U.S." and had not pushed back, adding it would respond with its position on the tariffs after consulting local industries. The office of United States Trade Representative, India's Trade Ministry, and the Ministry of External Affairs did not respond to requests for comment. Trade worth \$500 billion

After a meeting between Mr. Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month, the two nations agreed to resolve tariff rows and work on the first segment of a deal by the fall of 2025, aiming for bilateral trade worth \$500 billion by 2030. Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal is on a nearly week-long trip to the U.S. and on Tuesday met U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick to pursue trade talks. He is also expected to meet the United States Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.

While India is unlikely to relent to U.S. demands to reduce tariffs on auto imports to zero immediately, it has been priming the industry to prepare for a lower tariff regime and be open to competition, said the first source and a fourth person. Last month, the Indian government met domestic carmakers to decide on any tariff cuts and understand their reservations over taxes going down to zero immediately, the first source added. India's 4 million-vehicles-a-year car market is one of the most protected in the world and its domestic players have previously argued against lowering tariffs, saying such a move would dry up investment in local manufacturing by making imports cheaper.

The likes of Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra have especially lobbied against lowering import tariffs on EVs, saying it would hurt the nascent sector in which they have invested heavily. Vowing to avoid protectionist signals on trade, India last month cut import tariffs on nearly 30 items including high-end motorcycles and said it will review surcharges on luxury cars.



## Trump spares none



India's hopes of securing a trade deal with America to avoid high tariffs have been dashed with US President Donald Trump announcing the implementation of reciprocal tariffs from April 2, a move that could potentially disrupt the global trade dynamics. While addressing a joint session of the US Congress, a combative Trump spared none in arguing that America has been 'ripped off for decades by nearly every country on earth' and asserted that his administration would not 'let that happen any longer'. Significantly, he clubbed India along with Mexico, China, Brazil and the European Union for pursuing unfair trade policies. The reciprocal tariffs — meaning the US will impose tariffs equivalent to those charged by other countries — fit into Trump's much-touted 'America First' narrative and are expected to generate significant revenue for the US and create jobs. Trump repeated his longstanding position that the US must counter what he sees as inequitable trade policies and particularly singled out India for imposing 'higher than 100 per cent tariffs on American automobiles'. The announcement comes just weeks after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US raised hopes among Indian industry that a trade deal with America could help in warding off the threat of sweeping tariffs in exchange for market access for US products in India. To prepare the ground for this, India had proactively slashed tariffs on a number of American imported items including high-end motorcycles and bourbon whiskey. There are also plans to reduce duties for automobiles, some agricultural products, chemicals, critical pharmaceuticals, certain medical devices and electronics.

The idea is to forge a trade agreement with the US to shield India from high duties. Now that Trump has made no exceptions and gone ahead with the announcement of his reciprocal tariff policy, India will have to gear up for the impact. While details of the tariffs remain unclear, experts predict that these measures could disproportionately affect India, given the nation's higher-than-average tariffs on several categories of US imports. While India is open to tariff cuts on industrial products, including automobiles and chemicals, it is resisting pressure from the US to reduce tariffs on agricultural products, on the ground that such a move would impact millions of poor farmers. Experts say that chemicals, metal products and jewellery, followed by automobiles, pharmaceuticals and food products could be the most vulnerable sectors to the US reciprocal tariffs. If America expands such reciprocal tariffs to a broader range of farm products, India's agricultural and food exports, including shrimp and dairy, would be among the hardest hit. There is no doubt that the uncertainty surrounding global trade, in the wake of the Trump administration's disruptive moves, will impact India's economy. Earlier, the US imposed sweeping levies on imports from Mexico, Canada and China, citing issues such as illegal immigration and drug trafficking. The move has drawn widespread condemnation from international leaders.

## On regulatory measures to prevent vulgarity



In suggesting that the Government should come with regulatory measures to prevent vulgarity or perversity in the name of humour being aired, the Supreme Court has expanded the scope of petitions by YouTubers caught in a criminal case over alleged obscenity in a digital programme. The Court has sounded the right note by calling for a discussion among stakeholders on regulations that would not impinge on the freedom of speech and expression and will be within the framework of "reasonable restrictions" permitted in the Constitution. However, such regulations may be superfluous, as existing laws provide for dealing with possible obscenity or vulgarity in electronic and digital content. That those associated with the controversial programme, 'India's Got Latent', are facing FIRs and have sought protection from arrests show that the present regulations may be sufficient. Under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), display of content in electronic form shall be deemed to be obscene, "if it is lascivious or appeals to the prurient interest", and is a punishable offence. Similar penal provisions are available in the IT Act. The Programme Code under the Cable Television Network Rules prohibits programmes that offend decency, among other things. The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 provide for age-based classification and a three-tier system of grievance redress, under which users could approach the platform, a self-regulatory body and a government inter-departmental committee. The debate between 'clean' and 'dirty' humour is age-old, but the distinction is well-understood. It is only in the context of public outrage over specific instances of obscenity or vulgarity that voices are raised about the need to maintain decency and morality. In this case, the folly of the participants in making sexually perverse comments is matched by the zeal of the complainants and the police, mainly because of the content being leaked outside a paying audience. The participants may have thus rendered themselves vulnerable to prosecution, but a mature society should consider whether anyone should go to prison for such a verbal offence. The tendency to get the police to file FIRs wherever someone complains is also to be deprecated. The Internet's universal reach should not become an excuse to confer universal jurisdiction.

## Who will apologise to the 'Himalayans'?

Recently, Norway's Parliament issued a formal apology for its assimilation policies targeting the Sami, Kven, and Forest Finn peoples. These policies, known as Norwegianisation, were implemented between the 1850s and 1960s to suppress indigenous languages and cultures. Alongside the apology, the government proposed measures to address ongoing discrimination, such as protecting indigenous languages and monitoring inclusion efforts starting in 2027. Although Norway has repealed discriminatory laws and established symbolic rights, such as a Sami Parliament, challenges persist. Sami languages remain endangered, and indigenous groups face inequities in healthcare, education, and land rights. The experiences of Nordic and Himalayan communities share some parallels. The Himalayan region spans 2,500 kilometres from Afghanistan to northeast India and contains the world's largest ice reserves after the two poles. Like the Nordics, Himalayan communities face climate-induced disasters and centuries of resource exploitation.

The region is home to 52 million people from various tribes, clans, ethnicities, and religions. These include the Gaddis and Kinnauras in Himachal Pradesh; Lepchas, Bhutiyas, and Mons in Sikkim and Ladakh; and diverse groups in Arunachal Pradesh, such as the Abor, Aka, Apatani, and Mishmi. The Khas, Kalash, and other ethnic groups span Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nepal. These communities have faced waves of assimilation through colonialism, post-independence nation-building, and neoliberal economic policies. During British colonial rule, trade and forest laws impacted Himalayan communities. In the northeast, tribes were coerced into accepting colonial trade terms, involving goods such as tea, gold, silk, and opium. In some regions, trade blockades devastated local economies. According to A.S.R. Foreign proceedings, 1881, "An interesting result of blockade of 1874, as reported by Colonel Graham, revealed cultural operations of the hill people were suspended because they could not procure iron from the plains to manufacture dao jhooms and marriages stopped as the supply of silk cloth was blocked."

Likewise, in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, forest laws were enacted to ensure a regular supply of timber for laying the railway lines in India. An article in 'Prehistory of Community Forestry in India', underlines that "between 1853 and 1910 more than eighty thousand kilometres of track were laid in the subcontinent. Great chunks of forest were destroyed to meet the demand for railway sleepers. The sal forests of Garhwal and Kumaun, for example, were felled in event to desolation." After India's independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru advocated for respecting tribal ways of life. Mr. Nehru pointed out: "... I am not at all sure which is the better way of living, the tribal or own. In



some respects I am quite certain theirs is better. Therefore, it is grossly presumptuous on our part to approach them with an air of superiority, or to tell them what to do or not to do. There is no point in trying to make them a second-rate copy of ourselves." This humanistic approach influenced policies for about 15 years. However, by the 5th and 6th Five-Year Plans, rapid resource exploitation in tribal regions began to disrupt local ecosystems and cultures.

The 1990s marked a significant shift in Himalayan governance. Unlike other Indian States, which had some industrial base, Himalayan States emerged due to geographical and multi-ethnic considerations. This era introduced fiscal policies that pressured States to generate their own revenue. Tourism and hydropower became dominant economic activities, leading to extensive environmental degradation and cultural erosion. Hydropower projects, in particular, exemplify the exploitative development model. In March 2015, then-Chief Minister Nabam Tuki said: "After the commissioning of just three ongoing hydro-power projects in the State that it would earn ₹445 crore annually as revenue from 12% power supplied by the projects free for the State to sell. At the completion of all ongoing projects, Arunachal Pradesh would meet 40% of India's power demand and graduate from severe dependence to financial

self-sufficiency." This is another feature of assimilation. However, such projects often bypass local laws, undermining tribal land ownership governed by customary practices. Despite legal protections, a nexus of bureaucrats, politicians, and corporations has facilitated large-scale land acquisition for hydropower development. This "hydro-criminality," as described by civil society groups, exemplifies the prioritisation of economic growth over cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. Traditional practices and ethnic diversity in the Himalayan region are increasingly marginalised in favour of profit-driven initiatives. Lessons from Norway's apology to the Sami people highlights the importance of acknowledging historical injustices and committing to reconciliation. For the Himalayan region, a similar acknowledgment is long overdue. The exploitation of natural resources and the erosion of cultural identities demand accountability and a shift toward sustainable, inclusive development. While Norway's federal government has taken a step toward justice, the question remains: who will apologise to the 'Himalayans'? Tikender Singh Panwar is Former Deputy Mayor, Shimla, and Member, Kerala Urban Commission. Adviser to a few Himalayan think tanks working on alternative models of development

## A step backward for Odisha's economy



The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Odisha presented the State Budget for 2025-26 in February, with a total Budget size of ₹2,90,000 crore. The Budget document underlines the government's vision for 'Samruddha Odisha' by 2036, aiming to become a \$500 billion economy. However, the BJP government's fiscal performance over the last nine months has been unimpressive, giving an impression that its economic goals are like pie in the sky without an achievable action plan. According to the recent figures presented in the State Legislative Assembly, the government's spending in almost all sectors has been noticeably low. By January end, expenditure for the 2024-25 fiscal year remained below 50% in 16 departments, including key sectors such as Energy, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water, Transport, and Housing and Urban Development. Other important departments, such as Mission Shakti, Disaster Management, and Sports and Youth Affairs, could not spend even 30% of their allocated funds, according to government data.

While 'Odia Asmita' (cultivating on the narrative that Odia culture and self-pride of Odias were under threat during the previous government) was a major election campaign for the BJP in 2024, the spending figure for the Odia Language Literature & Culture department stood at only 27.1% during this period. Such low spending indicates a lethargic governance in the State. Further, the government's failure to publish the monthly fiscal report since coming to power raises concerns about transparency.

The borrowing figure under the BJP government in Odisha has gone up significantly. Two Budgets, presented during the BJP's nine months stint, estimate borrowing at over ₹80,000 crore (₹42,495 crore budgeted and ₹34,495

crore revised estimate for 2024-25, and ₹46,400 crore budgeted this year). This marks a shift in policy adopted by the previous Biju Janata Dal (BJD) government. The State's fiscal health underwent significant reforms during 2020-24, during which the BJD governed the State. As per the Reserve Bank of India's 'State Finances: A Study of Budgets' report, Odisha once had one of the highest debt-to-GSDP ratios at the beginning of the millennium, but by 2023-24, had the lowest in the country. The State's disciplined borrowing pattern also led to a significant reduction in interest payments on the debt. Although the current borrowing is well under the target set by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003, the growing debt trend is still problematic, not just for the government's poor spending record, but also for the surge in borrowing from open market (37% of the overall borrowing in this year's Budget).

The 2025-26 Budget's focus on capital expenditure — projected at 6.1% of GSDP — is a welcome move. It is important to see how it translates into job creation. The government has focused on agriculture and allied sectors, with this year's allocation showing a substantial 12% increase compared to last year's. Road connectivity has also been given a big push with a pledge to build 75,000 kilometres of roads over the next four years. However, other key departments have seen limited growth in allocations. For example, the micro, small, and medium enterprises sector, which employs the second-highest number of people in Odisha, has received only a minor Budget increase. Prioritising this sector is crucial to addressing the State's high unemployment rate. Further, some of the critical schemes for the people at the bottom of the pyramid, such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) that provides houses for the marginalised, have received a big Budget cut. Despite the State government's ambitious target for the PMAY, the allocation has been reduced significantly, from ₹6,090 crore last year to ₹4,500 crore this year. In this Budget, the government has also failed to explain why it has moved away from Odisha's reformist tradition of presenting thematic Budgets, such as gender and climate Budgets. While presenting the Budget, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi stressed: "Samruddhi is more than just economic growth; it signifies job creation, inclusive development, and equitable opportunities for every citizen." The government needs to walk the talk on this and be more proactive in its economic management if it is committed to its 2036 goal.

## Over-centralisation threatens federal health policy

The recent Supreme Court judgment, in Dr. Tanvi Behl vs Shrey Goyal (2025), which struck down domicile-based reservations in post-graduate medical admissions in the respective medical colleges in States, marks a significant shift in India's medical education policy. The ruling, holding that such reservations violate Article 14 of the Constitution, dismantles a mechanism that States have long relied upon to ensure a stable medical workforce suited to public health needs. While upholding meritocracy, it misapprehends the complex relationship between medical education policies and State public health planning. By entrenching a centralising bias in India's medical education framework, it risks disincentivising State investment in government medical colleges — transforming competitive federalism into a race to the bottom. Domicile-based reservations in post-graduate medical courses serve a crucial function in aligning State investment in medical education with health-care personnel retention. States allocate substantial resources to train medical students, expecting that these graduates will contribute to the local health-care system. Given chronic specialist shortages, domicile quotas ensure a predictable supply of doctors familiar with the State's health-care landscape. The Court's reliance on Pradeep Jain vs Union of India (1984) to eliminate domicile-based post-graduate reservations overlooks the essential distinction between undergraduate and post-graduate education. Unlike MBBS programmes, where students gain foundational knowledge, post-graduate courses are the primary channel through which States replenish their specialist workforce. Removing domicile quotas disrupts this pipeline, making States becoming increasingly reliant on external recruitment — a process fraught with unpredictability and inefficiencies. By striking down domicile quotas, the judgment weakens the incentive for States to invest in medical education. A well-functioning system of competitive federalism encourages States to develop robust institutions to attract and retain talent. However, if States cannot ensure that their investment translates into a local specialist workforce, their incentive to fund medical education diminishes. Without domicile reservations, States may deprioritise medical college funding, leading to declining infrastructure and worsening regional health-care disparities. This stands in contrast to premier central institutions such as the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), and the Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER), which are granted selection autonomy. State medical colleges — arguably even more vital to India's public health architecture — are now denied a similar prerogative, disadvantaging States in planning for their long-term healthcare needs. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to life, including access to adequate health care, while public health remains under State legislative competence. Medical colleges are not merely institutions of higher education; they are also a crucial part of the State's health infrastructure. Viewing them solely as centres for producing medical graduates is a limited perspective. A broader, systems-based approach highlights the connection between the right to life, public health, and medical education. Given the role of State government medical colleges in sustaining public health, it is essential to recognise the State government's need for autonomy in the selection process at the undergraduate, post-graduate and super-specialty levels. This ensures that medical education aligns with local health-care needs, reinforcing that these institutions serve a greater purpose than academics alone. Excessive centralisation, unwittingly powered by court rulings, restricts States from formulating policies suited to their public health needs and socio-economic circumstances. Legislatures and the judiciary must acknowledge that government medical colleges are integral to State health-care infrastructure. The Court's insistence on a rigid meritocratic framework ignores the structural inequities inherent in India's medical entrance system. An analysis of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Postgraduate), or NEET-PG, results reveals significant flaws in how merit is assessed,

## If Pakistan vacates PoK, Kashmir issue will be 'solved': Jaishankar

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has said that Pakistan vacating Pakistan Occupied Kashmir would resolve the Kashmir issue in its entirety. The Minister was responding to a question from a member of the audience at the Chatham House, the London-based think tank. The question was about whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi could use his relationship with U.S. President Donald Trump to "solve" the Kashmir issue.

"Removing Article 370 was step number one," Mr. Jaishankar said, referring to the controversial changes in the special status of Jammu and Kashmir made by the government in August 2019. "Then restoring growth and economic activity and social justice in Kashmir was step number two," the Minister added.

"Holding elections, which were done with a very high turnout, was step number three. I think the part we are waiting for is the return of the stolen part of Kashmir, which is under illegal Pakistani occupation. When that's done, I assure you, Kashmir [is] solved," he said. The discussion host, Chatham House chief executive Bronwen Maddox, sug-

gested there were a number of questions on Kashmir as well as human rights. The House of Commons held a debate earlier in the day, "Government support for human rights in Jammu and Kashmir", led by Labour MP Sarah Smith. Asked if the Indian government acknowledges some of its shortcomings on human rights, Mr. Jaishankar said the government had, for political reasons, been at the receiving end of campaigns around human rights. "There can be situations which require redressal and remedy," he said, adding that India had a strong record on human rights relative to global comparators. "I think any sort of sweeping concern on human rights is really misplaced. I don't see justification for it at all," he added. Mr. Jaishankar had, earlier in the discussion, referred to the idea of equal delivery of benefits for all Indian citizens — a concept he has used before to defend the government record on human rights. In some parts of the world there was a politics that was driven by "creating" and "pandering to" identity politics, the Minister said. Good politics was about "treating your citizens equally", he argued.

## The longer you can maintain this posture, experts say the more fit you are



With age, good balance becomes even more crucial to carry out day-to-day activities while preventing falls and injuries. Conditioning bones or joint health tends to decline, leading to imbalance, regular exercise and a nutritive diet can work wonders. But have you ever heard about the flamingo balance test to ascertain body balance (with age)?

What does it indicate?

The flamingo balance test is done to understand your ability to maintain a stable balance, said Dr Girish L Bhalerao, super specialty, consultant, orthopaedic surgeon, Wockhardt Hospital Mira Road. In this test, an individual needs to stand on one leg while the other leg is raised behind them. "This posture tends to mimic the posture of a flamingo. The longer you can maintain this posture, the more fit you are. It helps understand your physical health by measuring your ability to sustain in a stabilised position for a longer duration," said Dr Bhalerao. Dr Surender Pal Singh, HOD, physiotherapy department, CK Birla Hospital, Delhi, said that as people age, their ability to balance on one leg often declines due to reduced muscle strength, neuromuscular coordination, and body control. "Achieving this pose effectively reflects strong musculoskeletal and neuromuscular coordination, as well as a high level of mental focus and body control," said Dr Singh. Dr Singh stressed that holding the flamingo posture is an excellent indicator of over-

all stability and a well-aligned gait pattern, demonstrating effective mind-body synchronisation. "Practicing this posture can not only enhance muscle strength but is also beneficial for balance and gait improvement. Over time, regularly performing the flamingo posture can lead to better body control, improved balance, and a strengthened musculoskeletal system, making it a valuable exercise for individuals looking to enhance coordination and physical stability," said Dr Singh.

What if you can't?

Being unable to hold this posture for an optimal period is an indication that you need to focus on strengthening your core to improve your physical activity, noted Dr Bhalerao. "Make sure you perform this posture in a safe space away from things that can cause you harm," suggested Dr Bhalerao.

What to keep in mind?

While the flamingo test may sound like an interesting way to test your physical strength, it may not be suitable for everyone. "People with severe balance issues, disorders, injuries, neurological disorders, and arthritis should avoid doing tests without consulting their doctor. If you start to feel pain or uneasiness, then do not continue it further. Always listen to your body," said Dr Bhalerao.

## Honey Singh lost 18 kilos in a month with this diet and workout routine; we ask an expert if it is safe

Discover how rapper Honey Singh lost 18 kilos in a month with a strict diet, intense workouts, and a metabolism-boosting green juice. Expert insights reveal the pros and cons of rapid weight loss. Discover how rapper Honey Singh lost 18 kilos in a month with a strict diet, intense workouts, and a metabolism-boosting green juice. Expert insights reveal the pros and cons of rapid weight loss. (Source: Honey Singh/Instagram) Rapper and music sensation Honey Singh stunned fans with his dramatic weight loss transformation, shedding 18 kilos in just one month. The 'Maniac' singer went from 95 kg to 77 kg, proving that with discipline, consistency, and expert guidance, even the most ambitious fitness goals can be achieved.

Arun Kumar, Mr Asia 2022 and Honey's fitness coach, in an interview with Aaj Tak, shared the rapper's weight loss secrets, including a structured diet, rigorous training, and a special green juice that played a crucial role in boosting metabolism. One of the core components of Honey Singh's diet was a nutrient-packed green juice, which was consumed on an empty stomach to maximize nutrient absorption. Kumar emphasized its role in enhancing digestion, detoxification, and calorie burning. The key ingredients included: Beetroot – Packed with antioxidants, it promotes better blood circulation.

Amla (Indian Gooseberry) – Rich in Vitamin C, aiding digestion and fat reduction.

Cucumber – Keeps the body hydrated and flushes out toxins.

Carrots – Supports digestion while delivering essential vitamins.

Coriander Leaves – Enhances metabolism and supports gut health.

honey singh weight loss diet Singh's trainer says he begins the day with a green juice on an empty stomach so that there is maximum absorption of nutrients. A carefully curated diet played a major role in his transformation. Here's a breakdown of what he ate: Morning: Green juice, followed by blended vegetables or their pulp for fiber. Lunch: Boiled chicken with rice to maintain a balanced intake of protein and carbohydrates. Evening Meal: Vegetable soup or boiled chicken to sustain metabolism. Dinner: Green vegetables or soup to ensure fiber intake and essential vitamins. Singh



completely eliminated processed foods, sugar, and alcohol from his diet, ensuring that his body was fueled only by wholesome, natural foods. Workout routine: A mix of strength & cardio in addition to following a strict diet, Singh underwent an intense fitness regimen. His routine included: Strength Training to build muscle and enhance endurance Cardio Workouts to accelerate fat burning. High-Rep Training for increased metabolism and fat loss.

Expert take: Is rapid weight loss healthy?

Dr Kiran Soni, Head of the Department of Nutrition & Health at Yatharth Hospital, Greater Noida, weighed in on Honey Singh's rapid transformation. She highlighted both the benefits and risks associated with such fast weight loss. According to Dr Soni, his weight loss was a result of a well-structured diet and intense workouts. The green juice helped detoxify his body and boost metabolism, while his high-protein, whole-food diet ensured sustained energy levels. However, Dr Soni warned that rapid weight loss can lead to muscle loss, fatigue, and nutrient deficiencies. While Honey Singh followed a natural diet, extreme transformations may not be suitable for everyone. How can weight loss be more sustainable? For a healthier approach, Dr Soni suggests: Following a balanced diet rich in whole foods, proteins, and healthy fats.

Staying hydrated and consuming detox drinks in moderation incorporating regular workouts, including both cardio and strength training. Prioritizing sleep and stress management. Setting realistic goals and tracking progress gradually.

## Four surprising reasons you should consume papaya leaves

Papaya leaves have long been celebrated in traditional remedies for their potential health benefits. These green wonders are recognised as a natural way to support overall well-being. Dr Pranav Honnavara Srinivasan, consultant gastroenterologist at Fortis Hospitals Bengaluru, and Kanikka Malhotra, consultant dietician, provide a comprehensive and objective evaluation of the health benefits, preparation methods, potential risks, and why caution is essential when consuming papaya leaves. Some evidence-based health benefits of consuming papaya leaves

Tea prepared from boiling leaves may be beneficial for digestive problems and may offer comparable advantages, albeit with a somewhat less efficacy as a result of heat exposure. Tea prepared from boiling leaves may be beneficial for digestive problems and may offer comparable advantages, albeit with a somewhat less efficacy as a result of heat exposure.

How should papaya leaves be consumed for maximum effectiveness?

Malhotra advises, "Papaya leaves can be consumed as fresh juice, tea, or extract for optimal benefits. Alkaloids and flavonoids, which boost platelet counts and improve immunological function, are among the healthy substances most concentrated in fresh juice. Tea prepared from boiling leaves may be beneficial for digestive problems and may

offer comparable advantages, albeit with somewhat less efficacy as a result of heat exposure. Additionally helpful are extracts, especially aqueous ones, which can be particularly useful in treating diseases like dengue fever. For maximum health advantages, fresh or minimally processed nutrients are advised because preparation techniques affect their bioavailability. "Precautions people should take when using papaya leaves as a traditional remedy. When using papaya leaves as a traditional remedy, individuals should take several precautions, highlights Malhotra. "Firstly, consult a qualified healthcare provider before starting, especially if pregnant, breastfeeding, or on medications, to avoid potential interactions. Start with a low dose to assess tolerance and monitor for side effects like nausea or allergic reactions. Those with known allergies to papaya or latex should avoid it entirely." "Papaya leaves should complement, not replace, professional healthcare; they can be used as an adjunct in managing conditions like dengue fever but should not substitute prescribed treatments. Always prioritise quality when sourcing papaya leaf products. Additionally, be cautious of misinformation regarding their benefits; rely on credible sources for health guidance," notes Malhotra. Concurring, Dr Srinivasan asserts, "Always consult a doctor before using papaya leaves, especially if you are on medications or have underlying health conditions.

## Mother documents minor daughter's disappointment after being denied boarding on Dubai flight: Are kids not allowed to travel with relatives sans parents?

Nisha, a Chennai-based makeup artist, was left shocked when her daughter, excited to travel to Dubai with her grandmother and cousins for a vacation, was denied boarding despite a non-objection certificate from parents along with other documents. In a post dated January 29, 2025 — going viral on social media — she shared, "Previously, we had kids in our family travelling to Dubai UAE with their grandparents and cousins for vacations without their parents. The Airport authorities say it was 2 months back only that they implemented the rule of not allowing kids to travel with their relatives for vacations. The travel agency we booked said it's manageable if we carry the necessary documents like the parent's official consent letter," Nisha wrote in the post.

"It was her first international trip, totally disappointed ... I accept ... the worst feeling in the world is to see your child break down and cry for something you did out of carelessness," she wrote. Recounting the experience, Nisha told indianexpress.com: "Yes, her travel was denied despite producing the necessary documents. Both my husband and I were present to send her with my mother and sister." "Previously, she had sent her son with her mother-in-law to Dubai for vacations, and that time, there were no restrictions. I haven't received my daughter's airline ticket refund, either," said Nisha. While the family



claimed that they produced the necessary documents, "even after multiple requests, the airport authorities didn't allow our kid to board the flight. As parents, we could not travel with her on these dates because we had important commitments and couldn't postpone them right away," Nisha mentioned in the post.

"Posted it bcos it might help someone/some parent to be extra careful while planning for a trip for their kids," the post read. One user commented, "Last year we tried for my 13-year-old son. For him also not allowed. But we came to know before booking the tickets."

Taking a cue from the incident, let's understand all about the travel safety of minors. Colonel Rajgopalan, founder of Aviation Training India, explained the basic rules that prevent minors from travelling alone: "Kids below five years of age cannot travel alone. For those 5-12 years, it is possible to travel alone as an unaccompanied minor or after opting for a flying solo service, which is booked with some assistance. From 13-18, they can fly alone or use the

unaccompanied minor or fly solo service."

Notably, an unaccompanied minor/child means a "minor/child" who is/are not accompanied by a companion aged eighteen (18) years or more, on the date of travel, according to Indigo Airlines. "Minor" is a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years and includes children above the age of two and below the age of twelve years. The age range is applicable as on the date of travel of the onward and return journey (if any under the same PNR). In a bid to prevent child trafficking, all minors (below 18 years of age) travelling to the UAE, including Dubai, without their parents, like with some relatives, have to have an authorisation from their parents strictly. The rule came into effect on June 1, 2024, according to General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners-Dubai (Immigration), which notified the same. Dhairyashil Vandekar, an aviation expert and analyst, asserted that while travelling may be an exciting experience for minors or their parents, "it is a serious responsibility for

airlines to ensure the minor's safety while making their journey pleasant and memorable."

According to him, the age range, documentation, charges, policies, and level of assistance for minors may vary significantly among airlines and destination countries. Furthermore, "policies differ substantially" between domestic and international air travel in India, he said. "In India, the age range for urban minors is typically five-12 years for domestic travel, whereas for international travel, it ranges from five-15/18 years, depending on the airline and destination," said Vandekar. Typically, the documents required are a valid photo ID, birth certificate, consent form signed by both parents or guardians, full contact details of the parent/guardians seeing off/receiving the urban minor at the origin/destination. Some airlines may require additional documentation like passport copies of parents, a medical certificate, a police certificate, indemnity, proof of vaccination, a valid passport, and visa. Given the "varied requirements and policies among airlines, parents must thoroughly research and comply with their chosen airline's policy and requirements". This must be done well before the travel date or at the time of booking to avoid travel denial due to incomplete documents. Parents must also inform the airline about any special requirements or needs of the urban minor," said Vandekar.

## 'The best actor award goes to...': Divya Dutta on trusting her gut and manifesting dream to work in films

In her career spanning over three decades, Divya Dutta has portrayed a wide range of characters. It would not be wrong to say that each, regardless of screen time, resonated with the audience and left a lasting impression. Asked about the secret behind this connection, the actor credits her gut instinct. In an exclusive conversation with indianexpress.com, Divya Dutta, a national award-winning actor, opens up about her journey, the fulfilment of her dream of becoming an actor, and the challenges that come with it. She also highlights the significance of creative satisfaction. Read the edited excerpts below:

Q. From actor to writer, how would you describe your journey?

Divya Dutta: My journey has been beautiful and unconventional. I always knew I wanted to express myself, and acting was the best way to do that until I expanded my horizons and began writing. I started with newspaper articles, which helped me connect with my readers. It feels wonderful to express myself through both mediums, and I'm grateful to be able to do so.

Q. Do you find one medium more creatively satisfying than the other?

Divya Dutta: Both mediums have their beauty, creative satisfaction, hunger, and yearnings. The day you feel completely satisfied with something is the day you stop growing. I don't think I will ever be fully satisfied with either. I live by the phrase "Yeh dil maange more If I had to choose, I wouldn't be able to. As an actor, I express the words and emotions of characters written by others, while I express my thoughts through writing. Both mediums fulfil me creatively in different ways.

Q. Over the years, you have worked with some of the biggest stars and taken on diverse roles. What is the most crucial factor when selecting a project?

Divya Dutta: It may sound unusual, but my decisions are based purely on instinct—what my gut and heart tell me. I have turned down big films and instead worked with new directors because I just knew I would enjoy the process. That instinct has never let me down.

Q. As a young girl from Ludhiana, what were your dreams? Have you achieved them?

Divya Dutta: I feel incredibly blessed because it is rare to do what you love and make a living from it. While I still have a long way to go, I am grateful for how far I've come. Coming from a family of doctors, I had no roadmap, but I held onto my mother's hand and found my way. I made mistakes—big ones—but I kept going. Growing up far from Mumbai, the city of dreams, I used to daydream about being an actor. I truly believe that if you want something passionately, the universe conspires to make it happen. I was lucky to be selected in a talent hunt, which brought me to Mumbai. Everything changed after that. I still remember sitting and imagining, "The best actor award goes to Divya Dutta..." and "Divya Dutta acts with so-and-so and so-and-so," and now, looking back, it feels magical.

Q. The Hindi film industry is quick to typecast actors. Did you ever feel pigeonholed?

Divya Dutta: Absolutely. The industry follows a herd mentality, and you do get typecast. After Veer-Zaara, I was offered many similar roles, but I turned them all down despite the money because I knew I would get bored.

Many actors choose the safe path, but I wanted variety, so I said many no's. Now, the industry understands that I won't repeat myself unless it's presented in a new way that excites me, in a way that I get nervous and get butterflies in my tummy.

You have to keep yourself happy first, other things just



In her career spanning over three decades, Divya Dutta has portrayed a wide range of characters. It would not be wrong to say that each, regardless of screen time, resonated with the audience and left a lasting impression. Asked about the secret behind this connection, the actor credits her gut instinct.

follow. Thirty years into my career, I am glad people still want to see more of me; that, I think, means I made the right choices. Divya Dutta interview, Divya Dutta films After Veer-Zaara, I was offered many similar roles, but I turned them all down despite the money because I knew I would get bored, admits Divya Dutta. (Photo: PR handout)

Q. What has been the most challenging aspect—physically or mentally—of preparing for a role?

Divya Dutta: The most challenging part is always emotional, not physical. You have to strengthen your mind first. I had to learn to disconnect so that my roles didn't affect my personal life because I'm very emotional and sensitive. No matter how much I try, some roles seep into my subconscious. The role in The Echoes of Valour, a film I just finished, took a toll on me, as did The Sleeping Partner, a film about marital rape. These roles affect you in ways you don't even realise.

Some roles are also physically demanding. For Bandish Bandits, I had to unlearn and retrain myself for Western classical music, which was not easy.

Q. Tell us about your session at the Spoken Fest.

Divya Dutta: I was amazed when I was invited to speak about my book, Me and Ma. It is a personal journey, but the audience was receptive and sensitive to my story. It was a beautiful, collaborative session, all thanks to the organisers and the audience. Kisi bhi mood ki kahaani ho (no matter the mood of the story), they are all yours. It was such a "roobaroo (face-to-face conversation)" between the speaker and the audience.

Q. Audience perception plays a big role in an actor's career. Has this profession affected your mental health?

Divya Dutta: Of course. Some roles can take a toll on your mental health. I've been fortunate to have a supportive family and a brother who is a doctor and a hypnotherapist. Having family and friends who listen to you and help you maintain balance is essential. I've been fortunate that way. But ultimately, it is your own journey. You have to be aware of how much a role is affecting you and learn to switch off. It's not always easy, but you have to bring yourself back to you.

Q. You've written two books. Is there a third one on the horizon?

Divya Dutta: Yes! I'm planning a third book—a collection of short stories for children. I tell my niece and nephew bedtime stories every night, and they keep telling me, "Bui, you must write a book on this!" Who knows? Maybe I'll follow in Sudha Murty's footsteps.

# High tariffs by India and others unfair, reciprocal tariffs from April 2

## Rupee falls 5 paise to 87.11 against USD amid volatile markets, foreign fund outflows



Mumbai: The rupee failed to sustain its gaining momentum and fell 5 paise to 87.11 against the US dollar in early trade on Thursday as a lower American currency and crude oil prices failed to boost sentiment amid volatile equity markets and foreign funds outflow.

The local currency found support initially amid the US move to delay implementation of higher tariffs on Canada and Mexico, forex traders said. Also, RBI's decision to infuse Rs 1.9 trillion liquidity into the banking system added strength to the domestic unit. However, they said, volatile equity markets played a spoilsport and pushed back the local unit to the negative territory.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened stronger at 86.96, went up to 86.88 but soon pared most of its gains and traded at 87.11 against the greenback, registering a loss of 5 paise from its previous closing level. The rupee settled 13 paise higher at 87.06 against the US dollar on Wednesday, the third straight day of gain. In the preceding two sessions, the unit had gained 18 paise.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading marginally higher by 0.05 per cent at 104.30. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.58 per cent but stayed lower at USD 69.70 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex was trading 20.53 points, or 0.03 per cent, lower at 73,709.70 points, while the Nifty was down 10.75 points, or 0.05 per cent, at 22,326.55 points.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,895.04 crore on net basis on Wednesday, according to exchange data. The Reserve Bank on Wednesday said it will conduct open market purchases of government securities and undertake USD/INR swaps totalling about Rs 1.9 lakh crore during the month.

On February 28, the central bank conducted US dollar-rupee swap worth USD 10 billion to inject long-term liquidity into the system, with the auction eliciting robust demand. On the domestic macroeconomic front, India's services sector activity witnessed a sharp uptick in February boosted by improving domestic and international demand, which resulted in a quicker expansion in output and a substantial increase in employment, a monthly survey said on Wednesday. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index rose from January's 26-month low of 56.5 to 59.0 in February, indicating a sharp pace of expansion. US President Donald Trump has granted a one-month exemption on his stiff new tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada for US automakers amid concerns that the newly launched trade war could crush domestic manufacturing. The pause came a day after Trump spoke with leaders of the 'big 3' automakers, Ford, General Motors and Stellantis.

## Ultraviolette launches electric scooter and electric dirt bike in India



Hyderabad: Ultraviolette Automotive has on Wednesday launched two new vehicles — Tesseract an electric scooter and Shockwave an electric dirtbike. According to reports Tesseract is based on a next-gen platform which is powered by a 20.1 bhp electric motor, with a certified range of 261km on a single charge. The company also claims that the scooter does 0-60 kmph in 2.9 seconds. The Tesseract is being launched at an introductory price of Rs. 1,20,000 (ex-showroom). The actual price of the scooter will be Rs. 1,45,000 (ex-showroom). On the other hand Ultraviolette Shockwave, with raised fenders, rugged-looking suspensions and dual purpose tyres, is a typical dirt bike design. The company claims a mileage of 165km per single charge, and a top speed of 120kmph.

soften the impact of reciprocal tariffs are ongoing. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal began his US trip on Monday to meet the new United States Trade Representative (USTR), Jamieson Greer, who has been tasked with implementing Trump's tariff plan. Greer was also part of Trump's first administration, which broadly targeted China, helping create export opportunities for India, particularly in the electronics sector.

Trade experts said the US has long been pushing other countries to lower tariffs during multilateral negotiations and that reciprocal tariffs represent a more aggressive attempt to achieve a longstanding US goal. Abhijit Das, a former trade negotiator and an expert in international trade policy and the WTO, told The Indian Express that the US had sought reductions in tariffs from all countries during the WTO Doha Round in November 2001, but these efforts did not come to fruition at the time. "They wanted all countries to reduce their bound tariffs, which would have been less ambitious than what the US is attempting now. At that point, under the Doha Round, the US failed to achieve its goal. But through Trump's threat of reciprocal tariffs, he might achieve much more than what the US wanted during the Doha Round. Beyond pushing for lower tariffs, he may also gain concessions on government procurement and Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs)," he said. Trump's greenland congress speech President Donald Trump addresses a joint session of Congress at the Capitol in Washington. Trump's remarks on high tariffs on automobiles are particularly significant, as India exports nearly 30 per cent of its total auto parts and accessories to the US, its largest export market in this category. In FY24, India exported \$2.12 billion worth of "parts and accessories of motor vehicles" to the US, out of a total of \$7.20 billion in exports for this commodity classification. Notably, India's auto component exports have been on the rise, primarily driven by the US market, due to the US-China trade war that Trump initiated during his first term. Total auto component exports jumped from \$4.8 billion in FY19 to \$7.2 billion in FY24, with exports to the US

rising from \$1.3 billion to \$2.12 billion over the same period. The Indian automobile industry had hoped to sustain this growth over the next five years, as India currently accounts for only 2 per cent of the US's total \$300 billion auto parts imports. A trade war targeting China could have allowed India to secure a larger market share. However, reciprocal tariffs would mean that tariffs on Indian auto parts would also increase, as the tariff differential between India and the US stands at a steep 23 per cent, according to GTRI.

A Goldman Sachs report suggested that India could be affected by Trump's tariffs at the country level, the product level, or through non-tariff barriers, all of which could complicate trade relations between the two nations. At the country level, the report said that reciprocity would be the simplest to implement. If applied at the product level — where the US matches India's tariffs on each imported product — "this may increase the average tariff differential by ~11.5 percentage points, but would be more complex and require a longer implementation timeline," it said. "Reciprocity through non-tariff barriers, such as administrative restrictions, import licences, and export subsidies, is the most complicated approach, given the challenges of estimating non-tariff barriers. However, it could lead to even higher tariffs at either the product or country level," the report said. "India's gross exports to the US are among the lowest compared to its emerging market peers, at 2 per cent of GDP. We estimate a potential domestic GDP growth impact of 0.1-0.3 percentage points under different scenarios of an increase in the US's effective tariff rate on Indian exports, depending on whether reciprocity is applied at the country or product level and based on different estimates of US demand elasticity for Indian exports," the report said. However, in the case of global tariffs imposed by the US on all countries, India's exposure to US final demand — factoring in exports via third countries — would be roughly twice as high (~4.0 per cent of GDP). This could lead to a potential domestic GDP growth impact of 0.1-0.6 percentage points, the report added.

Trump's remarks, in an address to the Joint Session of the US Congress, signalled that negotiations for a trade deal may not yield concessions for New Delhi on sweeping duties. He singled out the auto sector, where, he said, India charges tariffs of over 100 per cent. "Other countries have used tariffs against us for decades and now it's our turn to start using them against those other countries. On average, the European Union, China, Brazil, India, Mexico and Canada — have you heard of them? And countless other nations charge us tremendously higher tariffs than we charge them," Trump said.

"It's very unfair. India charges us auto tariffs higher than 100 per cent. India charges us 100 per cent tariffs; the system is not fair to the US, it never was. On April 2, reciprocal tariffs kick in. Whatever they tax us, we will tax them. If they use non-monetary tariffs to keep us out of their market, then we will use non-monetary barriers to keep them out of our market," Trump said. This comes weeks after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US raised hopes in the Indian industry that a trade deal could help India secure relief from sweeping US tariffs in exchange for market access for US products. India had proactively slashed tariffs on a number of items, such as bourbon whiskey, even before negotiations began. Meanwhile, efforts to

## Actively bringing fab construction suppliers from Taiwan to Dholera, says Powerchip



"Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership... strategic initiatives have created a welcoming environment for an international company like PSMC, and an ecosystem which is conducive to innovation, investment and long-term success," Martin Chu, President, PSMC, said during the Gujarat SemiConnect conference.

Taiwanese semiconductor company Powerchip (PSMC), which is working with Tata Electronics to build India's first commercial fabrication plant, is attracting fab construction companies from the island nation to Dholera in Gujarat, where the site is coming up, a top company official said Wednesday. "Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership... strategic initiatives have created a welcoming environment for an international company like PSMC, and an ecosystem which is conducive to innovation, investment and long-term success," Martin Chu, President, PSMC, said during the Gujarat SemiConnect conference.

The Tata-PSMC fab, being built at a cost of roughly \$11 billion, is among the five semiconductor projects the government has greenlit under the India Semiconductor Mission. Apart from the fab, four assembly and testing plants by US-based Micron Technology, the Tatas, Murugappa Group's CG Power in partnership with Japan's Renesas, and Kaynes Semicon, are also under construction. Chu said that PSMC and Tata have begun collaborating on multiple fronts. "We are proud to partner with Tata Electronics to build India's first commercial 12 inch wafer fab in Dholera. We have already begun collaborating on multiple fronts — from fab construction and technology transfer, to talent development and ecosystem building," he said.

"We are actively bringing fab construction suppliers from Taiwan to Dholera, doing our best to build India's semiconductor ecosystem... We encourage more international partners to join us in this endeavour and support the development of local suppliers and capabilities," he added. Chu said he was "confident that the government of India and government of Gujarat will provide a favourable business environment and investment protection for Taiwanese businesses interested in investing in India". had earlier reported that the Indian government had mobilised officials to Taiwan bearing a key message: an explicit assurance of policy stability. Senior officials from the IT Ministry had earlier met with industry executives in Taipei and government officials, to assure them of policy stability, especially with regard to changes in rules governing imports and tweaks in customs duties on inputs.

Tata and PSMC also announced a memorandum of understanding with Himax Technologies, a Taiwan-based fabless chip company that makes display driver ICs and semiconductor products. Himax's display driver ICs and timing controllers have been adopted at scale across multiple industries worldwide including TVs, PC monitors, laptops, mobile phones, tablets, automotive, ePaper devices, industrial displays, among others. As part of the agreement, the entities will engage in end-to-end production of display semiconductor solutions for their mutual customers, from chip design to chip manufacturing and packaging, as well as electronics manufacturing services (EMS) to deliver system-level solutions, to both the Indian and global markets. The partnership also encompasses designing and manufacturing next-generation solutions to meet global demand while enhancing supply chain resilience.

Randhir Thakur, CEO and MD of Tata Electronics, said, "This MoU with Himax and PSMC will enable the development of differentiated solutions for display-related semiconductor products for our mutual customers... Together, we will drive innovation and develop next-generation technologies to meet the growing demands of display and ultralow power AI sensing technologies across key industries while contributing to a resilient semiconductor supply chain".

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

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

Unlike classical computers, which process information in binary (0s and 1s), quantum computing uses quantum bits (qubits) that can exist in multiple states at the same time, allowing it to perform certain tasks much faster. A sufficiently powerful quantum computer can also break public key encryption algorithms, in turn making modern internet security, online banking, and secure communications obsolete. Public sector investment in quantum development has increased rapidly, with over \$40 billion pledged by more than 30 governments. China leads with a \$15 billion commitment, the United States has invested \$5 billion, and India plans to invest \$750 million, primarily through the National Quantum Mission (NQM) launched in 2023, the release noted. On India's lower public spending compared to China and the US, NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam pointed to the country's success in "frugal innovation". "If you throw some money, you won't necessarily get a good solution. I don't think the billions matter. Again, our mission to Mars was the cheapest in the world. We landed on the south pole of the moon. I am sure that India can genuinely come up with very economical solutions," Subrahmanyam said. Debjani Ghosh, Distinguished Fellow at NITI Aayog and chief architect of the Frontier Tech Hub, said, "The quantum race hasn't even started. It's very early days, and I'm glad that we have got a foot in the door with the quantum mission. We are at least thinking about it and building a foundation."

The NQM, with a budgetary outlay of Rs 6,003 crore, was set up to build quantum-related capabilities in key domains, namely, computing, communications, sensors, and materials. The estimated expenditure for the ongoing financial year under the mission was reduced from Rs 427 crore to Rs 86 crore in the latest Union Budget. For 2025-26, it is projected to rise to Rs 600 crore. "The Indian quantum mission caught the trend very early and they started the investment early. They had a specific goal, which was to address the hardware issue, because that is going to be a key limiter in quantum. Later on, we'll realize how important that is going to be, not right now. The mission also started growing the startup ecosystem," Ghosh said. "Companies are increasingly focusing on producing ultra-high purity materials, cryogenic systems, specialized lasers, and control electronics tailored for quantum computing," the release noted, highlighting the growing importance of specialized quantum hardware. Prepared with the Data Security Coun-



cil of India, the release also flagged an expected surge in export controls on quantum technologies as a key risk.

"As quantum technologies become critical to national security, export restrictions are tightening on components like Arbitrary Waveform Generators (AWGs), Digital-to-Analog Converters (DACs), Microwave Components, specialized lasers, and cryogenic dilution refrigerators," it said. "Advancements in quantum technology would expose the country to increased risk of technological surprise and strategic blind spots. Being caught off guard by quantum driven advancements would jeopardize national security, economic competitiveness, and technological leadership," the release said. To mitigate risks to national security from quantum technologies, the release recommended developing a post-quantum cryptography (PQC) transition plan. PQC refers to cryptographic algorithms designed to withstand attacks from quantum computers, ensuring improved data security. "Countries are in a race to develop and implement PQC to safeguard their data. Those who master PQC first can protect their critical information while others remain vulnerable," it said.

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

## At an elevation of 15000 ft. above sea level"- Cabinet approves two major ropeway projects in Uttarakhand under Parvatmala Pariyojana

The union cabinet Wednesday approved two major ropeway projects- Govindghat to Hemkund Sahib Ji (12.4 km) and Sonprayag to Kedarnath (12.9 km)- in Uttarakhand, which will be developed under National Ropeways Development Programme - Parvatmala Pariyojana. The total cost of both projects is over Rs. 6,811 crore and these will be developed on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) mode, one of the variants of the Public-Private Partnership, or PPP, model.

Currently, the journey to Hemkund Sahib, which is a site of famous gurdwara, is undertaken through 21-km uphill trek from Govindghat and is covered on foot or by ponies or palanquins. Similarly, the journey to Kedarnath temple is a 16-km uphill trek from Gaurikund and is currently covered on foot or by ponies, palanquins and helicopter. According to the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH), Govindghat to Hemkund Sahib Ji ropeway project will have Monocable Detachable Gondola from Govindghat to Ghangaria (10.55 km) and further integrated with the advanced Tricable Detachable Gondola (3S) technology from Ghangaria to Hemkund Sahib Ji (1.85 km). It will have a design capacity of 1,100 passengers per hour per direction (PPHPD) with maximum carrying capacity of 11,000 passengers per day. Whereas, Sonprayag to Kedarnath ropeway will have Tri-cable Detachable Gondola (3S) technology with a design capacity of 1,800 passen-

gers per hour per direction carrying 18,000 passengers per day. Tri-cable Detachable Gondola is a ropeway system where the Gondola or passenger compartment is supported by three cables and the gondola can be detached from the haul rope at the stations for loading an unload of passengers. Tri-cable Detachable Gondola have higher capacity, longer span between towers and higher cost compared to monocable systems, which runs on a single cable. Ropeways do not need large construction works on the ground surface as such incur lower land acquisition costs. It has higher cost of construction per km than roadways. However, ropeways may be more economical than roadways. In an statement, the ministry said that the project will foster the economic growth of the region as both religious sites- Hemkund Sahib Ji and Kedarnath- attract lakhs of pilgrims every year. Hemkund Sahib Ji is situated at an elevation of 15,000 ft in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, where the Gurdwara open for about 5 months in a year between May and September and is visited by about 1.5 to 2 lakh pilgrims annually. Similarly, Kedarnath is situated at an elevation of 3,583 m (11,968 ft) in the Rudraprayag district, where the temple is open for about seven months and is visited by around 20 lakh pilgrims annually. Both the projects will significantly increase the total length of Parvatmala Pariyojana. Launched in Union Budget 2022-23, MoRTH's ambitious ropeway scheme aims to develop



more than 250 projects with ropeway length of over 1,200 kilometers under PPP model with around 60 percent contribution support by Government of India. The Programme is being implemented by National Highway Logistics Management Limited (NHLML), a special purpose vehicle of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI).

According to the ministry's annual report 2024-25, a total of Rs. 300 crore was allocated for the ropeway projects during current financial year and out of this Rs. 200 crore was spent till December 31, 2024. The ropeway projects of 60 km length was planned for award during FY25. Out of this, Ropeway at Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) of 3.85 km is under construction.

# ICC Champions Trophy: Why India should be wary of New Zealand in the final



GNS News Agency, March 6

In Sunday's ICC Champions Trophy final, India will face New Zealand, a side that will give them a stiff challenge. Having already played India at the venue last Sunday, New Zealand know what to expect in terms of conditions, which South Africa wouldn't have had, if they had made it. It takes a look at the reasons that make New Zealand a strong side to overcome in

the final. If there is any team in the Champions Trophy that could match or come close to India in terms of spin bowling resources, it is the Kiwis. Led by left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner, they have three other spin bowling options in Michael Bracewell, Glenn Phillips and Rachin Ravindra. So in terms of variety in the spin department, they have their bases covered. In their group match, India came out prepared to deal with them

and emerged successful. But this time, New Zealand will come back fully aware of what exactly to do in these conditions. With the final set to be played on the same pitch that was used for India's game against Pakistan, the Kiwi spinners will have a big role to play. What caught India by surprise against the Kiwis was the movement their seamers were able to generate with the new ball. In the other three matches that India have played here, seam movement has been non-existent. But against Kiwis, it was different. Part of it can be attributed to the height of their pacers — who are all tall — and because they bowl a good length and there is more air time, there is more chance of movement in the air. To go with their movement, the extra bounce that

they generate has also troubled India's top order in recent times across all formats in ICC events. India need to come up with a definite plan to counter this as runs in the first Powerplay are crucial. As they showed last Sunday with their fielding, New Zealand are capable of saving 30-40 runs in the field. If that isn't enough, they often convert half-chances into catches. In any other team, the likes of Santner, Will Young and Michael Bracewell could be considered top fielders, but here they have Glenn Phillips, who can change the course of the game with his exceptional fielding. With all their best fielders in the ring when the spinners operate, they can apply pressure by cutting off singles. And if the ball is anywhere in their range, they dive around to

take blinders. So India know they have to earn every run, and that in itself adds to the pressure. Like India, the Black Caps have a batting line-up well suited to the conditions. Though they didn't quite pull it off during their chase on Sunday, they have the quality to not be written off. In Rachin, Young and Kane Williamson, they have a top three that can not just provide rapid starts, but also hang around long enough to build a base for the middle order. While most teams have struggled against India's spinners, the Kiwis can change that trend thanks to the likes of Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell and Phillips, who are all good against tweakers. The other night, they were undone by a special performance from Varun Chakaravathy, but come Sunday they will be prepared.

# 'Aaqib Javed is a clown': Jason Gillespie slams Pakistan interim head coach for 'campaigning' for all-format role



GNS News Agency, March 6

Jason Gillespie has slammed Pakistan interim head coach Aaqib Javed, calling him a "clown" in a social media post. (AP) Jason Gillespie has slammed Pakistan interim head coach Aaqib Javed, calling him a "clown" in a social media post. Former Australia pacer Jason Gillespie, who left his role as Pakistan's Test head coach last December, slammed the current interim head coach Aaqib Javed for campaigning for the role across formats, labelling him a "clown" on a social media post.

Gillespie's reaction came on the back of Javed's lament that the constant management and team personnel changes across formats hampered

Pakistan's performance across formats. Hosts of the ongoing Champions Trophy, Pakistan suffered a group-stage exit with defeats to New Zealand and India before their final game against Bangladesh was washed out. "We have changed nearly 16 coaches and 26 selectors in the last two years or so," he was quoted as saying at a news conference to announce the latest overhaul of Pakistan's limited-overs squads. "You put that formula on any team in the world, I think they will also be in the same situation. Until you get consistency right from the top down to the bottom, from the chairman down, then your team will not progress."

Gillespie called Javed's remarks "hilarious". The former Australia quick who played international

cricket for 10 years, appearing in 71 tests and 97 ODIs, was appointed last April for two years as Pakistan's test coach but quit before a series in South Africa less than eight months later after an unsuccessful start. Gillespie was the second foreigner to leave Pakistan's program in less than two months after South African Gary Kirsten stepped down as limited-overs coach in October. Aaqib was clearly undermining Gary and I behind the scenes campaigning to be the coach in all formats," Gillespie posted. "He is a clown." Javed's interim coaching job was set to be until the Champions Trophy. However, with the Pakistan Cricket Board yet to seek a replacement, Javed will continue in the role for the team's tour to New Zealand, starting March 16.

# 'India have got the best chaser in the history of the game in Virat Kohli,' says Nasser Hussain



GNS News Agency, March 6

With Virat Kohli hitting his 74th half-century in India's win over Australia in the semi-finals of the Champions Trophy in Dubai, the 36-year-old made sure that India scored its fourth win over Australia in knockouts in ICC ODI tournaments. Kohli also crossed the 8,000-run mark in ODI run chases and took 159 innings to achieve the feat, which has only been matched by Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar. Former England captain Nasser Hussain has termed Kohli as the best run-chaser in the history of the game.

"It was a pretty clinical run chase. They have got the best chaser in the history of the game. Virat Kohli. And around Kohli, they have so much talent all the way through. Spin bowling all rounders. Guys that go hard at the ball in the power play. A wicket keeping batter in KL Rahul. That's magnificent and an all-rounder in Hardik Pandya makes things easy," Hussain told Sky Sports Cricket post the game.

While India won the match by four wickets, Kohli missed in what could be his 29th ODI hundred while batting second. He tried to hit an Adam Zampa googly for a six

before he was caught at mid-on by Ben Dwarshuis. The Indian batsman now holds the record for the most number of 50-plus scores (24) in ICC tournaments after surpassing Tendulkar's mark of 23 such innings. Kohli took 53 innings to achieve the feat while Tendulkar's 23 fifty-plus scores had come in 58 innings. Former England captain Michael Atherton too showered praise on Kohli. "You just expect him to get a 100 in a run chase like this. Once he's got himself in you beautifully. He gave that one chance that he got away with but his manipulation of the ball today was outstanding. In fact, funnily enough, that early shot he played one of them against New Zealand as well he is quite prepared to take it on. Early but then when he gets in. He is really an expert of just knocking the ball around and finding the gaps with the precision expected. He was going to get the hundred because that's what he does all the time in a run chase. It would have been his 29th ODI hundred. And then he just holed out. But that's fine," Atherton told Sky Sports Cricket. KL Rahul played a knock of 42 runs and took India home with 1.5 overs to spare. Atherton sees Rahul's experience as a strength for the Rohit Sharma-led Indian team.

"He is a pretty experienced player now. Isn't he? Obviously. He is keeping an outstanding player Rishabh Pant out of the team. Maybe that's part of the reason for it that he is vastly experienced and he's got a lot of skill in different ways and as Nasser rightly said he started just in Kohli's slipstream and then just after drinks, decided that it's my turn now, my time to take the game on. He has the ability to play in different ways. Most of these are good players and have the ability and range to do what they can. He just started off just in Kohli's slipstream and then just after drinks decided well it's my turn now my time to take the game on and he has the ability to play in different ways. Most of these good players have the ability and have the range to do so," said Atherton.

# PowerHouse Taekwondo Academy students bag medals



GNS News Agency, March 6

Hyderabad: It was a moment of celebration for Power House Taekwondo Academy when its young fighters left their mark in the recently concluded 13th Telangana State Level Open Inter School Taekwondo Championships. The event was held on March 1 and 2, 2025 at Kotla Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy Indoor Stadium in Hyderabad. The young fighters bagged five gold medals, six silver medals and four bronze medals by crushing the opponents in their style and celebrated their wins in this championships. On this occasion, the founders of Power House Taekwondo Academy and national referees, Aravind and Suresh extended their hearty congratulations to the winners and all participants who have excelled in style.

# LeBron James Makes NBA History as First Player to Reach 50,000 Career Points

GNS News Agency, March 6

James required only one point before the Lakers' clash against the New Orleans Pelicans at Crypto.com Arena. He secured it by sinking a three-pointer from the left wing off a Luka Doncic assist with 8:34 left in the first quarter. He finished the game with an impressive 34 points, eight rebounds, and six assists, steering the Lakers to a dominant 136-115 win over the Pelicans. Los Angeles: The three-time Olympic gold medalist LeBron James has become the first NBA player in history to score 50,000 career points.

The 40-year-old Los Angeles Lakers star reached the milestone after scoring a three-pointer during the NBA regular season game at home against the New Orleans Pelicans on Tuesday. James needed just one point heading into the Lakers' matchup against the

New Orleans Pelicans at Crypto.com Arena. He drilled a three-pointer from the left wing off a Luka Doncic feed with 8:34 remaining in the first quarter. He went on to put up 34 points, eight rebounds, and six assists, leading the Lakers to a convincing 136-115 victory over the Pelicans.

The American's combined scoring total now includes 41,871 regular-season points and 8,162 postseason points. He is also a first player in NBA history to play both as a teenager and past the age of 40. Last month, James became the first player in the history of the NBA to have multiple 40 plus points in a game at age 40 or higher. The legendary Michael Jordan is the only other 40-year-old to have produced a 40 plus point performance. In December last year, James, a man whose longevity will be talked about for years to come, surpassed six-time



NBA MVP Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for the most minutes played in league history during Los Angeles Lakers' win over Sacramento Kings. He was already the league's top scorer after surpassing Abdul-Jabbar's regular-season scoring record on February 7, 2023, and broke Michael Jordan's playoff scoring record on May 25, 2017. James also holds the NBA records for career field-goal attempts and turnovers while ranking fourth in assists, sixth in steals.

# Table tennis legend Sharath Kamal retires leaving unmatched legacy

GNS News Agency, March 6

When Achanta Sharath Kamal started playing table tennis in the 1990s, the scoring system was different, the ball was faster, the rubber used was much different, and frankly, there wasn't much technology. India had some brilliant players but weren't on the sport's global map. At the national level, there was always fierce competition, but they struggled at the international level. When Sharath first won his national title in 2003, he was content but thought just being a national champion wouldn't be enough for him. He wanted to be among the best in the world. The only problem was that no Indian had done it before. It was up to Sharath to find a path for himself. And he did. He was the first Indian paddler to train abroad and play for a club, the first to win international medals, and surely the first Indian paddler recognised globally. And by doing it for himself, he inspired a generation of paddlers in India who took up the sport by just watching him.

Seven gold medals in the Commonwealth Games and two Asian Games bronze medals later, it's safe to say that the 42-year-old, who announced on Wednesday that the World Table Tennis (WTT) Star Contender at his hometown Chennai (from March 25-30) would be his last professional tournament, has been a catalyst for Indian table tennis's meteoric rise over the past decade. "I played my first international tournament in Chennai, I will be playing

my last international also in Chennai. This will be my last tournament as a professional athlete," he revealed.

More than his medals, Sharath must be remembered for how his drive and love for the sport constantly drove him to break the toughest of barriers. The younger players are now reaping the huge benefits of those barriers broken by him. Then, there's also the fact that he always put the country first. Fresh from the high of winning three gold medals and one silver at the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games, Sharath refused to bask in glory. Then, at the age of 40, he had only one focus, one dream — getting India to qualify for the men's team event at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Only the top 16 teams in the world make it, and India had never even come close to qualifying for the team event at an Olympics. Qualifying meant that the team would be just two wins away from a medal round. A table tennis medal at the Olympics is the ultimate dream. When Sharath first started competing over two decades ago, back in 2002, he would never have fathomed that India could stand a chance at medalling at the Olympics. They could maybe compete at the Asian level, but the Olympics was a far cry. Having begun his Olympic journey at Athens 2004 as a 21-year-old, Sharath knew that winning a medal in singles was almost impossible. The top players were just unbeatable. He realised, though, that India

as a team could be really strong. He did everything in his capacity to ensure that India qualified. He constantly coordinated with the players and advised them which tournaments they should and shouldn't play. He trained with them and became their 'older brother'.

He was instrumental in their performance at the World TT Championships last year, where they reached the quarterfinals, thereby qualifying for the Olympics. They qualified, but then came his biggest challenge. His poor ranking meant that he could lose his place. Not one to back off from a challenge, he showed he still had it in him by registering the best-ever performance by an Indian male by reaching the quarterfinal of the Singapore Smash last year. His performance in Singapore cemented his spot in the team for the Paris Olympics, where they lost in the Rd of 16 to eventual champions China. Manav Thakkar, who is India's highest-ranked male paddler after Sharath, told The Indian Express that the Indian team will miss his presence but knows that he's just a call away.

"When I first started playing and competing internationally, it was Sharath who took me under his wing. He allowed me to train with him and other senior international players in Denmark. He told me to train in Chennai and gave me all the facilities. More than anything, his presence in the team inspired us. He saw to



it that we competed hard with each other but also ensured that we always supported each other. We know that we can always call him for advice." TTF secretary Kamlesh Mehta said that while Sharath may be retiring from the sport, he has and will always support table tennis away from the table.

"As a player, his medals don't do justice to the

impact he's had on the sport in India. He's had to struggle to break barriers throughout his career, so he knows exactly what athletes go through. He deserved his role as co-chair of the International Table Tennis Federation's (ITTF) Athletes Commission since he has always looked out for players. I'm sure he has great post-retirement plans," he said.

# Hyderabad's Uppal stadium gears up for IPL 2025

GNS News Agency, March 6

Hyderabad: Uppal Stadium is gearing up to host the 18th edition of Indian Premier League beginning March 22.

A team of Hyderabad Cricket Association officials inspected the stadium where Sunrisers Hyderabad will play its first match against Rajasthan Royals on March 23. On Tuesday, HCA Apex Council members held a meeting with the management of Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) at the Uppal Stadium to review the arrangements.

HCA president A Jagan Mohan Rao urged the SRH management to ensure that fans do not face any problems. The sale of tickets should be completely transparent, and adequate care must be taken to ensure that quality food is available at reasonable prices. Jagan Mohan Rao, along with HCA vice president Daljit Singh, joint Secretary Basava Raju, and treasurer CJ Srinivas, Councillor Sunil Kumar inspected the works being taken up in the dressing rooms and corporate boxes.

# Wasim Akram hails chase master Virat Kohli: 'He is definitely going to...'

GNS News Agency, March 6

India's Virat Kohli in action against Australia during the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 semi-final. (AP) India's Virat Kohli in action against Australia during the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 semi-final. (AP)

With his knock of 84 runs in India's four-wicket win over Australia in the Champions Trophy semi-final in Dubai on Tuesday, Virat Kohli became only the second batsman in the world to cross the 8,000-run mark in ODI run chases. Sachin Tendulkar currently sits at the top of the list with 8,720 runs in ODI run chases. Former Pakistan pacer and captain Wasim Akram believes Kohli's record is phenomenal and he is one of the greats of the game. The top five ODI run-chase scorers in world cricket are Tendulkar, Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Sanath Jayasuriya and Jacques Kallis.

"Look at these all names with the highest run

chasers. Sachin, Rohit, Jayasuriya and Kallis. There are the greats of the game and Kohli is definitely going to pass Sachin Tendulkar the way it looks like. Kohli's average is only second to MS Dhoni. Dhoni got close to 100 and Kohli's average is close to 90. That's just phenomenal," Akram said during the show The Pavilion on Ten Sports.

While India scored their fourth win against Australia in the knockouts of ICC ODI tournaments on Tuesday, Australia suffered their first loss in knockouts of the ICC Tournament in ODI format with their last such loss coming in the quarter-final of the 2011 World Cup. Australia was playing with rookie pacers Nathan Ellis and Ben Dwarshuis and were looking set to get a score in excess of 300 runs with the team placed at 198 for 4 with 14.4 overs left in their innings. Akram saw the fall of wickets of Steve Smith and Glen Maxwell in succession as the key factor in Australia's loss resulting in a below-par



score by the world champions. "If they are not here, it's not a valid point to discuss their absence. But then they are the leading bowlers of the cricketing world. Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins could not come, two were injured and one did not come due to personal reasons. But Australia did not help their cause. Like Steve Smith said, if the score was 290-300, then they would have got a chance. These two wickets of Smith and Maxwell made them score a below-par score," said Akram. Akram's compatriot and former team-mate Waqar Younis too echoed the same thoughts. "When you have weak bowling, you need 25-30 runs extra than the par score. Like Wasim bhai said, Australia could not achieve that and it ham-

## 'Bollywood has romanticized Karva Chauth, it was my responsibility to question it': Mrs director Arati Kadav



Arati Kadav has lingered on the margins for a while now. With a slender but striking body of work — two inventive shorts (55 Km/sec, The Astronaut and His Parrot) and a remarkable feature-length debut (Cargo) — she is one of those rare filmmakers who seemed to find her voice with ease. Science fiction appears to be her chosen language, but her craft lies in grounding the fantastical within the social and cultural textures of this country. Yet, as is often the case in Bollywood, an independent woman filmmaker — especially one building entire worlds on shoestring budgets — is not merely sidelined; she is met with indifference. The rules, after all, have always been clear: conform or disappear. And the game is never yours to define. But the past three weeks seem to have marked a turning point for Kadav. The industry, long indifferent to her otherworldly sci-fi visions, suddenly appears to be showing interest. And it's not just them. The audience, too, has opened its arms, eager to listen to what she has to say. At the heart of this shift is her latest film, Mrs., starring Sanya Malhotra — an official remake of the seminal Malayalam work, The Great Indian Kitchen. The film has rightfully become a cultural flashpoint, trending across social media and beyond. In dining rooms and quiet conversations, men are beginning to confront their reflections — as though the film has unknowingly placed a mirror before them.

For Kadav, the most profound response has come from women. There is a sisterhood she now feels tethered to. Messages pour in from women of all ages, not just from strangers but from those she had long lost touch with. And in their words, she finds something rare: A sense of belonging, as if the film has not only spoken for her but, in some way, spoken her into a community she didn't know was waiting. She was unprepared for this sudden swell of acceptance. But it is a welcome, long-overdue shift in her life. Strangers now recognize her in public spaces — stopping her to offer thanks for the film. More intimately, she watched Mrs. beside her mother, and together, they wept: Tears that held more than just pride, perhaps a release long withheld. But beyond the personal, Kadav has sent a ripple through the industry. The game may belong to them, as do the rules, and she has played by their conditions. Yet, somewhere along the way, the ground beneath their feet shifted. In a spoiler-laden conversation with SCREEN, Kadav reflects on the narrative choices she made while adapting such a profound film. She reflects on her intent to portray the male characters with nuance, the decision to frame the film as a coming-of-age story, and the importance of questioning Bollywood's celebratory portrayal of Karva Chauth.

Your previous work firmly situated you in the sci-fi space. What compelled you to remake The Great Indian Kitchen, a grounded and socially rooted narrative? I felt it was important for me to make this film for several reasons. One of the most personal was that I wanted to be a working director. Until Mrs., I had only produced my own projects and that can become overwhelming. Sometimes, you just want to focus on directing, to exercise those skills without carrying the entire weight of production. Beyond that, the story deeply resonated with me. In many ways, I felt it belonged to my mother, to my aunts, my cousins, to the women whose lives I've witnessed up close. There was something intimate and familiar about it, and I believed I could do justice to this kind of rooted storytelling. Bollywood often leans toward hyper-sentimentalizing narratives like these, but I wanted to ground it in realism. Also, Mrs. is a treatment-driven film. It's not about the plot but how it is told. That approach excited me. So, I found myself bringing my sci-fi sensibilities into the process. While designing the house, for instance, I drew from Amedeo Modigliani's paintings. I also took inspiration from Iranian cinema for the kitchen's visual language. I wanted the space to feel like it could hold

a sci-fi story too. The intent was always to make it immersive, precise. The color palette reflected that: Yellows and greens filling the frame while the protagonist starts in red, eventually absorbing the world's hues as her journey unfolds. And then, there was a simple but powerful piece of advice someone gave me — "To do more work, you have to do more work." For a while, I turned down many projects because I wanted to focus solely on my original stories. But I realised that taking on Mrs. could open doors to other stories I've long wanted to tell. And, luckily, that's beginning to happen. There's a sci-fi project I've been waiting to make for years, and now, for the first time, there's real interest in it. What surprised me most, though, was how much my vision evolved through the process of adapting someone else's work. It reminded me of that timeless artistic exercise of copying a master's painting to understand their brushstrokes. You inevitably discover new things, not just about the work, but about yourself. The Great Indian Kitchen was replete with rage, while Mrs. leans toward a sense of persistent frustration. For instance, the montage sequences in Mrs. feel more polished and stylized compared to the raw, unfiltered horror of the original. What guided your approach to this tonal variation? The idea was always to let the horror creep in gradually, rather than setting it from the outset. It's similar to what Kubrick did with The Shining. He could have placed it in a dark, foreboding space, but he didn't, right? That contrast makes the descent into horror more unsettling. I approached Mrs. with a similar thought: The environment didn't need to feel inherently terrifying — it could be a real, familiar space, weighed down by monotony. Even with the background score, we faced challenges. At one point, we tried a soundscape for the first montage — leaning into horror — but it felt too heavy-handed, almost pretentious. So, we shifted to something softer, more soothing, because it better reflected the surface calm of a seemingly ordinary household. After all, the invisible labor we're talking about is called invisible for a reason, right? I wanted that tension to build beneath the surface rather than overwhelm it. A crucial distinction from the original lies in how we follow Richa's perspective. In the first half, she isn't immediately aware that something is wrong — she's actually craving validation, believing in the idea of a happy marriage.

## Alia Bhatt says daughter Raha's birth transformed Ranbir Kapoor, they're like 'two friends': 'I often record them sneakily'



Through photos and short clips, fans of Ranbir Kapoor often see him being girl dad goals when he is out and about with daughter Raha Kapoor. Now, in a new interview, Alia Bhatt has shed some light on the transformation she has seen in Ranbir after Raha's birth. She also revealed that Ranbir 'really wanted to be a girl dad' all along.

"When he looks at Raha, there are stars in his eyes. Of course, (that's true) for any parents. But when I see it, because I've known Ranbir before and I know him now, I see the difference. I see the difference in the way he is with people, you know, as a father. He's just so sort of full. It's not like he was ever edgy. He always had a very calm demeanour, but there's a fullness which I experienced firsthand and that I see on a daily basis, and it's actually really sweet and special to watch their conversations," Alia told Jay Shetty on his podcast. She also spoke about how Ranbir keeps Raha engaged. "He's amazing. He's very creative when it comes to entertaining her. She entertains him as well, like they both have a very special friendship, I would say. Their bond is like they're two friends — either two adults or two toddlers, you know, different at different moments in life," she said. Alia accepted that she 'sneakily' tapes Ranbir and Raha's moments together. "I'm sneakily, you know, videotaping a lot of their random moments, and they don't even know I'm doing it. Eventually, I guess one of them looks at the camera and then I put it off, but it's just the beginning. But the beginning is just so unique and special, at least from where I'm sitting and from what I've seen. Just to watch your partner also manifest love in that way is very interesting." Ranbir and Alia welcomed Raha in 2022. The couple has been hands-on parents to her and are often spotted with her. Talking about her own journey of motherhood Alia said, "When you speak about surprises, there are many because she is a toddler now — she is always bubbling. The feeling of motherhood is ever-evolving, but one thing I can say for sure is that I have become incessantly protective ever since she was born. I remember the early months after she was born; it was bliss for me. I enjoyed the survival and nurturing feeling."

## Shibani Dandekar says Shabana Azmi didn't initially listen to her pitch for Dabba Cartel: 'Had already made up her mind'



Shabana Azmi, who is one of the acclaimed actors in Indian cinema, recently appeared in her daughter-in-law Shibani Dandekar's show Dabba Cartel and in a recent interview, Shibani said that Shabana had made up her mind about being a part of it even before she heard the pitch. In fact, Shibani shared that Shabana wasn't even listening to her pitch when she first spoke to her about playing a significant part in the show. In a chat with The Hindu, Shibani shared, "I don't think she even listened to the pitch when I was talking to her. I really don't think she was listening. It was a zoom call and it was a five minute conversation. I think she knew it was happening because during the lockdown, I had told Javed uncle and Shabana that I was working on this." Shibani said that when she first shared it with screenwriter Javed, who is her father-in-law, he suggested that they cast Shabana in the show. "Javed uncle suggested that Shabana be a part of the cast. I don't think he had any inclination that she was already someone that we wanted," she said and added that Shabana was keen to be a part of it too. "I think before the phone call, she had already made up her mind that she wanted to do it."

Shibani insisted that Shabana isn't a part of the show just because she is family, but because she had a deep influence on Shibani's childhood. She shared that when she was younger and was living in Australia, her only connection with Hindi movies was a video tape of Shekhar Kapur's Masoom and she would watch it over and over again.

"A lot of people are going to think that she was cast in this because she is my mother-in-law and it's a family thing but it actually wasn't like that at all. I mean, yes of course, I was dating Farhan at the time, but very few people know that when I was younger, my only connection to Indian cinema was a video cassette of Masoom, which I used to watch and rewind and then start it again. I think I watched that film over 400-500 times so I knew I wanted to work with her. It just so happened that she ended up being family which was, I don't know which one is a coincidence, that was more the reason she had to be in the show," she said. In an earlier chat shared on Netflix India's YouTube channel, Shabana said that she couldn't have said no to starring in Dabba Cartel because it was being produced by her son Farhan and daughter-in-law Shibani. Shabana is married to screenwriter Javed Akhtar.

## Abhay Deol opens up about experiencing violence with an ex: 'Have had a lot of drama in past relationships, I've been miserable'

Abhay Deol has always been quite candid about his thoughts on relationships and marriage. In a recent interview, while opening up about his older relationships and how he sees his life going forward, the actor shared that he has experienced violence in the past and categorically stated that he does not believe in violence. Abhay also spoke about some of his other exes as he shared that he has been with a narcissist and found this person to be "unemotional and scheming." Abhay was asked about a shared value system between the two partners and the actor shared that it is extremely essential that both partners are on the same page in the way they see the relationship. He shared with Humans of Bombay, "I don't believe in violence and I have had a lot of drama in some of my past relationships. They have turned violent as well, emotional mainly. And that's not good, not for my partner and not good for me. Not pointing fingers at anyone, it's a learning curve."

He also spoke about being in a relationship with narcissist and said, "In retrospect, you see that was kind of very unemotional and scheming." He shared that he has been in good, as well as bad relationships in the past. "I have had some great relationships, some really miserable ones," he said and added, "I've had partners where I have had great support, I have been the wrong one." In the same interview, Abhay shared his thoughts on marriage as well and said that he does not see it as a "natural phenomenon." Abhay said that marriage was initially introduced as a way

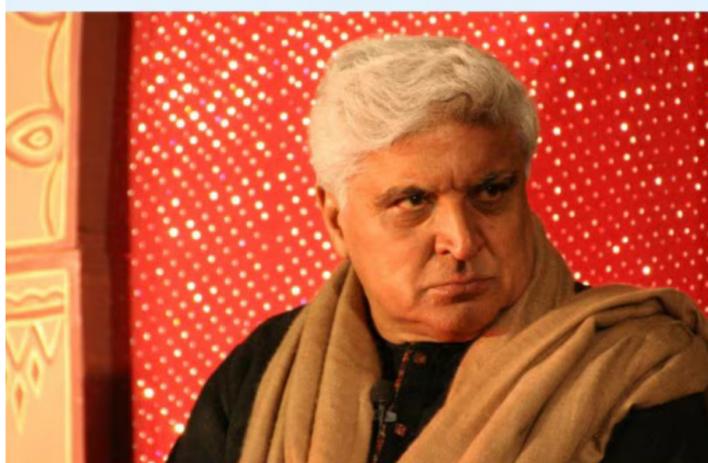


to join political forces and had nothing to do with love. He said, "In nature, you love, you don't love, no one is judging you for having more than one partner, or you can partner up and stay with that partner for life, you can end up single and finding your own self because you are able to be by yourself and know who you are." The actor concluded by saying, "I'd rather be single and lonely than coupled up and miserable."

## Javed Akhtar calls troll 'cockroach' for fat-shaming Rohit Sharma: 'What kind of neech, pathetic liar...'

Javed Akhtar is enjoying watching the ICC Champions Trophy as much as giving it back to trolls on X. Once again, he took offence to a troll questioning his nationalism and wrote a befitting reply to them. The back and forth started with Javed complimenting cricketer Virat Kohli for his outstanding performance in the India vs Australia semi-final match on Tuesday. Javed took to his X handle and wrote, "Once again Virat has proved that he is the strongest pillar of today's Indian cricket's edifice!!! Hats off!!!" An X user commented on the tweet, "Are you ready to prove your nationalism again (laughing with tears emojis)." Javed responded by writing, "I am a cricket lover and pigmies like you can not stop me from showing my joy when my team wins or any of our players gives a great performance. As far as nationalism is concerned, why would I prove it to people like you since you and your past generations have nothing to do with it. You don't understand even the meanings of this word."

Another user asked him in the comment section, "When did your ancestors went to Kaala Paani for fighting for freedom? You have

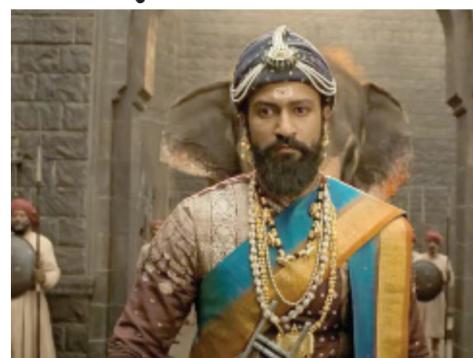


claimed several times so its important to ask. Enlighten us!" Javed wrote in response, "Google my background. Read about my great grandfather Fazole Haq Khairabadi. Then Google about my maternal uncle, real brother of my mom, Ansar Harwani. I want to give you more names but don't want to overload your delicate mind." Fazole Haq Khairabadi was a scholar, theologian, and poet. An activist of the Indian freedom struggle, he issued an early religious edict in favour of doing military jihad against

British colonialism. He campaigned against the British rule in the 1857 Rebellion. The British arrested him and tried him for inciting violence. He was found guilty, banished from the Indian mainland, and tried in the Kaala Paani jail at Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where he died after 22 months of captivity. Ansar Harwani was a member of the Indian National Congress and the Lok Sabha, who opposed the Partition of India. A troll went on to the extent of accusing Javed Akhtar of favouritism. "If Virat is strongest pillar,

then who is Rohit Sharma? Heaviest pillar? Shame on you Javed saab for fat shaming Indian captain," they wrote. Javed responded rather angrily, "Shut up you cockroach. I have great respect for Rohit Sharma and all the great cricketers of Test history. What kind of a neech (lowly) and pathetic liar you are that you are claiming that I have ever said a word against dignity of a great player like Rohit. Kabhi socho tum itne gande aur ghatiya aadmi kyo ho (think why you're such a bad and pathetic person)."

## Vicky Kaushal film sells over 10 million tickets, Rs 47 cr shy of breaking Gadar 2's Rs 525 cr record



Chhaava India and worldwide box office collection day 20: Vicky Kaushal-Rashmika Mandanna-starrer Chhaava has become the biggest film of the star's career as it has made over Rs 400 crore already domestically. On its 20th day in the theatres, the film made Rs 5.75 crore, as per industry tracker Sacnilk, taking the film's nett domestic total to Rs 477.65 crore. The film's worldwide gross collection is close to Rs 650 crore in 20 days. Directed by Laxman Utekar, the film is inspired by the life of Maratha king Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj with Vicky essaying role and Akshaye Khanna playing Emperor Aurangzeb.

On the 20th day, Chhaava saw around 11 percent occupancy in theatres. The Mumbai region had over 1100 shows which observed 15 percent occupancy, and the Delhi-NCR region had over 1200 shows, which observed around 8.5 percent occupancy. Until now, Chhaava has had a strong hold in the western region of the country, primarily Maharashtra, and has seen strong collections from the north as well. The film will be releasing in Telugu on March 7 and it is yet to be seen if it can replicate the same success there as well.

As per latest data shared by BookMyShow, Chhaava has sold over 10 million tickets in 20 days of its release and the number is still increasing as the film is still running in theatres successfully. Chhaava's nett domestic total is just Rs 47 crore lesser than Gadar 2's lifetime record of Rs 525 crore and it appears that the Vicky Kaushal-starrer will overtake the Sunny Deol-starrer this weekend.

Chhaava released on February 14 and hasn't witnessed much competition at the box office till now. Even in March, the film will have a clear run until the release of Salman Khan's Sikandar. This gave Chhaava a clear run in the theatres for approximately six weeks, which is quite rare. Dinesh Vijan's Maddock Films, who produced Chhaava, has been on a winning streak since last year. Their films Munjya, Stree 2 have all been recognised as hits at the box office. Their most recent release, Sky Force, made over Rs 100 crore at the box office, but there were accusations by trade analyst Komal Nahta that the film's collections were incorrectly reported.

Maharashtra cabinet watches Chhaava, CM says 'injustice corrected' Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis also watched Chhaava on Wednesday with MLAs and MLCs at a special screening. Talking to ANI later, he said, "Those who wrote history did a lot of injustice to Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, but through this movie, his valour, bravery, cleverness, intelligence, knowledge, all these aspects of his life are coming in front of the public. And the way Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj continuously protected Swarajya after Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, his sacrifice is coming in front of the people through this."

I would like to congratulate the producers of this film and the entire team." Several states have already made the movie tax free, including Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Goa and PM Narendra Modi had also referenced the Vicky Kaushal starrer during a speech. Chhaava will also release its Telugu version on Friday and the film is expected box office boost. Unlike other blockbusters such as Pathaan, Jawan and Animal, the film didn't have simultaneous release in the language.