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## Bodies of man, daughter traced in SRSP canal in Warangal

Warangal: The bodies of an LIC development officer and his daughter, who went missing in SRSP canal at Theegarajupalli village of Sangem mandal in the district on Saturday, have been traced. Expert swimmers, police and fire department personnel engaged in the search operations as a car in which LIC development officer, Somarapu Praveen Kumar was going to his native place along with family members, plunged into the canal. Praveen Kumar (30) of Mecharajupalli of Inugurthi mandal in Mahabubabad district, who was travelling in the car along with his wife Krishnaveni, children Chaitra Sai (4) and Saivardhan (2), suffered a sudden chest pain leading to the accident. Krishnaveni was rescued by the locals.

## Hyderabad Zoo takes measures to protect animals from summer heat

Hyderabad: As the day temperatures soar, the Nehru Zoological Park here is going above and beyond to ensure that its animal residents stay cool and comfortable. From large air coolers, water sprinklers, mist dispensers to tailored made diets, initiatives are taken for its inmates to beat the heat this summer.

With temperatures recording above the normal in March itself, large air coolers have already been installed in the lions, tigers and other carnivore enclosures. These enclosures have also been equipped with vetiver curtains and thungu grass, which are frequently watered to keep the temperature down.

## Govt encouraging women to become future entrepreneurs: CM Revanth



GNS News Agency, March 8

Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy stated that the State government is promoting women's entrepreneurship by developing action plans aimed at enabling women self help groups to compete in business alongside industrialists like Adani and Ambani. The Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for Veeranari Chakali Iamma Women's University campus in Hyderabad on Saturday. Addressing the meeting to mark the occasion, Revanth Reddy said women have the capabilities of leadership and they had already proved their sincerity by standing as a role model.

He said that naming a Women's University after Veeranari Chakali Iamma is a big tribute to Telangana and hoped that the Women University should compete with reputed universities at the international level. Revanth Reddy also appealed to all students of the women university to excel in all fields and fulfill former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's dream. "Girls should not be confined to the kitchen. 33 percent quota for women will be provided in the elections soon. I hope that the students of the women's University will also represent by utilising 33 per cent women's quota," he said. The Chief Minister further instructed the officials to complete the construction of the new university building in two and a half years.

## Unable to spend even Rs.500 crore a month towards capital expenditure, admits Revanth Reddy

GNS News Agency, March 8

Hyderabad: A day after announcing the plans to develop Future City in 30,000 acres, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy admitted that State government was finding it tough to spend even Rs. 500 crore a month towards capital expenditure. He said Telangana's monthly income was Rs. 18,500 crore. Of these, Rs. 6,500 crore were being spent towards salaries and pensions and Rs. 6,500 crore for loans and interests payments. Only Rs. 5,500 crore were left for welfare and development, the Chief Minister explained at India Today's conclave in New Delhi on Friday.

When pointed out that Telangana was reeling under fiscal deficit and it had pledged Rs. 50,000 crore in 2024 for guarantees. The Deputy Chief Minister also announced that another Rs. 80,000 crore was being raised as market debt, the Chief Minister said that the race has to continue. Given the financial situation and how the guarantees would be implemented, the Chief Minister replied that he was not able to pay for the loans but not for implementation of guarantees.

## K Chandrashekhara Rao to mark 25 years of BRS with massive public meeting in Telangana's Warangal on April 27



GNS News Agency, March 8

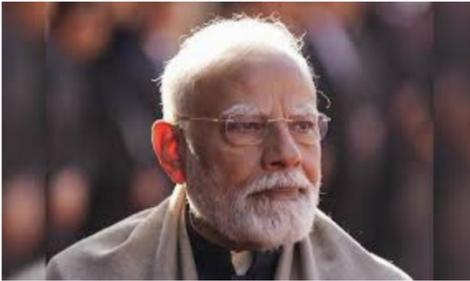
Hyderabad: Marking the 25th anniversary of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), party chief and former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao has announced plans for a massive public meeting in Warangal on April 27. The event, expected to draw lakhs of supporters, is being planned as a turning point in Telangana politics, with the BRS leadership preparing to take on both the Congress-led State government and the BJP-led Centre.

A crucial meeting was held at Chandrashekhara Rao's Erravelli residence on Friday, where party leaders deliberated for over eight hours on the political roadmap ahead. He said the silver jubilee celebrations were not just about the BRS' foundation, but represent the aspirations of the Telangana people. He asserted that under the Congress rule, the State has witnessed rising dissatisfaction and uncertainty, proving that only the BRS can provide strong governance and protect Telangana's

## PM Modi interacts with beneficiaries at 'Lakhpati Didi Sammelan' in Gujarat

GNS News Agency, March 8

Navsari: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday interacted with beneficiaries of 'Lakhpati Didi' scheme in Gujarat's Navsari district, on the occasion of International Women's Day. Modi, who attended the 'Lakhpati Didi Sammelan' at Vansi Borsi village, also disbursed Rs 450 crore in financial assistance to more than 2.5 lakh women from over 25,000 Self-Help Groups



(SHGs). The Lakhpati Didi scheme was launched by the Union government in 2023 and recognises women members of SHGs, who have an annual income

of at least Rs 1 lakh from agriculture, animal husbandry, and small industries, as 'Lakhpati Didi'. Modi engaged in 'prerna samvaad' with a group of 'Lakhpati Didi's' who shared their experiences, with Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and Navsari MP C R Paatil in attendance. At the Navsari event, a security cover comprising only women police personnel was deployed to mark International Women's Day.

## \*Department of Fisheries Hosts Fisheries Startup Conclave 2.0 in Hyderabad\*



Hyderabad :GNS News Agency, March 8The Department of Fisheries, under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying (MoFAH&D), organized the Fisheries Startup Conclave 2.0 today in Hyderabad, Telangana.

The event was inaugurated by Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry (MoFAH&D) & the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, along with Minister of State Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel (MoFAH&D and Ministry of Panchayati Raj) & Prof Ramesh Chand, Member NITI Aayog. The Department of Fisheries organized the Startup Conclave 2.0 to promote innovation in the fisheries sector. As part of this initiative, the Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge 2.0 was launched to support startups in manufacturing and related areas. The program aims to foster entrepreneurship, technological advancements, and sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture, enhancing production and efficiency. Through the Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge 2.0 support will be extended to 10 winning startups with Rs 1 crore in funding. Each winning proposal will receive structured incubation support from ICAR (ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology) ( National Fisheries Development Board) NFDB, or other affiliated institutions under the Department of Fisheries. These incubators will play a crucial role in mentoring startups, offering capacity-building programs, and providing access to manufacturing infrastructure to help them scale their solutions

effectively. The NFDPMobile Application was launched during the Fisheries Startup Conclave 2.0 to expand access to Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PM-MKSSY) benefits. The launch was led by Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh (Lalan Singh), Hon'ble Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying and Panchayati Raj other dignitaries, and participating startups. The NFDPMobile app has been developed and is now available on the Google Play Store. The app offers a seamless interface for users particularly startups to navigate various modules and avail scheme benefits. Developed under the scheme Pradhan Mantri Matsya Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY), the NFDPMobile app serves as a platform for creating digital work-identities for fishers, fish farmers, vendors, and processors, enabling their seamless integration into formal financial and welfare systems. The mobile application simplifies access to various government schemes, offering a user-friendly interface for navigating multiple modules and avail scheme benefits. The NFDPMobile app has transformed the fisheries sector by enabling digital registration and providing access to the PM-MKSSY scheme, financial aid, insurance, and training programs. It offers Rs 100 for self-registration and Rs 76 for registration via VLEs of CSCs. The app strengthens cooperatives, improves traceability, and enhances market linkages, benefiting over 19 lakh registered users. Special awareness and registration camps are boosting participation, making this initiative a major step toward digital inclusion and financial empowerment in the fisheries sector.



Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): Minister for Irrigation & Civil Supplies . N. Uttam Kumar Reddy has announced that robotic technology has been deployed to accelerate the ongoing rescue operations at the SLBC tunnel near Domalapenta in Nagarkurnool district, where eight workers remain trapped. Calling the incident a national disaster, the Minister emphasised that the State government is utilising the best global technology to overcome the challenges in the final stretch of the 14-kilometer-long tunnel. Visiting the site along with Achampet MLA Dr. Chikkudu Vamsi Krishna on Saturday, he conducted a review with officials from multiple national agencies. Speaking to the media, the Minister stated that such a critical tunnel accident has never occurred in the country before. He explained that the rescue teams have managed to advance up to 13.95 kilometres inside the tunnel, but the final 50 meters remain highly unstable, posing severe risks due to oxygen depletion, excessive water seepage, and metal fragments from the collapsed Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM). Given these hazards, robots equipped with high-resolution cameras, infrared sensors, and robotic arms have been deployed to assess conditions and assist in extraction, he said. Uttam Kumar Reddy informed that cadaver dogs from Kerala detected a strong odour at a specific location, indicating the presence of three individuals. He assured that the government would provide full support to the families of the missing workers. The Minister also reviewed the ongoing dewatering and desilting efforts, confirming that updates would be provided after a review on March 11. Despite continuous efforts by 11 national-level rescue teams over the past two weeks, locating and retrieving the trapped workers remains a challenge. The government is consulting tunnel construction and rescue experts from across the globe to determine the safest course of action. On Saturday, 525 personnel were engaged in the rescue efforts, he said. Uttam Kumar Reddy reaffirmed that the government is fully committed to completing the mission, with no financial constraints hindering the operation. He announced an immediate allocation of Rs 4 crore for robotic rescue systems and directed officials to begin using them without delay. (NSS)

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## Seethakka participates in Run for Action-2025 at People's Plaza



Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): In celebration of Women's Day, the Run for Action-2025 event took place at People's Plaza on Saturday. The event was organised in collaboration with Hyderabad Police. To kick off the event, Minister for Panchayat Raj Seethakka officially launched the Run for Action-2025 program, which saw a significant turnout of participants taking part in both the 5k and 2k run competitions. Among those in attendance were MLC Balmuri Venkat, Hyderabad Police Commissioner CV Anand, Additional CP Vikram Mann, Additional CP (crimes) Vishwa Prasad, and several other DCPs. During her address, Minister Seethakka emphasized that the initiative aims to promote the idea that there are no distinctions in capabilities between men and women, underscoring the importance of equality. She also remarked on the detrimental effects of alcoholism in society, stating, "It has been undermining our lives and dignity. We need to create awareness and work towards a drug-free society. It is crucial for everyone to contribute to the protection and advancement of women. Let us empower women to flourish," Seethakka urged. Hyderabad Commissioner of Police CV Anand commended Minister Seethakka for her resilience, noting that she has become a role model after ascending from humble beginnings to her current position. He highlighted that among the 20 Deputy Commissioners of Police (DCPs) in the Commissionerate, 8 are women, and there have been recent appointments of female Station House Officers (SHOs) in both Law and Order and traffic police stations. CV Anand mentioned that 30 percent of the 18,000 police personnel in the Commissionerate are women,

guard Telangana's rights. The meeting emphasised the need for stronger BRS representation in Parliament to effectively voice the State's concerns. "No matter which party is in power at the Centre, Telangana has always been ignored. The lack of a strong Telangana-based force in Parliament has resulted in continued injustices. The people must understand this and elect BRS MPs in Parliament, to represent their voice at the national level," he said.

## Give immunity to women to commit one murder: NCP (SP) urges President Droupadi Murmu

Mumbai: The women's wing of the Nationalist Congress Party (SP) has written a letter to President Droupadi Murmu, urging her to grant immunity from punishment to women for committing one murder in view of atrocities against them. Rohini Khadse, the women's wing president of the Sharad Pawar-led party, in the letter written on the occasion of International Women's Day, said that women want to kill the tendency of oppressive mentality, rapist mindset and inactive law and order situation. rime against women was rising, Khadse said, pointing out the recent gangrape of a 12-year-old girl in Mumbai. We, on behalf of all women, are demanding immunity (from punishment) to commit one murder," Khadse said in the letter, aimed at targeting the state government over the law and order situation in the state. She also cited a survey report stating that India was the most unsafe country for women as crimes, including kidnapping and domestic violence, were happening against them.

interests. During the meeting, the former Chief Minister said Telangana was achieved after decades of struggle and sacrifices, and for 10 years, the BRS had set an example of governance. However, he said the progress made under his administration was now being undone by the Congress regime. He called upon party workers to mobilise people in large numbers for the Warangal rally, which will serve as a platform to expose the failures of the Congress government. "The BRS party is not just a political entity, as it belongs to the Telangana people who consider it as their own. Today, people who believed in the Congress' promises during elections, feel deceived. They are looking back at the BRS for help and are ready to bring it to power, whenever elections come," he declared. The meeting also resolved to hold constituency-wise preparatory meetings leading up to the Warangal event. Special committees will be formed to oversee the preparations, ensuring maximum participation. After the Warangal meeting, the party is gearing up for a major structural revamp. Plans are in place to strengthen the organisation from the village to State level. Chandrashekhara Rao directed the party leaders to chalk out an action plan to form new committees across all levels of the party, with a representatives body comprising the in-charges of these committees. Special emphasis will be placed on increasing the participation of youth and women in the party's activities. The meeting also focused on the evolving political scenario in Telangana and at the national level. The BRS chief and senior leaders discussed key strategies to counter the Congress government in the State and the BJP at the Centre. They analysed past political shifts, identified mistakes and discussed corrective measures to strengthen BRS' position. Chandrashekhara Rao raised concerns over the consistent neglect of Telangana's interests by successive governments led by both the Congress and the BJP at the Centre. He charged both the parties for failing to safe-

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Making roads safer

Nitin Gadkari, who has been serving as the Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways since 2014, has finally hit the nail on the head. He has blamed defective road design and faulty DPRs (detailed project reports) prepared by engineers and consultants for the ever-increasing road accidents and fatalities in the country. India has the second largest road network (after the US) in the world, but it continues to have the dubious distinction of recording the highest number of road mishap deaths globally year after year; the national toll was around 1.8 lakh in 2023 — a staggering average of 500 lives snuffed out every day.

Despite being a major cause of accidents, flawed road design rarely gets due attention of policymakers and other stakeholders. The general tendency is to blame reckless driving and poor law enforcement for mishaps. This virtually absolves the people involved in the planning and execution of road projects. It's not uncommon to see even newly built roads develop cracks. Unfortunate motorists suffer due to the lapses made by engineers and other officials. Shoddy maintenance of roads only worsens the situation.

It is hoped that Gadkari's tough talk will bring about a transformation on the ground. His observation that "even small things" like road signages and marking systems are very poor in India is ironically a reflection on his own long tenure. There is no doubt that accountability must be fixed or negligence that endangers lives, but at the same time, Central and state governments should also be answerable to the public for any laxity on their part. Last month, ministers from 100 countries met in Morocco and endorsed a declaration that calls on governments to make road safety a political priority. However, this issue of public interest is usually conspicuous by its absence from the agendas of political parties in India.

## BJP, BRS parties stay away from Govt's all-party meeting

Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): The BJP has decided not to attend the all-party meeting convened by CM A. Revanth Reddy on Saturday. Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy wrote an open letter to the deputy CM of the state Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka. Who personally invited him for the meeting, that he was not attending the meeting. "Thank you for your invitation. As you are aware, a minimum of time is required for a meaningful discussion on key issues in such meetings of importance. But all the BJP MPs received this information late on Friday night. Today is International Women's Day and all our MPs have to participate in pre-decided programmes in their respective constituencies. In addition, we are unable to attend the meeting due to pre-decided official and informal programmes. We hope that if you want to hold such meetings sometime in the future, we will need to be informed a little earlier. In this context, we once again make it clear that the BJP and the Central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi are committed to the development of Telangana," he said in his letter. Meanwhile the main opposition BRS party MPs also skipped the all-party meeting. At present, leaders like Parthasarathy, Damodar Rao, Kethireddy Suresh Reddy and Vaddiraju Ravichandra are representing the BRS party in the Rajya Sabha. Though they were also invited, the pink party chief and former CM KCR seems to have asked them to skip the meeting. (NSS)

## Modi is showing women empowerment to the world: Union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar

Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Saturday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was a great person, who shows women's empowerment in his hands. In a statement on the occasion of International Women's Day, he described the women as embodiments of power and added that the BJP was the only party that respects women and works for their upliftment. "The BJP is the party that has given the responsibility of the president of India and union finance minister to women. Referring to the mahila shakti program of the state government, he asked CM Revanth Reddy whether it was limited to big announcements and speeches only? He questioned the state government as to what happened to the promise of Rs 2,500 per month to all eligible women of the state. He asked the government as to what happened to its promise of one Tola gold and Scotty to the women of the state. Bandi Sanjay Kumar praised the women of Telangana as the descendants of Rani Rudrama Devi. He warned that the rulers who are deceiving women would have to be burnt with sticks. He said that the BJP was a party that worships women as Goddess Lakshmi, Saraswati and Goddess Durga. He said that PM Modi was a great man, who gives the true definition of the women's power by giving tap connections to eight crore families in the name of women, Jan Dhan bank accounts to 25 crore women and ? . 10 lakh crore to nearly 25 crore women under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana without any collateral. (NSS)

## Hyderabad now transforming into an international medical hub: Raja Narasimha

Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): Minister for Medical, Health and Family Welfare Damodar Raja Narasimha inaugurated the newly established Conceiva Fertility Center at Kondapur in Hyderabad on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister stated that as a result of the policies enacted by the State government, Hyderabad, previously a center for pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and IT, is now transforming into an international medical hub. He said patients from the State as well as from abroad are coming to the city to seek treatment at the many hospitals that provide services with international standards and state-of-the-art technology. Medical tourism is developing in Telangana. The state government is developing government hospitals at a corporate level and providing services.

# Gokaraju Rangaraju Institute Celebrates International Women's Day



Hyderabad: GNS News Agency, March 8 Gokaraju Rangaraju Institute of Engineering and Technology (GRIET) celebrated International Women's Day with an inspiring event honoring women's contributions in academia and beyond. Chief Guest Dr. Kurra Rajani Priya, Group A Officer and Estate Manager at Rashtrapati Nilayam, delivered a motivational speech urging women faculty to recognize their strengths and break the glass ceiling. She emphasized the importance of overcoming barriers to career advancement and concluded with the powerful message: "Celebrate her today, support her always." Dr. Sailaja Simma, Founder of Omparampara and Guest of Honor, began her address with a prayer to Goddess Saraswati.

She highlighted the legacy of Ahilya Holkar, the renowned Queen of Indore, praising her leadership and sharing insights on the benefits of meditation for mental and physical health. Dr. Simma concluded by inviting attendees to chant "Om karam," fostering unity and empowerment.

## PM Modi has done a lot for women empowerment: Kishan Reddy



Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): Union Minister G Kishan Reddy today participated in the international Women's Day celebrations held at the BJP city office in Hyderabad. Speaking on the occasion, he said that On International Women's Day, the world was moving forward on the issue of how to overcome women's issues and promote the women's community and added that On the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP national president JP Nadda, they were celebrating the Women's Day in all cities, towns and villages of the country. "Everyone should take inspiration from the way the women are facing challenges and moving forward. India is a country that gives the utmost respect to the women. The Women play a key role in flying fighter aircraft, as pilots, and in designing space technology. In banks, in the police and revenue departments, as teachers, in the IT sector, in any field, the women are working with a lot of faith, courage and dedication. Lakhs of women in Hyderabad are playing a key role in the IT sector. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given an opportunity to women in the Army as there should be no discrimination in any field," he said.

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## There is a need to encourage women in all fields: Justice Surepalli Nanda



Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): Telangana High Court Judge Justice Surepalli Nanda today said there was a need to encourage women to grow in all fields. On Saturday, the International Women's Day was celebrated by the Development and Welfare Association of the Blind (DWAB) at the Indian Medical Association hall in Koti of the city. Justice Surepalli Nanda, was the Chief Guest at the event. Speaking on the occasion, she conveyed her best wishes to the women on the occasion and felicitated the blind alumni who were educated in Nalgonda blind school run by DWAB and settled in higher jobs, the teachers, the staff and the donors with a shawl. In her message, she suggested that the women should be financially empowered. She said that the country can develop only if it was encouraged educationally, politically, socially, economically. Senior Advocate Sofia Begum expressed happiness that the women were excelling in the current competitive world. Vidya Bharathi Alumni Parishad Sangathan Secretary Telangana, DWAB General Secretary and AICB Vice-President Ponugoti Chokka Rao, DWAB President Anjaiah, Treasurer Parameshwara, Secretary K Srinivas and others were present at the event. (NSS)

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## CM should seek apologies from women: Harish Rao

Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): BRS party MLA and former Minister T. Harish Rao lashed out at the Congress government on the occasion of International Women's Day. He alleged that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who had promised to make the women of the state as the crorepati before the Assembly elections, had only cheated them after coming into power. He complained that there was a situation of indebtedness among the women of the state and in Indiramma's kingdom, what was left of the women was the incessant pain.

He asked CM Revanth Reddy as to what he had done for the women during the one-and-a-half-year rule of his government. "During the assembly elections, it was promised that ? .20,000 crores annually would be given to the women as interest-free loans making the total amount as Rs 1 lakh crores in five years. According to the reply given in the assembly session held in December, around Rs 5,000 crore of the interest-free loans were shown as the outstanding dues. How will the Congress government, which has not cleared the past dues, give the loans worth Rs 1 lakh crore in the next five years," he asked. Harish said that due to the attitude of the Congress government, women did not become the crorepati but fell into a debt trap. "It is shameful that the women's day celebrations are being held in the name of Indira Mahila Shakti. It is a matter of shame that the Revanth government, which had promised to give ? .2500 per month but failed to implement it for



the last one-and-a-half years, is celebrating the women's day today in the name of Indira Mahila Shakti program. Under the Mahalaxmi scheme, the state government owed Rs. 37,500 to the women of the state. "Revanth Reddy's words have once again proved that they will cross the forts, but his actions will not cross the threshold. The Revanth government has cheated the women of the state," he alleged.. He demanded the state government to reveal the exact dates of the implementation of these promises at the Indira Mahila Shakti celebrations. He also demanded an apology from Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on behalf of the entire Congress party at the Women's Day celebrations for cheating the women.

## Electric mobility remains focus area: Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw

GNS News Agency, March 8 Mahabubnagar, March 8 (NSS): Union Minister for Railways, Electronics, IT and Information & Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw stated that Electric mobility remains a focus area for the Union government and it is committed to developing the right infrastructure and ecosystem for the promotion and adoption of EVs. Speaking at a programme after laying the foundation stone for four manufacturing units at Divitipally in Mahabubnagar district on Saturday, the Union Minister said that the Union government would welcome innovation and manufacturing initiatives. He further stated that as part of its objective to strengthen the electronics manufacturing ecosystem in India and give boost to EV manufacturing along with its supply chain; the Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY) notified Modified Electronics

Manufacturing Cluster (EMC 2.0) Scheme. The Minister said that under the Modified Electronics Manufacturing Cluster scheme, the government had accorded approval last year for establishment of Electronics Manufacturing Cluster (EMC) project over an area of 377.65 acres at Divitipally village. Ashwini Vaishnaw also extended congratulations to the success of the endeavor and hoped that the proposed projects would make significant contributions to the socio-economic development of the region.

Telangana Minister for IT and Industries Sridhar Babu, Mahabubnagar Lok Sabha Member DK Aruna, Chairman & Managing Director of Amara Raja Energy and Mobility Ltd. Jayadev Galla and other elected representatives were also present in the programme. (NSS)

## Enjoy I Am Not A Robot, Summer Strike, Flower of Evil and more on Tata Play K-Dramas



GNS News Agency, March 8 Hyderabad :Annyeonghaseyo! Enter the world of Korean entertainment with thrilling action, romantic comedies and K-Pop from the comfort of your home. Featuring a lineup of titles across a wide variety of genres, Tata Play K-Dramas (previously named Tata Play Videshi Kahaniyan) will bring you all the Korean entertainment you could ask for! A refreshed catalogue will showcase the most popular Korean content under one roof. With romance shows like Summer Strike, I Am Not A Robot and W- Two Worlds Apart, gripping actioners like Unlock My Boss, and crime thrillers like Flower of Evil, 365 - Repeat the year, and scintillating K-Pop performances, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Get ready to explore a rich repository of Korean entertainment, all the way from Seoul only on Tata Play K-Dramas, completely ad-free.

Here's the best part—with Videshi Kahaniyan now turning into Tata Play K-Dramas, existing viewers can enjoy the best of Korean entertainment in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and Korean, on the same channel #151 at no additional cost, while new viewers can subscribe for a nominal fee of INR 2/day. All the shows are also available on the Tata Play mobile app for on-the-go viewing.

## AI-driven skill development training for Govt school students: Sridhar Babu



Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): Minister for IT and Industries Sridhar Babu has announced that government school students will receive skill development training with the help of Artificial Intelligence (AI). He emphasised the government's commitment to enhancing the teaching capabilities of government school teachers in alignment with evolving technology. Telangana Film Development Corporation Chairman Dil Raju, accompanied by representatives of the Konam Foundation, led by Sandeep Kumar, met Sridhar Babu at the Secretariat here on Saturday. During the meeting, Sridhar Babu highlighted the State's proactive approach to leveraging emerging technologies across various sectors. He also revealed plans to establish an "AI City" under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, which will include an AI University adhering to international standards. The Minister commended the foundation's initiative of providing free AI-driven skill development training to government school students in Nalgonda district. He assured that steps would be taken to expand these services to all government schools across the State. Sridhar Babu also praised Sandeep Kumar for his dedication to social service, noting that despite his successful career abroad, he continues to contribute to his hometown through the foundation's initiatives. The event was attended by the state's IT Advisor, Sai Krishna. (NSS)

## Department of Fisheries Hosts Fisheries Startup Conclave 2.0 in City

Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): The Department of Fisheries, under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying (MoFAH&D), organized the Fisheries Startup Conclave 2.0 here on Saturday. The event was inaugurated by Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry (MoFAH&D) & the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, along with Minister of State Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel (MoFAH&D and Ministry of Panchayati Raj) & Prof Ramesh Chand, Member NITI Aayog. The Department of Fisheries organized the Startup Conclave 2.0 to promote innovation in the fisheries sector. As part of this initiative, the Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge 2.0 was launched to support startups in manufacturing and related areas. The program aims to foster entrepreneurship, technological advancements, and sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture, enhancing production and efficiency. Through the Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge 2.0 support will be extended to 10 winning startups with Rs 1 crore in funding. Each winning proposal will receive structured incubation support from ICAR (ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology) (National Fisheries Development Board) NFDB, or other affiliated institutions under the Department of Fisheries. These incubators will play a crucial role in mentoring startups, offering capacity-building programs, and providing access to manufacturing infrastructure to help them scale their solutions effectively. The NFDP Mobile Application was launched during the Fisheries Startup Conclave 2.0 to expand access to Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PM-MKSSY) benefits. The launch was led by Rajiv Ranjan Singh (Lalan Singh), Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying and Panchayati Raj other dignitaries, and participating startups.

The NFDP mobile app has been developed and is now available on the Google Play Store. The app offers a seamless interface for users particularly startups to navigate various modules and avail scheme benefits. Developed under the scheme Pradhan Mantri Matsya Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY), the NFDP serves as a platform for creating digital work-identities for fishers, fish farmers, vendors, and processors, enabling their seamless integration into formal financial and welfare systems.

## Jaguar fighter aircraft from Ambala air base crashes in Panchkula, pilot ejects safely



GNS News Agency, March 8

A Jaguar aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed in Morni hills of Panchkula district Friday afternoon after taking off from Ambala air base in Haryana. The pilot managed to eject from the aircraft safely.

A statement issued by the IAF said that the crash took place during a routine training sortie, after encountering a system malfunction. "The pilot maneuvered the aircraft away from any habitation on ground, before ejecting safely. An inquiry has been ordered by the IAF, to ascertain the cause of the accident," the statement said. The IAF has experienced several incidents involving its fleet of SEPECAT Jaguar aircraft in recent years, highlighting the challenges of maintaining an aging fleet.

The Jaguar, a British-French supersonic jet attack aircraft, has been a mainstay of the IAF since the late 1970s, primarily used for deep penetration strikes and ground attack roles. However, as the aircraft ages, technical malfunctions have contributed to a series of crashes. Looking back over the past few years, other notable Jaguar crashes include an incident on January 28, 2019, in Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh. The aircraft, which had taken off from Gorakhpur Air Force Station, crashed shortly after departure due to a suspected technical snag. The pilot ejected safely, and the plane came down in a field, avoiding residential areas. A Court of Inquiry was established to investigate, with initial

reports suggesting the pilot's quick decision-making minimised potential harm. Another significant crash took place on June 5, 2018, near Mundra in Gujarat's Kutch region. This incident was tragic, as it resulted in the death of Air Commodore Sanjai Chauhan, a highly experienced test pilot and the Air Officer Commanding of Jamnagar Air Force Station. The Jaguar went down during a routine training mission shortly after departing from Jamnagar, and despite Chauhan's extensive experience — over 2,000 hours on the Jaguar alone — the crash proved fatal. A Court of Inquiry was again ordered, though specific findings were not widely publicised. Just days later, on June 8, 2018, another Jaguar encountered trouble near Jamnagar. During landing, the aircraft developed a snag, leading to a minor accident. The pilot ejected safely, and the damage was limited, with the aircraft coming to rest off the runway. This rapid succession of incidents raised concerns about the Jaguar fleet's reliability, prompting scrutiny of its maintenance and operational protocols. These crashes underscore the challenges faced by the IAF with its Jaguar fleet, which now numbers around 121 aircraft. The jets, acquired starting in 1979, are undergoing upgrades like the DARIN III (Display Attack Ranging Inertial Navigation) system to extend their service life. However, issues such as underpowered engines (Adour Mk811) and aging airframes persist, exacerbated by budget constraints that have delayed engine upgrades. The IAF has resorted to cannibalising parts from retired airframes to maintain squadron serviceability, reflecting the strain on resources. Despite these incidents, the Jaguar remains a critical asset for the IAF, with plans to phase out the oldest aircraft between 2028 and 2031, replacing them with modern alternatives like the HAL Tejas Mk1A. The recurring crashes, while concerning, have largely been mitigated by pilot training and ejection systems, ensuring minimal loss of life. Each incident has prompted detailed investigations, though public disclosure of findings is often limited, leaving the precise causes — whether mechanical failure, human error, or external factors like bird strikes — open to speculation.

## Punjab police constable extorts money at gunpoint, threatens drug charges; case registered



GNS News Agency, March 8

While reports of gangsters extorting money through phone calls or direct threats frequently surface, cases have now emerged involving police officers misusing their authority. The Kharar police station has registered a case against a constable accused of threatening individuals with fabricated drug charges and demanding money. Meanwhile, in a separate incident under Zirakpur's Dhakoli police station, another Punjab Police constable has been arrested with a large consignment of drugs.

Confirming the devel-

opments, Deepak Pareek, Senior Superintendent of Police, Mohali, said that Constable Jasbir Singh Sandhu, posted in the PCR team of the Mohali Police, extorted Rs 1 lakh from a chemist at gunpoint, threatening to frame him in a drug case. Upon receiving information, the police took swift action and registered a case against him. The Kharar police launched an investigation based on the chemist's complaint. During the inquiry, the allegations against Jasbir Singh Sandhu were found to be true, said police sources. Additionally, the police have arrested an individual, Pratap, who was involved in the extortion

racket, while Constable Jasbir Singh Sandhu remains absconding.

In a separate case under the Mohali Police's 'War Against Drugs' campaign, a team led by the Station House Officer (SHO) of Dhakoli arrested two individuals along with seizing an Activa scooter. The police also claimed to have seized 1.8 kg of charas from them. One of the accused, Davinder Kumar, a resident of Jatoli village (under Nurpur Bedi police station), is a constable in the Punjab Police, while the second accused, Gurjit Singh, hails from Mariwala Town, Mani Majra.

Both have been arrested. SSP Mohali has urged the public to immediately report any police officer involved in extortion or illegal activities to senior officials. He also appealed to citizens to assist the police by providing information about drug peddlers so that strict action can be taken against them.

## Traffic curbs for Indira Mahila Shakti-2025 event at Parade Ground

GNS News Agency, March 8

Hyderabad: In connection with the Indira Mahila Shakti-2025 event to be held at Parade Ground on March 8, certain traffic restrictions will be placed in the surroundings.

The Hyderabad Traffic Police requested citizens to avoid the road between Punjagutta and Parade Ground as traffic congestion is expected between 3 pm and 10 pm. "Chilkalguda X road- Alugaddabavi X road, Sangeeth X road, YMCA X road, Patny X road, SBH X road, CTO Junction, Brook Bond junction, Tivoli junction, Sweekar Upkar junction, Secunderabad Club, Trimulgherry X road, Tadbund X road, Diamond Point, Bowenpally X roads, Rasoolpura junction, Begumpet, Paradise junction, MG Road, R.P Road and S.D Road.

## Thane transport body plans multiple initiatives to boost revenue, ensure sustainability

GNS News Agency, March 8

The Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC), in its budget presented on Friday, has announced several measures to increase revenue and improve efficiency of public transport services under Thane Municipal Transport (TMT). The initiatives focus on increasing the number of passengers, curbing ticketless travel, introducing cleaner energy solutions, and streamlining operations. For the 2025-26 financial year, TMT has proposed a total budget allocation of Rs 571.33 crore. This includes Rs 440.81 crore for revenue and capital expenses and Rs 130.51 crore to cover operational deficits.

To enhance ridership, TMT will work with the Regional Transport Office (RTO) and the Thane City Traffic Control Branch to curb illegal transport operations in the city. TMC officials believe that restricting unauthorised vehicles will encourage more commuters to use TMT buses. A major step towards sustainability is the plan to retrofit 130 diesel buses from the Anand Nagar Depot to run on CNG. This conversion will be carried out with financial support from Mahanagar Gas Ltd, which will provide a subsidy of Rs 2.70 lakh per bus. The project is expected to be implemented in the next financial year, as mentioned in TMC's budget.

The transport body has also introduced a mobile app, 'Mazi Bus', which provides real-time bus route information and online ticket booking options. Further, a smart mobility platform is being developed in coordination with the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) to integrate TMT buses with railways and Metro services. Once operational, this system will allow passengers to purchase tickets and passes from a unified platform. Efforts are also being made to reduce ticketless travel. Senior employees are being appointed as route inspectors to conduct checks and enforce ticketing regulations. The fine for traveling without a ticket has been revised to Rs 200 for regular buses and Rs 300 for



air-conditioned buses from the earlier amount of Rs 100. Following government policies on clean energy, TMT has already added 123 electric buses to its fleet. An additional 160 electric buses are expected to be introduced in the next financial year, to maximise green buses on the fleet. Municipal Commissioner Saurabh Rao emphasised that besides transportation, TMT buses are also an important source of revenue generation. "Currently, we only generate revenue through advertisements pasted on the buses externally and on bus stops. Plans are underway to install LED boards inside every bus to increase the revenue through more and more advertisements," he said.

In the ongoing 2024-25 financial year, TMT received a revenue grant of Rs 180 crore and an operational deficit grant of Rs 80 crore from the civic body. By November 2024, Rs 174.06 crore had been received, comprising Rs 128.79 crore in revenue grants and Rs 45.27 crore for operational expenses. To meet expenses for the remaining four months of 2024-25, TMT has requested an additional Rs 188.97 crore in revised estimates. This includes Rs 100.57 crore for revenue deficits and Rs 88.39 crore for operational shortfalls.

## CPI holds south' round table conference on Delimitation of constituencies

Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): Reacting on the proposed plans of the central government to reorganize the Lok Sabha constituencies in the country, Several speakers today demanded that the number of seats should be such that all states get equal justice in the process of the delimitation of the Lok Sabha constituencies and added that the central government should take steps for this. They suggested that the Rajya Sabha, known as the 'House of States' on the lines of the US Senate, should be given the same powers as the Lok Sabha. With the central government announcing that the reorganization of the parliamentary constituencies will take place in 2026, they expressed concern that if the population is reorganised, it will be a grave injustice to the southern states. "Instead, there should be safeguards and reorganisation in such a way that all states get equal justice, they noted. The speakers made their remarks at a round table meeting held under the aegis of the CPI State Committee on the theme 'Delimitation of Lok Sabha Constituencies - Impact on Southern States' at the state party headquarters Maqdhoom Bhavan'. The round table meeting was chaired by CPI state secretary and the MLA Koonamneni Sambasiva Rao. It was attended by Prof. G. Haragopal, Justice Chandrakumar, Senior Editors K. Srinivas, CPI National Secretaries Dr. K. Narayana and Syed Aziz pasha, Executive Members Chada Venkatreddy, IAL National President Bommagani Prabhakar, Economist K. Papa Rao, Advocate K. Prabhakar, CPI State Secretariat Member V.S. Bose. Reorganization of constituencies should in accordance with the spirit of federalism: Prof Haragopal Addressing the gathering, Professor Hara Gopal said that even though the reorganization of the parliamentary constituencies was enshrined in the Constitution of India, the spirit of Indian federalism also needs to be kept in mind. He said that the then government's decision to control the population by 1971 had hindered the growth of population in the southern states due to the practice of family planning. In the same northern states, due to backwardness and other reasons, there has been a phenomenal increase in the population due to lack of control, he said. "In the wake of delimitation of parliamentary constituencies, it has now become a curse for the southern states which have maintained population control and contributed to the development of the country. In addition to this, there is naturally a fear among the leaders here that the BJP government at the Centre will do injustice to the

southern states in the name of reorganisation to its selfish politics of centralising power and consolidating its power by centralising power and consolidating itself. Therefore, if the reorganisation of parliamentary constituencies is inevitable, then there is a possibility of doing some justice to the southern states by allocating seats to the southern states in a suitable manner and giving special powers to all the states, irrespective of whether they are small and big states, on the lines of the US Senate," he said. He also said that the US Senate would give two members from each state, regardless of the population, and added that the Senate would be a powerful section in America. "In a similar manner, if two or three people from each state are formed in order to strengthen the Rajya Sabha, it will be equally important," he said. Delimitation of parliamentary constituencies is a complex issue: K. Srinivas

Senior Editor K. Srinivas said that India was going to face a complex problem with the issue of the delimitation of the parliamentary constituencies on the basis of the population. He said that the then Congress government recognised the issue in 1975 and stopped the process of the delimitation of the Lok Sabha constituencies for 25 years, while Vajpayee, who came to power in 2001, also decided to extend it for another 25 years. "Now, in 2026, if the delimitation of constituencies is carried out, the importance of the southern and north-eastern states will decrease and the influence of four states in the north will increase. If the reorganisation takes place, the representation of the southern states will be reduced to 19.1 per cent from the present 24.1 per cent, while the representation of the four major states in the north will increase from 40 per cent to 46 per cent. Though the reorganisation is a helping process, this fear has been further heightened in the southern states due to the rulers in power at the Centre. This is because this becomes clear if we look at the issue of reorganisation of the state of Kashmir," he said. We will discuss it at the national level: CPI national secretary Narayana CPI national secretary Dr K Narayana said that the CPI would discuss the issue of the delimitation of the parliamentary constituencies at the national level and announce the course of action. The party leader Aziz Pasha said that the reorganisation of parliamentary constituencies needs to be done not on the basis of population but keeping in mind the local conditions of the states and the political importance of those areas.

## BJP leader Jagdish Mulik and NCP's Deepak Mankar eye Maharashtra Legislative Council membership

GNS News Agency, March 8

With the bypolls for the five seats in Maharashtra Legislative Council to be held later this month, two leaders from Pune are likely to make it to the body as they were assured of the membership by their parties ahead of the Assembly elections. The bypolls to the five seats are scheduled to be held on March 27 after three members of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and one member each of the Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) were elected to the Assembly in the elections held last year.

Former Pune BJP chief Jagdish Mulik was assured of representation in the Legislative Council after he staked a claim for a party ticket for the Pune Lok Sabha seat and the Vadgaonsheri Assembly constituency during the elections held last year. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had asked him not to contest the Assembly election from Vadgaonsheri as an Independent candidate since the seat was being contested by then-sitting legislator Sunil Tingre of the NCP led by Ajit Pawar. Mulik initially refused to work for the alliance partner during the Assembly election but after Fadnavis's assurance, he decided to support Tingre. However, Tingre lost to Bapu Pathare of the NCP (SP).

"We are hopeful that our leader Mulik will be given the opportunity to be representative in the state legislative council," said a BJP worker and supporter of Mulik. Pune BJP chief Dheeraaj Ghate also expressed disappointment after being refused a party ticket to contest the Maharashtra Assembly election from the Kasba constituency. He, too,



was assured of an opportunity later. The second name that is making rounds for the Maharashtra Legislative Council is Pune NCP chief Deepak Mankar. Mankar was assured of a council seat after being refused a ticket in the previous election of the Legislative Council. He offered to resign in protest but did not do so after discussing it with party chief Ajit Pawar. "I was assured of Legislative Council membership in the past. I am still aspiring for it and hope to get the opportunity this time. However, I will accept whatever decision is taken by the party chief and will continue to work for the party," said Mankar. In the previous election of the Maharashtra Legislative Council, local NCP leaders protested when the name of state women commission chairperson and state NCP women wing chief Roopali Chakankar made the rounds as a probable candidate.

## Women are suffering due to the non-implementation of women's reservations bill: Kavitha



Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): BRS party MLC Kavitha today said that women were suffering politically due to the non-implementation of the Women's Reservation Act. She criticised the Centre for not implementing the Women's Reservation Act by linking it with the census. "The Women have suffered severely in poll-bound states like Maharashtra, Delhi and Haryana due to the non-implementation of the women's reservation," she claimed and questioned as to why funds were not allocated in the budget for the census. Kavitha participated in the International Women's Day celebrations held at Telangana Bhavan in Hyderabad. Speaking on the occasion, She said that If the census was completed quickly, more and more women will become MLAs in states like Bihar and Tamil Nadu, Targeting the state government, she made it clear that they would continue to chase the Congress government till the promise of Giving Rs 2,500 to each woman was implemented. Referring to the hiring of the buses owned by women SHGs, she said that It should be clarified whether the RTC would pay the rent on time for the buses being hired by it from the women's organisations? She criticised that It was not right for the state government to not increase the salaries of anganwadi and ASHA workers. She demanded that the state government should come out with a specific plan on how the women would be made into crorepatris? Kavitha claimed that former CM KCR had done women-centric governance and added that several schemes and programmes had been taken up for the women. She alleged that there was a feudal government in the state that removes the schemes launched by KCR. The role of women in the growth of society is significant. Women all over the world need to have equal rights, respect and decision-making rights. Only then will women empowerment be possible. It is a matter of pride for us that that heroic women like Chityala Ailamma and Rani Rudramadevi were born on telangana soil. There are no castes and religions for the women. Women belong to the same caste. Women should be united and achieve their rights. The argument that women are the second-class citizens in homes

must be dismissed. In the US, 40 per cent of the women are employed, while in India it is 17 per cent. If 50 per cent of the country's women work, we will be able to give 5 lakh crore to the country's GDP. But we have to think about whether there are facilities for the women to do jobs. From working in underground mines to going into space, women have grown. Yet there are many obstacles. They need to be overcome," she said. (NSS)

## Establish Kazipet division, sanction new railway lines: Ministers urge Centre



Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): Telangana Ministers have urged the Union government for the establishment of Kazipet Railway division and the sanction of new railway lines in Telangana. Ministers Konda Surekha, Seethakka and Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, MPs Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy and Kadiyam Kavaya called on Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav at Shamshabad Airport on Saturday morning and presented a list of demands related to the Telangana State. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said that in addition to sanctioning new railway lines in Telangana, they had requested cooperation in completing the ongoing works entirely with railway funds, setting up a new railway division at Kazipet and expediting all the proposals. "The proposal of Kazipet Railway Division plays a key role in the development of Telangana's second largest city, Warangal. There is a need to set up a new railway division in Kazipet to ensure efficient railway network operations and maintenance for passengers and goods. If Kazipet, which handles the highest passenger traffic and freight, is made a division, it will generate more revenue than Guntur and Hyderabad divisions," he revealed. (NSS)

## Supreme Court lists Pegasus case for hearing on April 22



GNS News Agency, March 8

The Supreme Court on Friday (March 7, 2025) agreed to hear on April 22 petitions alleging that the Indian establishment used Israeli military grade spyware to snoop on personalities across a spectrum of politicians, activists, and journalists. A Bench headed by Justice Surya Kant said all the petitions in the case would be listed together in April for a comprehensive hearing.

When the case was called, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Union government, said the case was coming up after a gap of over two years. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing the petitioner side, brought to the court's notice that only two petitions were listed for hearing on Friday. The Bench directed the entire batch of petitions to be listed on April 22. Petitioners included senior journalists N. Ram and Shashi Kumar who had

sought a fair probe into the snooping allegations.

In October 2021, the top court had formed a technical committee to look into the snooping allegations while noting that there was a "broad consensus that unauthorised surveillance/accessing of stored data from the phones and other devices of citizens for reasons other than nation's security would be illegal, objectionable and a matter of concern". In August 2022, after perusing the committee's confidential report, a Bench headed by then Chief Justice N.V. Ramana (now retired) informed in open court that 29 mobile phones were examined. The committee had detected the presence of a malware in some of them, but could not confirm the presence of Pegasus.

The top court Bench, which was headed by then Chief Justice N.V. Ramana (now retired) had also conveyed the committee's observation that the Union gov-

ernment had not been "cooperative". Mr. Mehta had responded by saying he was not personally aware of what had happened. "But if they [committee] had asked 'whether you are using a particular malware', we would have said 'we are not using'. If they had asked 'what you are using, we may not have said it'," he had said. The records that were confidentially placed before the top court consisted of digital images of phones examined for spyware infection, report of the technical committee and the report of former Supreme Court judge, Justice R.V. Raveendran, who was tasked to consider improvement in cyber security. Justice Raveendran had recommended striking a balance between the country's cyber security and right to individual privacy against unauthorised surveillance. The retired top court judge has said private firms resorting to illegal surveillance ought to be prosecuted. He had also suggested the formation of a special investigation agency for investigating cyber attacks and to strengthen the cyber security network of the country. Justice Raveendran has recommended that the government should create a mechanism for the citizens to complain about surveillance and alleged implantation of malware in their personal devices.

## 1 lakh crore fund for private sector research close to approval



GNS News Agency, March 8

The government is close to finalising an ambitious 1 lakh crore fund to stimulate private sector investment in core research and development. While there have been schemes before to galvanise research and development, the unique attribute of this scheme is that funds — primarily in the form of low-interest, long term loans — will be available to private companies to develop novel products and new intellectual property. These funds cannot be availed by universities or academic institutes but they may be co-opted by a private company towards developing technology, Ajay Sood, Principal Scientific Adviser, Government of India, told The Hindu in an exclusive interaction. "You could understand it as a sort of huge PLI (Production Linked Incentive) scheme for research and development." A major weakness of India's investment in research and development, experts have pointed out since long, is that the share of investment in R&D as a percentage of GDP is less than 1% (0.65) whereas scientifically advanced countries spend between 1.5%-3% on the same. In this, the private sector investment in overall R&D spend has remained 30%-36% in India whereas countries such as the United States, China see private sector contribute 75% and 77% respectively.

First announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the interim Budget in February 2024, the government apportioned a part of it — 20,000 crore —

to the Department of Science and Technology (DST). Dr. Sood said that a Cabinet note detailing the contours of the scheme, focus areas of technology was being prepared and "will be available very soon." He said that while the money was for now with the DST, it was the newly created Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) that would likely be involved in administering the fund. "The loans will almost be 0% interest, essentially a huge PLI scheme. This intent (to bolster private sector R&D) was never there earlier," Dr. Sood underlined.

He emphasised that the loan could be availed only if the private sector company (or a consortia) made a compelling case that the research would result in a commercial product. "Otherwise why would industry do it? They are taking a loan, not a grant," he averred. "This will not be for blue-sky research." Tenures for the loan could range from 5-7 years and proposals would be evaluated by a professional body and not the

DST. "Be it space, pharmaceuticals, auto, energy. We are sector agnostic. There are some broad areas but they cover nearly every area (of science and technology). However if it is a service industry (like information technology) they won't make the cut. IT does not need such support," Dr. Sood opined.

The ANRF was conceived as a funding body, on the lines of the American National Research Foundation (NRF), to galvanise science and engineering research in the country. It was conceived as a step-up over existing funding arrangements and meant to encourage research funding to State universities, and to have private industry participate more actively in funding basic research and development. The ANRF aims to establish a 250,000-crore corpus with 736,000 crore of it coming in from non-government sources. While currently headed by the Secretary of the DST, it is expected to have its first full-time CEO — most likely a technologist from the private sector — take over from the next financial year.

## Ambedkar statue defiled with footwear garland in Telangana's Jagtial

Jagtial: Unknown persons defiled the statue of Ambedkar with a garland of footwear at Nagunur in Sarangapur mandal on Friday.

Expressing anger for humiliating Ambedkar, Dalit leaders asked the police to take serious action against the accused. In this regard, members of dalit organisations gave representation to Jagtial DSP Raghuchander. Later, they performed palabishekam to the Ambedkar statue after cleaning it with water. Police took three suspected persons into custody and are questioning, it is learnt.

## Election Commission of India says will ensure unique EPIC numbers to all voters in next 3 months

GNS News Agency, March 8

Amid the controversy over duplicate Voter ID Card numbers issued to some electors, the Election Commission of India on Friday (March 7, 2025) said it would resolve the matter in the next three months by ensuring a unique national EPIC number to all voters. The Trinamool Congress, which had first raised the issue of duplicate Voter IDs, was quick to react saying "the ECI has admitted and accepted their guilt today". Electors Photo Identification Card or the EPIC number is the 10-digit voter ID card number issued by the Election Commission of India to each elector. On February 27, West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee had alleged that the ruling BJP at the Centre was "with the blessings of Election Commission of India" including voters from other States in the West Bengal voters' list. She cited multiple voters with same Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) numbers.

It its statement on Fri-

day (March 7, 2025), the Commission said that a sample enquiry of over 100 electors reveals that electors with duplicate EPIC numbers are genuine electors. "Since the allotment of EPIC series in the year 2000 to the States/UTs, some EROs did not use the correct series. The issue of allotment of duplicate numbers due to incorrect series across States/UTs could not have been detected as the States/UTs were independently managing the electoral roll databases," it said. The poll body said that it has now decided to resolve this long pending issue after detailed discussions within the technical teams and concerned Chief Electoral Officers in the next three months by ensuring a unique national EPIC number to the existing electors having a duplicate EPIC number and for future electors as well. The ECI reiterated that irrespective of an EPIC number, an elector who is linked to the electoral roll of a particular polling station can cast his vote at that polling station only and nowhere else. It also listed out the detailed process of how



voters lists are prepared and names added and deleted.

It said that if any person has any objection, he has the option to file the first appeal to the DM/District Collector/Executive Magistrate under section 24(a) of RP Act 1950. Even if the person is not satisfied with the decision of the first appellate authority, a second appeal to Chief Electoral Officer of the concerned State/UT under the same Act. Sources in the Commission said that during the last Special Summary Revision in 2024, only 90 appeals had

been filed across the country and no such appeal had been filed in West Bengal. Trinamool Congress MP Saket Gokhale was quick to respond to the ECI. In a post on X, he said: "All of this has happened because (West Bengal) CM Mamata Banerjee nailed the lies of the ECI and exposed this scam". After being in denial, ECI now says it will "fix the issue" in just 3 months. It has also given a very unconvincing explanation that "this duplication of EPIC has happened since the year 2000 due to registration of-

ficers using incorrect alphanumeric series", the post on X said.

The TMC MP further questioned as to how was an "incorrect series" allegedly used when ECI's Handbook for Electoral Registration Officers has clear guidelines? What happened to the software that's supposed to catch this? "If ECI says this has happened since 2000, why was nothing done for 25 years until CM Mamata Banerjee pointed it out? Why hasn't ECI still revealed how many duplicate EPICs currently exist?"

## From Chess-playing machines to AI Classrooms: The evolution of learning technology

GNS News Agency, March 8

The story of education is the story of humanity itself — one that evolved from the flickering firelight of ancient caves to the glowing screens of AI-powered classrooms. It's imperative that we reflect on how we arrived here and the way we have reimagined how knowledge is created, shared, and internalised over the years.

In 1770s a Hungarian bureaucrat called Wolfgang von Kempelen presented a show with an automaton that he had built. An automaton is a machine that operates on its own without the need for human control. Automata were all the rage during the 18th century; inventors like Jacques de Vaucanson, Pierre Jaquet-Droz, and Henri Maillardet amazed the public with brilliant human-like contraptions capable of doing such things as playing an instrument or writing. Kempelen's automaton topped them all, anyway — or at least appeared to. It was a wooden figure in oriental attire, seated behind a great cabinet with a chessboard on top of it. Kempelen would start his performances by opening the doors of the cabinet to reveal to the audience the clockwork machinery within. When the doors were shut, he would wind the machine using a key. A spectator would approach and sit opposite the automaton to play a game of Chess. The automaton would then come to life, picking up the pieces and making moves. To add further surprise to that, the human opponent would soon realise that the automaton was a formidable opponent; it would win the majority of the games it played. Automaton chess player, called "The Turk" by Hungarian author and inventor, Wolfgang von Kempelen. | Photo: iStock/Getty images

Automaton chess player, called "The Turk" by Hungarian author and inventor, Wolfgang von Kempelen. | Photo: iStock/Getty images Starting in the 1780s Kempelen's automaton, also referred to as the Turk or the Mechanical Turk, was placed on tour throughout Europe. It played against several prominent human players. It was played by Benjamin Franklin in Paris. The Chessmaster Francois-André Philidor was able to defeat it but stated that the game had been a difficult one. When Kempelen passed away in 1804, the automaton was purchased by an engineer, Johann Maelzel, who went on to travel with it and perform. It was not until Karl Gottlieb von Windisch's reveal in his "Inanimate Reason" essay published in 1784 that the truth was revealed — There was a chess player hidden within the cabinet, following the game on a tiny chessboard and moving the Turk using levers. As much as it was a farce, the Turk inspired Charles Babbage, an English mathematician, to invent the world's first automatic mechanical calculator and digital computer in 1822. In less than a couple of centuries, a chess-playing computer called Deep Blue defeated a human world champion in a chess match in 1997. Kempelen's Mechanical Turk has had an outsized impact not only in the field of entertainment but in the gen-



eral idea of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its role in many areas including education. Today, AI's growing presence in education can be traced back to that early fascination with machines that could seemingly think for themselves. This early spectacle was part of building interest in AI and its subsequent inclusion in learning environments. It questioned the potential of machines in replicating human capabilities, signalled the possibility of human-machine interaction, and forced us to think critically about the best way in which technology could serve the process of learning. Human's educational journey began not in classrooms but in the forest in 50,000-3000 BCE with direct transmission of survival knowledge from elders to youth through demonstration, stories and supervised practice. It evolved into traditional education in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China (3000-500 BCE) centred on literacy and vocation. The period of 500 BCE-500 CE was perhaps a pivotal one as Socrates introduced the dialectic approach to learning — one which encouraged critical thinking rather than memorization and focused on citizenship with an all-round holistic education.

The medieval period saw a shift towards religious schools maintaining knowledge before leading the world to the Renaissance and Enlightenment (1400-1800 CE) period that witnessed a transition to secular education, driven by the invention of the printing press and thinkers such as Locke and Rousseau. It wasn't until the nineteenth century that education systems became universal, based on the Prussian system and on Horace Mann's faith that education could level the playing field. The twentieth century saw developments from John Dewey and Maria Montessori in child-led experiential learning. Technology pervaded the schooling system in the later part of the twentieth century with products such as PLATO, clearing the way for distance learning. Between 2000-2020, education was transformed by the internet and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), a pace further fuelled by the Covid-19 pandemic. The current period, with AI's advent, represents a fundamental shift in educational possibilities, bringing both unprecedented opportunities and complex challenges across the teaching and learning process.

## Swamy Pushkarini gears up to host "Teppa Tirunallu"

Tirumala, March 8 (NSS): The sacred temple tank in Tirumala, the Swamy Pushkarini has geared up to host the Salakata Teppotsavam which begins on March 9 and concludes on March 13. Every night between 7pm and 8 pm the processional deities takes out a pleasure ride in the holy waters of the temple tank once in a year in the holy month of Phalguna. Teppotsavam is called 'Thirupalli Odai Thirunal' in Tamil and 'Teppa Thirunallu' in Telugu. HISTORY: It is believed that the Teppotsavam has been taking place in Tirumala since ancient times. The Vijayanagara emperor Sri Saluva Narasimha Raya built the "Neerali Mandapam" in the middle of the Swamy Pushkarini in 1468 AD and made it suitable for the Teppotsavams. On the first day, the procession deity of Srivara graces on Teppa in Ramavatra, second day in Sri Krishnavatara taking three rounds on waters, while on the last three days as Sri Malayappa along with

Sridevi and Bhudevi, He takes three, five and seven rounds on Teppa respectively and blesses devotees.

Due to the Teppotsavam, TTD has cancelled the Sahasradeepalankara Seva on March 9th and 10th, and

the Arjitha Brahmotsavam and Sahasradeepalankara Seva on March 11, 12, and 13. (NSS)

## Establish Kazipet division, sanction new railway lines: Ministers urge Centre

Hyderabad, March 8 (NSS): Telangana Ministers have urged the Union government for the establishment of Kazipet Railway division and the sanction of new railway lines in Telangana. Ministers Konda Surekha, Seethakka and Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, MPs Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy and Kadiyam Kavaya called on Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav at Shamsabad Airport on Saturday morning and pre-

sented a list of demands related to the Telangana State.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said that in addition to sanctioning new railway lines in Telangana, they had requested cooperation in completing the ongoing works entirely with railway funds, setting up a new railway division at Kazipet and expediting all the proposals. "The proposal of Kazipet Railway Division plays a key role in

the development of Telangana's second largest city, Warangal. There is a need to set up a new railway division in Kazipet to ensure efficient railway network operations and maintenance for passengers and goods. If Kazipet, which handles the highest passenger traffic and freight, is made a division, it will generate more revenue than Guntur and Hyderabad divisions," he revealed. (NSS)

There is a need to set up a new railway division in Kazipet to ensure efficient railway network operations and maintenance for passengers and goods. If Kazipet, which handles the highest passenger traffic and freight, is made a division, it will generate more revenue than Guntur and Hyderabad divisions," he revealed. (NSS)

## Trump writes to Iran leadership, wants to negotiate nuclear deal



GNS News Agency, March 8

U.S. President Donald Trump said he wants to negotiate a nuclear deal with Iran and sent a letter to its leadership on Thursday (March 7, 2025) saying he hoped they would agree to talk. "I said I hope you're going to negotiate, because it's going to be a lot better for Iran," Mr. Trump said in the interview with Fox Business Network broadcast. "I think they want to get that letter. The other alternative is we have to do something because you can't let another nuclear weapon." The letter appeared to have been addressed to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The White House did not immediately respond to a request about that. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov discussed international efforts to resolve the situation around Iran's nuclear program with Iranian Ambassador Kazem Jalali, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Friday.

## Kremlin, responding to Trump and Macron, says nuclear dialogue with U.S. is essential



GNS News Agency, March 8

Russia said on Friday (March 7, 2025) that it was essential to engage in a dialogue with the United States on arms control after President Donald Trump made a broad call for the world's nuclear powers to ditch their weapons. The Kremlin said these discussions should also include Europe's nuclear arsenals, especially after French President Emmanuel Macron this week suggested extending the protection of France's nuclear weapons to other countries on the continent. Mr. Trump, who has pledged to make denuclearisation a goal in his second term, said on Thursday, "It would be great if everybody got rid of their nuclear weapons". He added: "I know Russia and us have by far the most. China will have an equal amount within 4-5 years. It would be great if we could all denuclearise because the power of nuclear weapons is crazy."

Asked about Mr. Trump's comments, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters: "Dialogue between Russia and the U.S. on arms control is necessary, especially concerning strategic stability." He said European nuclear arsenals could not be ignored in this dialogue. The issue, he added, had gained greater urgency since Macron's speech on Wednesday in which he floated the idea of extending a French nuclear umbrella to other countries and called Russia "a threat for France and Europe". Russia has said the speech contained threats towards it and "notes of nuclear blackmail". The Kremlin has called it highly confrontational and said France was staking a claim to "nuclear leadership in Europe". Russia and the United States are the world's biggest nuclear powers, with over 5,000 nuclear warheads each. China has about 500, France has 290 and Britain 225, according to the Federation of American Scientists. A U.S.-Russia nuclear arms treaty that caps the number of strategic nuclear warheads both countries can deploy is due to run out in February 2026. A senior Russian official warned last month that the outlook for extending the treaty, New START, did not look "very promising". Mr. Trump said in February he wanted to have conversations with both Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping about imposing limits on their nuclear arsenals. He gave no specific timeline for these discussions, but said he hoped to get started in the "not too distant future."

## Donald Trump creates task force to prepare for 2026 World Cup

GNS News Agency, March 8

Washington: President Donald Trump created a task force on Friday to prepare for the 2026 World Cup, which will bring the globe's premier soccer tournament to North America at a time when his on-again, off-again tariffs have ratcheted up tensions across the continent. "I think it's going to make it more exciting," Trump said of playing the World Cup amid sharp rhetoric between leaders of the host nations. "Tension's a good thing." The task force, which Trump will chair, will coordinate the federal government's security and planning for the tournament, which is expected to draw millions of tourists to the United States, Canada and Mexico. "It's a great honour for our country to have it," Trump said of the World Cup after meeting with officials from FIFA, the international soccer governing body. He said he'd like to attend multiple games. Preparations are ramping up across the continent alongside tensions between the United States and its neighbours as Trump has repeatedly threatened to impose tariffs before backing off, spooking markets and leading to fears of a trade war and economic downturn. He also speaks pejoratively of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and muses about Canada becoming a US State, which has boosted national pride north of the border. For 2026, the World Cup will expand to 48 teams playing 104 matches across three nations, the first time the tournament will be split between countries. Seventy-eight of 104 matches will be played in the US, with 13 games each in Mexico and Canada, and as many as six matches a day. The final will be played July 19 at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

## India, China made positive strides after Modi-Xi meeting, boundary issue shouldn't define ties: Chinese FM Wang Yi

GNS News Agency, March 8

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Friday (March 7, 2025) that India-China relations have made "positive strides" and achieved a series of encouraging outcomes at all levels after last year's breakthrough ending the over four-year-long military standoff in eastern Ladakh. Addressing his annual press conference here, Mr. Wang also said the boundary question or specific differences should not affect the bilateral relations between the two countries. "China-India relations have made positive strides over the past year" after the successful meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping at Kazan in Russia, Mr. Wang replied to a question on how Beijing views the course of bilateral ties after the two countries ended the prolonged stalemate in the ties. Both Mr. Xi and Mr. Modi provided strategic guidance for the improvement of ties at the Kazan meeting, Wang said on the sidelines of the annual session of China's Parliament currently underway here. After this, both sides earnestly followed through on the important common understanding of the leaders, "strengthened exchanges and practical cooperation at all levels and achieved a series of positive outcomes", he said. India and China completed the disengagement process late last year after firming up a pact for the withdrawal of troops from Depsang and Demchok, the last two friction points in eastern Ladakh, ending over four years of freeze in ties.

After the finalisation of the pact, Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi

held talks in Kazan on October 23. In the meeting, the two sides decided to revive the various dialogue mechanisms. After that, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Mr. Wang held the 23rd Special Representatives (SR) dialogue in Beijing on December 18. On January 26, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri travelled to the Chinese capital and held talks with his Chinese counterpart Sun Weidong under the framework of the 'Foreign Secretary-Vice Minister' mechanism. In an apparent reference to India stressing the importance of peace at borders for the development of relations, Mr. Wang reiterated China's stand that the differences over the boundary or on other issues should not affect the overall bilateral ties. "As two ancient civilisations, we have enough wisdom and capability to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas pending a fair and reasonable solution" to the boundary issue, said Wang, who is also a member of the powerful political bureau of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC). "We should never allow bilateral relations to be defined by the boundary question or specific differences to affect the overall picture of our bilateral ties," he said. China believes that as the largest neighbours, both countries should be partners in each other's success. "A cooperative partnership between the dragon and the elephant is the only right choice for both sides," he said. "There is every reason for us to support each other rather than undermine each other or undercut each other," he said, adding that both the countries "should work with each other rather than guard against each other". "This is



the only path that truly serves the fundamental interests of the two countries," Mr. Wang said. "As important members of the Global South, we have the responsibility to take the lead in opposing hegemonism and power politics" he said in apparent reference to the United States. "We must not only safeguard legitimate rights and interests of our countries but also uphold the basic norms governing international relations," he said. "If China and India join hands, the prospect of greater democracy in international affairs and the stronger Global South will improve greatly," he said. Wang said 2025 marks the 75th anniversary of China-India diplomatic relations. "China stands ready to work with India to sum up past experience and forge a fast forward and advance China-India relations on the track of sound and stable development," he said.

## Trump threatens new Russia sanctions over Ukraine attacks

GNS News Agency, March 8

President Donald Trump on Friday (March 7, 2025) threatened new sanctions and tariffs on Russia over its bombardments of Ukraine, after previously suspending U.S. aid to Kyiv in a stated bid to encourage diplomacy. "Based on the fact that Russia is absolutely 'pounding' Ukraine on the battlefield right now, I am strongly considering large scale Banking Sanctions, Sanctions, and Tariffs on Russia until a Cease Fire and FINAL SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT ON PEACE IS REACHED," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. "To Russia and



Ukraine, get to the table right now, before it is too late," he wrote. Mr. Trump's threat comes after Russia launched major drone and missile attacks Friday on Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

Days earlier, the Trump administration sus-

gratitude for billions of dollars in U.S. weapons. Mr. Trump has since faced harsh criticism from allies and domestic opponents who say he has sided with Russia, which invaded Ukraine in 2022. The United States voted with Russia and against its European allies on United Nations resolutions that called for ending the war without stressing Ukraine's territorial integrity. Trump last month spoke by telephone with Russian President Vladimir Putin in an initial step toward resuming normal relations and undoing sweeping sanctions imposed under former president Joe Biden over the Ukraine invasion.

ended U.S. military aid deliveries and intelligence-sharing with Ukraine after a dispute with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Mr. Trump and Vice President JD Vance on February 28 berated Zelenskyy in a televised meeting at the White House, accusing him of in-

## After reports of Elon Musk-Marco Rubio clash, Trump denies it



GNS News Agency, March 8

U.S. President Donald Trump denied on Friday (March 7, 2025) a report that his senior advisor, billionaire Elon Musk, had clashed with Secretary of State Marco Rubio during a White House meeting. According to The New York Times, Mr. Musk argued with Mr. Rubio and separately with transportation secretary Sean Duffy during Thursday's cabinet meeting chaired by Mr. Trump.

Mr. Musk is leading the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) in a drive to slash costs and cut jobs across government departments, reportedly leading to tensions with department heads. After the meeting, Mr. Trump announced that cuts would continue but with a "scalpel" rather than a "hatchet", implying that he had taken the opportunity to rein Mr. Musk in. But, asked by reporters on Friday about the reported dispute, the president dismissed it, declaring: "No clash. I was there." He went on to insist of Mr. Musk and Mr. Rubio "they're both doing a fantastic job ... they both get along fantastically well." According to the Times report Mr. Musk scorned Mr. Rubio's cost-cutting record at the State Department, accusing him of having fired "nobody" in the administration's first 45 days. Mr. Rubio countered that 1,500 State Department officials had accepted early retirement, and sarcastically asked whether he should hire them back just to sack them again more spectacularly. In another exchange, Mr. Duffy accused DOGE of having tried to sack vital air traffic controllers right as he deals with the aftermath of several plane crashes, prompting Mr. Musk to accuse him of a "lie", again according to the New York Times.

Trump intervenes Mr. Trump reportedly intervened to halt the argument and suggest that henceforth the controllers be hired from the "geniuses" studying at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Since coming to office, Mr. Trump's administration has sacked or announced the departure of tens of thousands of federal employees in a scorched-earth efficiency drive. Several U.S. media have reported friction between Mr. Musk and senior officials, who accuse his young crew of DOGE officials — recruited from Silicon Valley — of exceeding their authority.

## Sri Lanka signs \$2.5 billion debt deal with Japan

GNS News Agency, March 8

Sri Lanka signed a deal with Japan on Friday (March 7, 2025) to restructure \$2.5 billion in loans, marking the first agreement with official creditors who had pledged debt relief to the cash-strapped nation last year. Japan said it was granting concessions on a 369.45 billion yen (\$2.5 billion) loan under a comprehensive debt treatment plan, which the International Monetary Fund considers essential for Sri Lanka's economic recovery. "The development of Sri Lanka, which is located at a strategic point in the Indian Ocean, is essential for the stability and prosperity of the entire Indo-Pacific region," the Japanese Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "Japan intends to further contribute to the sustainable development of Sri Lanka." Colombo's Finance Ministry said Tokyo had played a "pivotal role" in helping Sri Lanka restructure its debt. "Its leadership, commitment, and constructive engagement have been instrumental in helping Sri Lanka navigate the challenges of economic recovery," the ministry said in a statement. Sri Lanka announced last June that it had reached an understanding with all its bilateral lenders to delay repayments until 2028. Formal agreements were delayed due to protracted negotiations, making Friday's deal with Japan the first with an official creditor of the South Asian nation. China remains Sri Lanka's largest bilateral lender, accounting for \$4.66 billion of the \$10.58 billion borrowed from other nations. Japan is the second-largest, with just over \$2.5 billion in loans. Sri Lanka had concluded debt deals with the Export-Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank last year. Japan is the first country in the 17-member Official Creditor Committee (OCC) of Sri Lanka to ink a debt deal, Sri Lankan officials said. Beijing is not a member of the OCC. The government of leftist President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, which came to power in September, had hoped to finalise debt deals before the end of last year. The island nation defaulted on its \$46 billion external debt in April 2022 after running out of foreign exchange to finance even the most essential imports, such as food and fuel.

## Is there a link between the use of pain killers and kidney disease?

GNS News Agency, March 8

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD), as per Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcomes (KDIGO) is defined as estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR) < 60 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup> for at least three months, or the presence of markers of kidney damage (urinary abnormalities, structural abnormalities). The prevalence of kidney disease in our country varies from 3 to 10% based on various studies, underlying the importance of developing a national registry. The incidence of kidney disease is also on the rise with over 1,00,000 new patients requiring renal replacement therapy (dialysis/renal transplantation) annually. Various ailments contributing to kidney disease include diabetes mellitus, hypertension, obesity, medicines causing kidney injury, inflammation of the kidney, urological causes and other diseases of the body affecting the kidney. Paracetamol, diclofinac and tramadol are all different group of pain killers available in the market. Of all the drugs (medications) causing kidney damage, pain killers, primarily NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), are most commonly associated with kidney failure. Consuming any of the above medications in excess quantities can have adverse effects. Paracetamol causes liver injury, NSAIDs cause kidney injury and gastritis, and tramadol is addictive. Various NSAIDs available in the market are diclofinac, aceclofinac, ibuprofen, ketorolac, and celecoxib. Drugs like nimesulide, also NSAIDs, have been banned by the government but are still widely available in the market. These are mainly used for pain which is associated with inflammation, like tooth pain with swelling, and joint pain, particularly in people with arthritis. NSAIDs are very potent in controlling pain and inflammation. How painkillers affect the kidneys There are many ways painkillers affect the kidneys. NSAIDs control pain by lowering prostaglandins, which are essential for blood flow to the kidneys. Thus, when the blood flow to the kidney is affected, it can result in damage to the kidney tubules, which in turn results in increased serum creatinine levels. Other mechanisms which cause renal injury are those which initiate inflammation in the interstitium causing interstitial nephritis and excessive protein leakage in the



urine causing swelling of the body, called minimal change nephropathy. Unfortunately, NSAIDs are not the only nephrotoxic drugs consumed. Other drugs include various antibiotics like amikacin and streptomycin which are used for treating infections, diuretics like furosemide used in cardiac failure, antihypertensives (when causing low BP), and proton pump inhibitors like pantoprazole and omeprazole. When NSAIDs are used along with these medications, the toxic effect on the kidney increases significantly. People with already affected kidneys, the elderly and the paediatric age group, and people with other debilitating illnesses are prone to kidney failure with nephrotoxic drugs like NSAIDs. Another class of people affected by these drugs are the those with dehydration. Dehydration increases the nephrotoxicity of NSAIDs manifold and might even cause kidney failure requiring dialysis.

How to manage pain and inflammation?

NSAIDs are useful to control pain but have to be used judiciously. They should not be freely accessible but should be only available with prescriptions. They have to be used carefully, particularly in the elderly, people with other comorbidities, and especially in those with already affected kidneys. If in doubt, consulting a healthcare provider is the best way to navigate pain management safely and sustainably.

## Trump says India agreed to cut tariffs way down

GNS News Agency, March 8

New York/Washington: US President Donald Trump said India has agreed to cut its tariffs "way down" as he reiterated his claim that the country charges America massive tariffs that make it difficult to sell products there. "Our country, from an economic standpoint and financial standpoint and a trade standpoint, has been absolutely ripped off by almost every country in the world," Trump said in remarks from the Oval Office on Friday.

"Canada, Mexico and then you just go right down the line. India charges us massive tariffs, massive, you can't even sell anything into India. It's almost, it's almost restrictive. It is restrictive. We do very little business inside," he said. "They've agreed, by the way, they want to cut their tariffs way down now because somebody's finally exposing them for what they've done. And the same thing with China, same thing with a lot of other countries, and the EU has been a terrible abuser of this country," Trump added. This

was the third time this week that Trump has criticised the high tariffs charged by India. On Thursday, Trump said India is a very high-tariff nation and reiterated that reciprocal tariffs on countries that impose levies on American goods will kick in on April 2.

In his address to the joint session of Congress on Tuesday, the first of his second term in the White House, Trump criticised the high tariffs charged by India and other countries and termed them as "very unfair".

Addressing lawmakers from the US Capitol, Trump announced that reciprocal tariffs will kick in next month. In the past, Trump has called India a "tariff king" and a "big abuser". Last month, during a joint press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the White House, Trump said that India has "been very strong on tariffs". "I don't blame them, necessarily, but it's a different way of doing business. It's very hard to sell into India because they have trade barriers, very strong tariffs," he had said.

# More than 200 dead in Syria amid clashes between Assad loyalists and government forces

## An equitable future for women in science, in India

GNS News Agency, March 8

Women in science navigate a minefield of challenges that often start early. Educational barriers, such as limited access to quality schools and gendered societal norms, can discourage girls from pursuing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). For those who persist and are fortunate to get past these early hurdles, cultural expectations frequently demand that they prioritise family over careers, severely jeopardising professional growth. Gender stereotypes further restrict opportunities, affecting hiring, promotions and funding. Harassment and discrimination in academic settings add another dimension of hostility that push many women out of the field. Globally, as well as in India, we see similar patterns. A study of STEM scientists across 38 countries reveals higher attrition rates for women, driven by non-inclusive workplaces, work-life balance struggles, and limited access to high-impact research.

These barriers slow career progression and reduce access to senior roles and professional networks, increasing dropout rates. The postdoc-to-faculty transition is especially challenging for women, with familial responsibilities, low confidence, and a lack of female role models cited as key factors, as highlighted by research from the National Institutes of Health. These barriers compel us to consider why it is vital to prioritise the retention of women in science. Diverse teams drive creativity and innovation, leading to breakthroughs by integrating multiple perspectives. More women in science also results in role models for future generations, inspiring girls to pursue STEM. Promoting equity ensures that women can contribute fully to scientific progress, enriching society with a more inclusive workforce. This conversation has progressed little over the centuries. The "Matilda Effect" — named after 19th-century feminist Matilda Joselyn Gage — describes the tendency to downplay or overshadow women's scientific contributions in favour of their male colleagues, highlighting the historic struggle for proper recognition of women's innovations. Nearly 200 years later, gender inequity in STEM persists. Jacob Clark Blickenstaff's "leaky pipeline" metaphor describes women dropping out of STEM due to biased pedagogy, a lack of role models, and hostile workplaces. Critiqued as somewhat simplistic, this model does not consider systemic power dynamics. A more recent "Chutes and Ladders" model focuses on broader structural and environmental barriers, highlighting how mentorship, access to hidden knowledge, and career disruptions disproportionately hinder women, minorities, and marginalised groups, emphasising the need to address inequities within academic systems.

Examining these concepts is particularly valuable in the context of India, where conservative attitudes abound. In an extensive survey across 98 institutions across India conducted in 2020-21, the proportion of women faculty members across all the fields was a mere 17%, ranging from 23% in biology to 8% in engineering. The proportion was even lower within higher-ranked institutions, with dwindling ratios within senior career faculty. The data showed that women scientists were vastly under-represented at conferences and often overlooked in career-enhancing activities. Addressing these challenges demands a reimagined approach that embraces diverse career paths and involves policymakers, institutions, and the scientific community in fostering inclusivity, particularly for underrepresented and economically disadvantaged women. Approaches vary based on the timing of intervention. Early intervention, engaging parents, educators, and the broader social environment, is key to lasting impact.

We propose three key recommendations to improve the retention of women in STEM at the early- and mid-career levels. First, institutional changes such as flexible work options, affordable childcare, and policies supporting work-family integration are essential. Second, public recognition of both triumphs and obstacles is crucial. Showcasing successful women in science challenges stereotypes, inspires the next generation, and reinforces the need for greater visibility and representation. At the same time, calling out setbacks, as exemplified by BiasWatchIndia, can drive incremental progress by exposing gender inequities in academia. Finally, a nuanced approach across career stages is crucial, eliminating age restrictions on grants, fostering

sustained fighting between the two sides. However, he said he was concerned it could stoke cycles of violence between different civilian communities living along the coast. Also, any violations by the security forces sent from Damascus would leave young Alawite men more fearful of the new government — and more prone to take up arms, Mr. Waters said. Support for new regime in Damascus In Damascus, a crowd gathered in the rain at Umayyad Square to show support for the new government.

"We've had enough of long periods of wars and tragedies," said retiree Mazen Abdelmajeed. He blamed the violence on remnants of the former regime and said Syria's unity must be preserved. "No one wants a civil war to happen," he said. "We're not against any of the components of the Syrian people. ... We're all one Syrian people." Qutaiba Idlibi, a research fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank, said that apart from the danger of sectarian escalation, the violence had laid bare a "big security challenge for the government in terms of potentially its inability to address multiple security threats on multiple fronts across the country." Armed groups opposed to the new authorities may take note, he said.

Scores of people gathered Friday outside the main Russian air base in Syria near Jableh to ask Moscow for protection. Russia joined Syria's conflict in 2015, siding with Mr. Assad, although it has since established links with the new government. Mr. Assad has been living in Moscow since leaving Syria in December. Russia's foreign ministry said in a written statement that Moscow is "closely coordinating efforts with foreign partners in the interests of a speedy de-escalation of the situation." "We reaffirm our principled position in support of the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic," the statement said. "We expect that all states that have influence on the situation in Syria will contribute to its normalization." Turkey, which backed the insurgents when Mr. Assad was still in power, warned on Friday that the current fighting poses a serious threat to the new government. "Intensive efforts are underway to establish security and stability in Syria," Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesperson Onu Kececi said in a post on X. "At this critical juncture, the targeting of security forces could undermine the efforts to lead Syria into the future in unity and solidarity."

three villages, saying that more than 30 men were killed in the village of Mukhtariyeh alone. Another 60 people were killed in the town of Baniyas, including women and children, the observatory said. Syrian authorities did not publish a death toll, but Syria's state news agency SANA quoted an unidentified security official as saying that numerous people went to the coast seeking revenge for recent attacks on government security forces. The official said the actions "led to some individual violations and we are working on stop them. President responds

Interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa in a video statement called on armed groups affiliated with the former government to hand over their weapons and for those loyal to the new government to avoid attacking civilians or abusing prisoners. "When we compromise our ethics, we reduce ourselves to the same level as our enemy," he said. "The remnants of the fallen regime are looking for a provocation that will lead to violations behind which they can seek refuge." Overnight, Damascus sent reinforcements to the coastal cities of Latakia and Tartus and nearby villages that are home to Mr. Assad's minority Alawite sect and make up his longtime base of support. A curfew remained in effect in Latakia and other coastal areas. Under Mr. Assad, Alawites held top posts in the army and security agencies. The new government has blamed his loyalists for attacks against the country's new security forces over the past several weeks. There also have been some attacks against Alawites in recent weeks, though the new government says it won't allow collective punishment or sectarian vengeance.

Control of Assad loyalists As of Friday, the observatory said, Jableh and the coastal town of Baniyas were still under the control of Mr. Assad loyalists, along with other Alawite villages nearby and Mr. Assad's hometown of Qardaha, in the mountains overlooking Latakia. One Qardaha resident told The Associated Press in a text message that government forces were firing with heavy machine guns in the town's residential areas. Another said people had not been able to leave their homes since Thursday afternoon because of the intensity of the shooting. Both spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution. Gregory Waters, an associate fellow with the Middle East Institute who has researched Syria's coastal areas, said he doesn't expect the flareup to escalate into

## Gene Hackman died of heart disease, his wife died of hantavirus about 1 week prior, authorities say

GNS News Agency, March 8

Actor Gene Hackman died of heart disease a full week after his wife died from hantavirus in their New Mexico hillside home, likely unaware that she was dead because he was in the advanced stages of Alzheimer's disease, authorities revealed. Both deaths were ruled to be from natural causes, chief medical examiner Dr. Heather Jarrell said alongside state fire and health officials at a news conference.

"Mr. Hackman showed evidence of advanced Alzheimer's disease," Dr. Jarrell said. "He was in a very poor state of health. He had significant heart disease, and I think ultimately that's what resulted in his death." Authorities didn't suspect foul play after the bodies of Hackman, 95, and Betsy Arakawa, 65, were discovered February 26. Immediate tests for carbon monoxide poisoning were negative. Investigators found that the last known communication and activity from Arakawa was February 11 when she visited a pharmacy, pet store and grocery before returning to their gated neighbourhood that afternoon, Santa Fe County Sheriff Adan Mendoza said Friday. Hackman's pacemaker last showed signs of activity a week later and that he had an abnormal heart rhythm February 18, the day he likely died. Dr. Jarrell said. Although there was no reliable way to determine the date and time when both died, all signs point to their deaths coming a week apart, Dr. Jarrell said. Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office officials and New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator officials hold a press conference on the death of actor Gene Hackman and his wife Betsy Arakawa, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, March 7, 2025. Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office officials and New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator officials hold a press conference on the death of actor Gene Hackman and his wife Betsy Arakawa, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, March 7, 2025. | Photo Credit: Reuters "It's quite possible he was not aware she was deceased," Dr. Jarrell said. Hackman's Alzheimer's disease Dr. Michael Baden, a former New York City medical examiner, said he believes Hackman was severely impaired due to Alzheimer's disease and unable to deal with his wife's death in the last week of his life. Most older Americans with dementia live at home, and many receive care from family or friends. Their bodies were found a little over a week later. Hackman was found in the home's entryway. His death was tied to heart disease with Alzheimer's disease contributing. Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome Arakawa was found in a bathroom. Authorities linked her death to hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, a rare but potentially fatal disease spread by infected rodent droppings. Thyroid medication pills prescribed to Arakawa were found nearby and weren't listed as contributing to her death, Jarrell said. Hantavirus typically is reported in spring and summer, often due to exposures that occur when people are near mouse droppings in homes, sheds or poorly ventilated areas. This is the first confirmed case of hantavirus in New Mexico this year. While hantavirus is found throughout the world, most cases in the U.S. have been found in western states. The virus can cause a severe and sometimes deadly lung infection. One of the couple's three dogs also was found dead in a crate in a bathroom closet near Arakawa, while two other dogs survived. Authorities initially misidentified the breed. Dogs do not get sick from hantavirus, said Erin Phipps, a veterinarian with the New Mexico Health Department. The sheriff considers this an open investigation until they receive results of the dog's necropsy and finish checking into data from personal cellphones retrieved from the home. When Hackman and Arakawa were found, the bodies were decomposing with some mummification, a consequence of body type and climate in Santa Fe's especially dry air at an elevation of nearly 7,200 feet (2,200 meters). "All of us that knew him should have been checking on him," said Stuart Ashman, co-owner of Artes de Cuba gallery who cherished his encounters with Hackman at a local Pilates exercise studio, where they used to swap stories. "I had no idea. ... It's just really sad. And that she died a week before him. My God."

Dr. Victor Weedn, a forensic pathologist in Virginia, said when two bodies are found at the same time, the usual assumption would be that they died at the same time. But Hackman's Alzheimer's disease added a complicating factor: He apparently was unable to seek help after his wife died. "They died several days apart: One dying of a viral infection, the hantavirus, which can kill quite quickly. And the other death occurring from heart disease. And that too



can be a relatively sudden death," Dr. Weedn said. "Their (the authorities') explanation, I thought, was quite clear and plausible. I believe they really discovered what truly happened in this case." Hackman, a Hollywood icon, won two Oscars during a storied career in films including "The French Connection," "Hoosiers" and "Superman" from the 1960s until his retirement in the early 2000s. Arakawa, born in Hawaii, studied as a concert pianist, attended the University of Southern California and met Hackman in the mid-1980s while working at a California gym. Hackman dedicated much of his time in retirement to painting and writing novels far from Hollywood's social circuit. He served for several years on the board of trustees at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, and he and his wife were investors in local businesses.

## Agusta Westland case: Christian Michel James refuses to accept bail, offers to 'finish his sentence'

GNS News Agency, March 8

Christian Michel James, an alleged middleman in the Agusta Westland case, on Friday (March 7, 2025) offered to "finish his sentence" and leave India instead of walking out on bail owing to "security risks". James was addressing special judge Sanjeev Aggarwal when he made the plea. Following the reprieve in the CBI and ED cases against him, the special court imposed the necessary bail conditions for releasing him on bail. While the Delhi High Court on March 4 granted him bail in the ED case and directed for saddling Michel with the necessary bail riders, the Supreme Court on February 18 granted the relief in the CBI case subject to the trial court's conditions. On Friday (March 7, 2025), the judge asked James, "How are you now? God has been kind to you in the last two months. You have got bail in both cases." James, however, said, "Delhi is just a larger prison. My family cannot come to me... My security is at risk. I would rather complete my sentence and leave the country." The judge asked Michel how could he continue to be incarcerated when bail had been granted to him. "I cannot accept the bail. It's unsafe. Every time I step out of Tihar (prison),



The judge then asked the media persons and the police personnel to wait outside for some time

something happens," Michel said. On the aspect of furnishing a surety bond, he said, "How can a person who has been in jail for six years produce local sureties?" After Michel stressed he did not want to be released on bail because of security reasons, the judge asked, "Can't you find a safehouse in Delhi?" Michel then offered to "narrate in private the incident" he faced when he was admitted to AIIMS. "The problem I have is with the police. I would rather talk to you in private," he said.

The judge then asked the media persons and the police personnel to wait outside for some time. At around 4.30 pm, the court passed its

order, laying down the conditions for bail. The conditions include James marking his attendance physically before the investigating officers once every 15 days, providing his cellphone number, email and residential address to the probe agencies aside from not leaving the country without the court's permission and not tampering with the evidence or attempting to influence the witnesses. "The accused shall not interact with respect to the present case with the media nor shall communicate regarding this case at any forum, during the trial of this case," the court's order said. The court also directed James to furnish a personal bond and surety of ₹10 lakh in both cases and surrender

his passport. James was extradited from Dubai in December 2018 and was arrested by the CBI and the ED later. He is among the three alleged middlemen being probed in the case and the other two are Guido Haschke and Carlo Gerosa. The CBI, in its chargesheet, claimed an estimated loss of ₹398.21 million euros (about ₹2,666 crore) to the exchequer due to the deal that was signed on February 8, 2010, for the supply of VVIP choppers worth ₹556.262 million euros. The ED chargesheet filed against James in June 2016 alleged he received 30 million euros (about ₹225 crore) from Agusta Westland.

## Hamas brushes off Trump's threat and says it will only free hostages in return for a lasting truce



GNS News Agency, March 8

Protesters held cutout pictures of hostages and a banner that reads "Don't blow up the deal. Get them out of hell. End the war." during a demonstration demanding the immediate return of hostages who were kidnapped during the deadly October 7, 2023 attack on Israel by Hamas, i

Protesters held cutout pictures of hostages and a banner that reads "Don't blow up the deal. Get them out of hell. End the war." during a demonstration demanding the immediate return of hostages who were kidnapped during the deadly October 7, 2023 attack on Israel by Hamas, in Tel Aviv, Israel. The Hamas militant group on Thursday (March 6, 2025) brushed off President Donald Trump's latest threat and reiterated that it will only free the remaining Israeli hostages in exchange for a lasting ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas accused Mr. Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of trying to back out of the ceasefire agreement they reached in January. The agreement calls for negotiations over a second phase in which the hostages would be released in exchange for more Palestinian prisoners, a permanent ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Hamas spokesman Abdel-Latif al-Qanoua said the "best path to free the remaining Israeli hostages" is through negotiations on that phase, which were supposed to begin in early February. Only limited preparatory talks have been held so far. On Wednesday (March 5, 2025), Mr. Trump issued what he said was a "last warning" to Hamas after meeting with eight former hostages. The White House meanwhile confirmed it had held unprecedented direct talks with the militant group, which Israel and Western countries view as a terrorist organization.

"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," Mr. Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. "Only sick and twisted people keep bodies, and you are sick and twisted!" Both Israel and Hamas have a longstanding practice of holding onto the remains of their adversaries in order to trade them in hostage-prisoner deals. Hamas is believed to still have 24 living hostages taken in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war, including Israeli-American Edan Alexander. It is also holding the bodies of 34 others who were either killed in the initial attack or in captivity, as well as the remains of a soldier killed in the 2014 war.

Hamas released 25 Israeli hostages and the bodies of eight more in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners in the first, 42-day phase of the ceasefire, which ended on Saturday. Israel supports what it says is a new U.S. plan for the second phase in which Hamas would release half the remaining hostages immediately and the rest when a permanent ceasefire is negotiated. Hamas has rejected the proposal and says it is sticking with the agreement signed in January. Israel has cut off the delivery of food, fuel, medicine and other supplies to Gaza's roughly 2 million Palestinians in an attempt to pressure Hamas into accepting the new arrangement. It has threatened "additional consequences" if Hamas does not resume the release of hostages. It's unclear if the U.S.-Hamas talks made any progress. The Trump administration has pledged full support for Israel's main war goals of returning all the hostages and eradicating Hamas, which may be incompatible. Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the Oct. 7 attack and took a total of 251 people hostage. Most have been released in ceasefire agreements or other arrangements. Israeli forces have rescued eight living hostages and recovered the bodies of dozens more.

# Inclusion in public spaces — from fear to freedom



takes place in many ways. According to National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4) data (2015–16), 54% of Indian women had the freedom to visit markets alone, while 50% could access health-care facilities independently, and 48% were permitted to travel outside their village or community unaccompanied. Also, the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for 2023-24 indicates that the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for women is 35.6%. Even though it has risen significantly over the years, unfortunately, this highlights that more than half the female population remains outside the workforce. Therefore, while a majority of women are confined to private spaces, there is a rising number of women who are using public spaces.

However, for working women, public spaces primarily serve as transitional zones, facilitating their commute between home and workplace. These spaces are rarely utilised for leisure or recreation. Consequently, women's engagement with public spaces is purpose-driven and time-bound, reinforcing spatial restrictions that limit their presence to functional necessities rather than unrestricted social participation. A space is truly safe and inclusive when women can navigate it freely and without hesitation. As argued in 'Why Loiter?' (Phadke, Ranade, Khan, 2011), reclaiming public spaces is not just about necessity but also about leisure and uninhibited presence. When women can move without a purpose, without urgency, without having to conform to the male gaze, they assert their right to belong, transforming public spaces into shared, equitable environments. Simply put, women should be able to just exist in public spaces.

The issue of safety. During such instances, the issue of women's safety becomes a pressing concern. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that violence against women is not confined to public spaces as many face threats even within their homes which is considered to be a comparatively safer space. In open spaces, the risk of gendered violence from multiple strangers is high. This has reinforced the belief that women need protection, ultimately restricting their autonomy. As a result, women are largely found in curated spaces such as malls, theatres, and cafes, where the likelihood of violence is perceived to be lower. But what about women on footpaths, bus stations, or narrow streets — just a group of girls sitting around and having fun?

Street amusement where women are the participants is not a normal sight. Everyday public spaces — those that

men navigate freely — continue to be unwelcoming to women. The fact that women cannot simply exist in these spaces without discomfort or fear raises a critical question. What is fundamentally flawed in the design of public spaces that prevents women from fully claiming and navigating them as their own? It is here that the community and the government can be great enablers. As a society, we must acknowledge and accept the fact that public spaces offer a sense of freedom. Yet, this very freedom often translates to a loss of control for families over women's mobility. Risk is inevitable but avoiding public spaces is not the solution. Men are subjected to street violence as well, even though their nature of vulnerability is different from that of women. Women need to reclaim these spaces with the same ease as men, fostering autonomy rather than restriction. For this, women should have more conversations about this problem, take out time to go around and 'hang out' and have fun in public spaces. Normalising a woman's use of public space for leisure can contribute to this shift. Policy level changes

At the policy level, the government can drive change by reimagining public space planning and design. This includes improving street lighting, ensuring safe and accessible public toilets, installing street furniture such as benches, and creating more recreational spaces tailored for women. Another critical area requiring government intervention is strengthening public safety through stringent laws and their effective enforcement to address crimes against women in public spaces. How many men are actually punished for gender-based violence in public spaces? How many secure bail, only to repeat their crimes? The low conviction rate remains a glaring issue that must be addressed. Even today, women are often blamed for being in the "wrong place at the wrong time", shifting the focus from the perpetrator to the victim. Society places the burden of safety on women while simultaneously excusing or downplaying the actions of offenders. This not only fosters a culture of impunity but also reinforces a gendered fear that serves as a tool for patriarchal control. So, by consciously reshaping public spaces, we can create environments where women feel safe and truly welcome. While centuries of patriarchy cannot be dismantled overnight, meaningful change begins with small, everyday actions. From the built environment of public space to societal attitudes, every shift, no matter how gradual, brings us closer to an inclusive society where women can navigate and own public spaces freely, without fear or restriction.

## New passport rules notified: Changes in birth proof, passport colour



The Centre has announced a major change in the application of the passport for those who are willing to apply or update their passport in the near future. As per the document released by the Gazette of India, these rules may be called the Passports (Amendment) Rules, 2025 and they shall come into force on the date of their publication in the Official Gazette. Under the new rule, any individual born on or after October 1, 2023 will have to present their birth certificate issued by the Registrar of Births and Deaths or the Municipal Corporation as an only proof for their date of birth.

However, anyone born before October 1, 2023 can present the a birth certificate or alternative documents such as HSC certificate or driving licence among others to prove their date of birth. Documents required for proof of Date of Birth for individuals born before October 1, 2023: Birth certificate issued by the Registrar of Births and Deaths or the Municipal Corporation/Transfer or school leaving or matriculation certificate issued by the recognised school last attended or recognised educational board having the date of birth of the applicant Permanent Account Number Card issued by the Income-tax Department having the date of birth of the applicant Copy of an extract of the service record of the applicant (only in respect of Government servants) Pension Order (in respect of retired Government servants), duly attested or certified by the officer-in-charge of the administration of the concerned Ministry or Department of the applicant, having his date of birth Driving licence issued by the Transport Department of the concerned State Government, having the date of birth of the applicant

Election Photo Identity Card issued by the Election Commission of India containing the date of birth of the applicant Policy bond issued by the Life Insurance Corporations of India or Public Companies having the date of birth of the holder of the insurance policy Along with this the government has also decided to remove the residential address printed on the citizen's passport for privacy purposes. The address will now be held in the barcode that is printed on the passport. Passports will now be issued under a colour-coded system in order to make it easier to identify different passport holders according to rank. Ordinary citizens will be issued the usual blue passports while government officials will be given white coloured passports and diplomats will get red passports. Parent's names of the passport holders which is typically printed on the last page of the passport will now be removed in order to protect personal information and to benefit those separated from families.

## An equitable future for women in science, in India

Women in science navigate a minefield of challenges that often start early. Educational barriers, such as limited access to quality schools and gendered societal norms, can discourage girls from pursuing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). For those who persist and are fortunate to get past these early hurdles, cultural expectations frequently demand that they prioritise family over careers, severely jeopardising professional growth. Gender stereotypes further restrict opportunities, affecting hiring, promotions and funding. Harassment and discrimination in academic settings add another dimension of hostility that push many women out of the field.

Globally, as well as in India, we see similar patterns. A study of STEM scientists across 38 countries reveals higher attrition rates for women, driven by non-inclusive workplaces, work-life balance struggles, and limited access to high-impact research. These barriers slow career progression and reduce access to senior roles and professional networks, increasing dropout rates. The postdoc-to-faculty transition is especially challenging for women, with familial responsibilities, low confidence, and a lack of female role models cited as key factors, as highlighted by research from the National Institutes of Health. These barriers compel us to consider why it is vital to prioritise the retention of women in science. Diverse teams drive creativity and innovation, leading to breakthroughs by integrating multiple perspectives. More women in science also results in role models for future generations, inspiring girls to pursue STEM. Promoting equity ensures that women can contribute fully to scientific progress, enriching society with a more inclusive workforce. This conversation has progressed little over the centuries. The "Matilda Effect" — named after 19th-century feminist Matilda Joslyn Gage — describes the tendency to downplay or overshadow women's scientific contributions in favour of their male colleagues, highlighting the historic struggle for proper recognition of women's innovations. Nearly 200 years later, gender inequity in STEM persists. Jacob Clark Blickenstaff's "leaky pipeline" metaphor describes women dropping out of STEM due to biased pedagogy, a lack of role models, and hostile workplaces. Critiqued as somewhat simplistic, this model does not consider systemic power dynamics. A more recent "Chutes and Ladders" model focuses on broader structural and environmental barriers, highlighting how mentorship, access to hidden knowledge, and career disruptions disproportionately hinder women, minorities, and marginalised groups, emphasising the need to address inequities within academic systems.

Examining these concepts is particularly valuable in the context of India, where conservative attitudes abound. In an extensive survey across 98 institutions across India conducted in 2020-21, the proportion of women faculty members across all the fields was a mere 17%, ranging from 23% in biology to 8% in engineering. The proportion was even lower within higher-ranked institutions, with dwindling ratios within senior career faculty. The data showed that women scientists were vastly under-represented at conferences and often overlooked in career-enhancing activities. Addressing these challenges demands a reimagined approach that embraces diverse career paths and involves policymakers, institutions, and the scientific community in fostering inclusivity, particularly for underrepresented and economically disadvantaged women. Approaches vary based on the timing of intervention. Early intervention, engaging parents, educators, and the broader social environment, is key to lasting impact. We propose three key recommendations to improve the retention of women in STEM at the early- and mid-career levels.

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## A party, a street fight, and the death of a Kerala boy: Minors in conflict with the law

With his hands folded and eyes partly closed, Mohammed Iqbal, 47, is immersed in prayer. Clad in a white shirt and dhoti at his ancestral home in Thamarassery, a village in Kerala's Kozhikode district, Iqbal is at a religious ritual for the third day. He is mourning the death of his eldest son, Mohammed Shahabaz, 15. When he starts chanting prayers, tears roll down his cheeks. His relatives stand around him. "His wife and three children have not accepted the fact that Shahabaz is no more," one of them says. Iqbal, who had toiled for years as a daily wage labourer abroad, says his eldest son was really smart. "He performed well in school. He would make electronic toys. He loved playing sports. He always took care of his younger siblings. I couldn't even buy him a mobile phone, as I was short of money," he says. Iqbal vows to fight until death to secure justice for his son. Shahabaz, a Class 10 student at a government-aided school at Elettill village, died on March 1 after he was brutally assaulted during a clash between two groups of teenagers at Thamarassery in Kozhikode on February 27. His death led to widespread protests by the Youth Congress, the Kerala Students' Union, and the Muslim Students Federation, among others. These organisations allege that Shahabaz was murdered and that there was a conspiracy behind his death. The Kerala government described the incident as "unfortunate" and said a comprehensive investigation would be conducted. The Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights also registered a suo motu case on the incident.

The problem began on February 23, when there was an argument between the students of two schools — Muhammedali Jauhar Higher Secondary School, Elettill; and Government Vocational Higher Secondary School, Thamarassery — at Trizz, a local training centre in Thamarassery, according to trainers at the centre. There was a farewell party for Class 10 students from the two schools that day at the centre. When the music that was being played for a dance performance at the party stopped due to techni-



cal glitches, students from the Thamarassery school laughed, and this led to a heated argument between the students of the two schools, say trainers. The students met again on February 27 at the centre. "Shahabaz was not a student at Trizz, but he came to the spot along with his friends from the Muhammedali School to settle scores with the students from Thamarassery," says a trainer. Witnesses say the first clash between the two groups took place along a dingy corridor of a building complex near the tuition centre. When the locals intervened, the students moved to other spots. They clashed four times in front of about 50 students at the centre, say locals. "The students from both the schools began assembling near the tuition centre at around 4.30 in the evening. The clash broke out around 5.30 and went on till 7," recall Siddique and Shukkur, two tea shop owners who saw the brawl. According to them, after the students fought the first time, teachers from the tuition centre intervened and forced the students to disperse.

Hajira and Jaseera, who run a stitching unit near the incident spot, say they heard loud noises around the building but they were too scared to intervene. "We thought that this was a minor quarrel between the students as such incidents happen sometimes. We never thought that it would lead to this," Hajira says. K.K. Akhilesh, the head of the tuition centre, says the five students who were nabbed the next day by the police in connection with the incident, based on a complaint by Shahabaz's parents, had not turned up for classes that day and were waiting outside the centre. "They did not have any criminal background, nor were they aggressive. They were good students who studied hard," Akhilesh says. A sixth stu-

dent was nabbed in connection with the incident on March 4.

When Shahabaz sustained a head injury and collapsed, the tuition centre trainers and locals called his family, who rushed him to the Thamarassery taluk hospital. There, he was referred to the Kozhikode Medical College, according to the police. Shahabaz had become unconscious after several episodes of vomiting and also had severe wounds in his eyes. He succumbed to injuries on March 1. That evening, he was laid to rest at the Kedavoor Juma Masjid Khabar Sthan. According to the post-mortem report, Shahabaz had suffered a deep head injury and a fractured skull. The police later found that he had been attacked with a nunchaku, a martial arts weapon consisting of two sticks. The police say one of the six students involved in the incident had brought the weapon, which had been in the possession of his older brother, with him.

Anger built up when a photo emerged showing the father of one of the accused alongside a convict in the 2012 murder of Revolutionary Marxist Party leader, T.P. Chandrasekharan. Further, the police say they found a WhatsApp group that was created by the six accused. They say the messages on the group of 60 people and another Instagram group showed that the six boys had been planning the clash for more than four days. The police recovered a laptop, four phones, and the weapon from the houses of the accused. A senior police officer says the accused show no repentance. "They had discussed everything on a social media group and even posted details of the nunchaku that was brought to the spot. The voice messages sent by some of the students in the group clearly

explained the plan. The messages indicate a dangerous criminal trend among adolescents," he says. P. Jayesh, a professional karate trainer, says the nunchaku is banned in several countries, but not in India. "If people simply watch some demonstration videos and use it, they may use it crudely. This can lead to an unpredictable outcome. There should be a proper vigil against the misuse of such weapons," he says. Iqbal worries about the probe. "One of the key accused is the son of a policeman, while a few others are the children of politically influential people," he says. The police have charged the teenagers under Sections 103(1) (murder), 118(2) (causing grievous hurt using dangerous weapons), 126(2) (wrongful restraint), 189(2) (unlawful assembly), 191(2) (rioting), and 190 (every member of unlawful assembly guilty of offence committed in prosecution of common object) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023. They say more sections of the BNS are likely to be invoked once the probe is completed and the final report submitted. The police have also reached out to Meta and other social media platforms to collect evidence.

A recurring phenomenon Some traders say that students from the two schools, located nearly 7 kilometers apart, have been fighting for years on various issues, such as sports and cultural programmes. They even have a name for it — 'Friday Thallumala', an act of revenge. Some local traders also sought action from the police a few months ago, to end the street scuffles that took place on Fridays.

The incident and investigation have largely affected the two schools and their students and teachers. Mohammed Basheer, headmaster of the Government Vocational Higher Secondary School, Thamarassery, is in tears. All the six students who have been held are from his school. "The school has been putting up a good performance. Now, everyone is shaken. This is my last year in my career as a teacher and this happens," he says, sitting in his office room.

## Trump, Zelenskyy and the hypocrisy of 'polite' diplomacy



(MAGA) era are no different. The key role of the idea of a very rude current American president is to paint the American past — and past American presidents — as better. This, in turn, is linked to the idea of Vladimir Putin as a power-hungry madman, acting in ways that are both incomprehensible and beyond European "civilisational values". European civilisational values and table manners, we should remember, flourished alongside European colonial endeavours. King Leopold II (1835-1909) of Belgium constructed some very beautiful buildings in Brussels through wealth extraction from Congo based on forms of brutality that no other colonial power could match. Ideas of a rude Trump and an "uncivilised" Putin — along with a "heroic" Zelenskyy — allow Western governments and media commentators to present the situation as a simple confrontation between politeness and civility on the one hand and madness and megalomania on the other. The issue of Ukraine's membership to NATO and Putin's objection to it is not a simple matter of a mad head of state bullying a much smaller country into submission. It has everything to do with the nature of the modern nation-states: Wherever possible, each acts to defend its perceived interests. In this, the Russian nation-state is no different from others. It is not any more imperial in its ambitions than, say European ones. It is worth remembering that France and the United States continue to hold territories that they acquired during the heydays of their own imperial ambitions.

To psychologise the interests of the Russian nation state in seeking to counter endless NATO expansion through centering the argument on Putin's personality — "he is a mad man" — is to argue that "polite" and "civilised" American and European heads of state make for a better world. It masks the multiple ways in which — as the German philosopher Walter Benjamin said — barbarity is the flip side of civilisation. It dignifies the argument that the actions of Euro-American nation states are, intrinsically, civilised, for, after all, that is the nature of the European people. And, it completely bypasses another laughable assumption: That while America and its allies refused to provide Ukraine ironclad security guarantees before the Russian invasion, they would be willing to do so after it. It excuses Euro-American self-interest through psychologising Putin.

The result of "Trump is a very rude man" and "Putin is a mad man" school of analysis is, on the one hand, the spurious distinction between Trump and his predecessors and, on the other, the terrible devastation of Ukraine, one that might possibly have been avoided through recognising the ways in which nation-states define their self-interest. Notwithstanding a great deal of media characterisation, the Russian nation-state is no more "mad" than the American: The American-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 reflected the US understanding of its national interests and has been analysed as such rather than in the language of incumbent US president John F Kennedy being a mad man. But that is not often an analytical privilege extended to political leaders outside the Euro-American sphere. "Our brutality is borne of rational behaviour whereas yours is just another form of animal behaviour" is a cliché that converted to a truism. The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard had once suggested that the Watergate affair should not be spoken of as a scandal as that suggests that there is a less scandalous and "clean" American political system beyond it and that Watergate was an aberration. The "impoliteness" of Trump and Vance should not, similarly, be seen as an aberration. For that directs us to the spurious belief in polite and civilised world leaders who have our best interests at heart.

By one account, between the end of World War II and the opening decade of the 21st century, the United States had carried out operations to destabilise, overthrow and supplant foreign governments in over 70 countries. In the late 1940s, with President Harry S Truman in power, the US intervened in Greece on behalf of pro-monarchist forces against Communist ones; in 1953, during the Eisenhower presidency, the US was involved in the overthrow of Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh and the restoration of the autocracy of the Shah; in 1960, also under Eisenhower, CIA-supported activities led to the assassination of the president of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba; from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, the actions of a variety of US presidents led to the Vietnam war; and, in 1973, during the Nixon presidency, American support led the establishment of the murderous regime of Augusto Pinochet in Chile. The American political schedule as "leader of the free world" is a very extensive one indeed.

Over the past few days, there has been a great deal of public commentary decrying the "bullying" and "rudeness" displayed by Donald Trump and his deputy J D Vance towards the Ukrainian head of state, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Trump's presidency has been singled out as a completely new era of "American imperialism", one marked by crassness of language, lack of diplomatic niceties, sexism and undisguised misogyny. Nothing troubles Euro-American (and, quite often, Indian) liberalism more than the lack of table manners. The manner in which the Trump presidency has come for criticism and condemnation would seem to suggest that it is qualitatively different from those of his predecessors, those that bullied and damaged the world in the name of promoting and preserving democratic values. The current episode is, however, primarily about the need to have table manners when conducting the affairs of the world. Under Barack Obama, as a 2017 report by The Guardian newspaper noted, "President Obama did reduce the number of US soldiers fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, but he dramatically expanded the air wars and the use of special operations forces around the globe". And that, "In 2016, US special operators could be found in 70 per cent of the world's nations, 138 countries — a staggering jump of 130 per cent since the days of the Bush administration". However, Obama is a very polite man and has a firm hold on table manners.

Barring the rudeness factor, American dealings with the world under the Trumpist Make America Great Again

## Delimitation needs deliberation. Stalin has set the ball rolling



delimitation stalinThe recent move by Stalin to set up a Joint Action Committee of chief ministers and non-BJP leaders has set the ball rolling for a nation-wide debate on delimitation. The battle lines have been drawn before the number of constituencies can be redrawn. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and president of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, MK Stalin, has thrown down the gauntlet to the Union government on the issue of delimitation. He has articulated the deepest concerns of not just Tamil Nadu but five southern states as to the future of their representative strength in Parliament. The Union Home Minister was unable to defuse the issue and an all-party meeting held in Chennai this week confirmed that this will be a political issue between states ruled by non-Bharatiya Janata Party-led governments and the BJP.

According to Article 82 of the Constitution of India, upon the completion of each census, the allocation of seats in the Lok Sabha (LS) to states shall be readjusted. This provides a constitutional mandate to revise the strength of the LS in accordance with changes to the population. Consequently, in 1952, 1962 and 1972, successive Parliaments enacted a Delimitation Act and revised the parliamentary strength. In 1976, as population control measures were prioritised by the Centre, a 25-year freeze on the number of LS seats was put in force. Subsequently, the Constitution (84th Amendment) Act, 2002 was enacted to extend the freeze till 2026. The then Union government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee had justified the extension of the freeze and continuation of parliamentary representation on the basis of the 1971 census to enable states to pursue population stabilisation.

Some states have performed well to bring down fertility rates through targeted interventions, including increasing female literacy, gender empowerment initiatives, enhancing female labour force participation and creating awareness on the National Population Policy. It is ironic that these states are set to lose a significant number of seats in the LS. According to a recent report of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the following nine states stand to lose between one and eight LS seats: Uttarakhand, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu. The five southern states, especially, stand to lose 26 seats altogether. With the freeze ending in 2026, the first Census thereafter will be used to determine the number of seats in the LS, unless the present freeze is extended by

way of a constitutional amendment like in 2002. The Union government is expected to set up a Delimitation Commission consisting of a retired judge to provide a report based on changes to the population. Once the Commission provides its report, courts cannot interfere. This makes it necessary for the issue to be raised earlier.

In 1950, India's population was 359 million people and we had 500 LS members. In 1967 the number of LS members grew to 521 while our population grew to 522 million people. In 1976, the population increased to 637 million while the LS was expanded to accommodate 543 members. Since 1976, India's population has more than doubled to 1.45 billion now, while the LS has remained constant at 543. Between 1950 and 2025, India's population has grown by four times but the LS changed by less than 10 per cent. If we were to increase the number of constituencies now, it is imperative to understand what the next three decades look like. According to a UN report, the population of India is expected to peak at 1.7 billion before it starts declining from 2060. This begs the question why there is a need now to increase the number of seats in the LS when the population may only grow by 20 per cent from the present number over the next 35 years or so. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, during a media interaction, recently said that delimitation would not adversely affect the interest of the states and changes to parliamentary representation would happen "pro rata". There has been no further clarification from the Centre, leading Stalin to term this vague and unclear. Given that the 50-year freeze on delimitation will come to an end soon, the Union government is obligated to consider all political views before taking a decision. The recent move by Stalin to set up a Joint Action Committee of chief ministers and non-BJP leaders has set the ball rolling for a nation-wide debate on delimitation. The battle lines have been drawn before the number of constituencies can be redrawn.

## Samsung India unveils Galaxy A56 5G and Galaxy A36 5G with AI-powered features, sleek design

Hyderabad: Samsung India has launched its latest smartphones, the Galaxy A56 5G and Galaxy A36 5G, bringing AI-driven innovation, enhanced durability, and a refreshed design to the Galaxy A series. Both models come with Awesome Intelligence, Samsung's AI suite designed to enhance creativity and user experience. Features like Google's Circle to Search allow users to search directly from the screen, including identifying songs playing around them. Additionally, AI-powered visual editing tools such as Auto Trim, Best Face, Instant Slo-mo, and Object Eraser offer a seamless content creation experience. With a 7.4mm sleek profile, the Galaxy A56 5G and A36 5G boast a Linear Floating Camera Module and "Radiance" color themes.

## There is a crisis of leadership in the Middle East



Middle East, Middle East conflict, Middle East leadership crisis, Donald Trump, Gaza, Gaza Israel conflict, Hamas Israel conflict, Benjamin Netanyahu, Gaza Palestine, Israel and Palestine, Israel Palestine conflict, Israel Palestine relations, Israel-Palestine talks, Palestine-Israel relations, India news, Indian express. In some ways, Trump seeks to break the cycle of conflict. Only the transition of self-governance in Gaza and the West Bank, as established in the Oslo Accords, towards the realisation of a two-state solution, can break this vicious cycle, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

Last month, when US President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by his side, announced that Palestinians could not live amidst war debris and would wish to leave the Gaza Strip, making way for the establishment of a "riviera" which would be taken over by the US, he set the proverbial cat among the pigeons. The extraordinary proposal, largely criticised by the global community, has been rejected by the Palestinians and provoked Arab stakeholders. Netanyahu said the proposal to relocate Gazans and preparations for a post-Hamas phase deserved attention. It consolidated his right-wing support base, and some saw this as the grand prize after a prolonged conflict. Israel's position on the ongoing truce with Hamas has hardened, with calls for the immediate return of the remaining hostages and for not proceeding to the second phase, which entailed the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. Israeli intelligence agencies, however, are cautious, fearing backlash after Ramadan.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio later explained that Washington's proposal was aimed at encouraging countries with economic and technological capacity to help with the rebuilding, that Gazans might have to relocate in the interim and that there was no intention to station US troops in Gaza. Significantly, the White House waded into direct contact with Hamas, to set the parameters for peace, without involving the Israelis. As US pressure mounted, Egypt and Jordan stoutly rejected Trump's proposal. They insisted Palestinians would stay on their land and there would be no forced deportations. When the King of Jordan said he would host 2,000 sick Palestinian children, he was criticised by the rest of the Arab world. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, leveraging his position as recent host to US-Russia talks, hosted seven Arab leaders in Riyadh to emphasise unity in the Arab ranks. Egyptian and Qatari mediators found that the mood had changed — Hamas was unhappy Israel had delayed the release of prisoners and was blocking international relief, while Israel sought to press on without promising withdrawal. The lack of trust has exposed the fragility of the truce. At the Arab summit, Egypt presented a reconstruction plan for Gaza. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi emphasised the right of Palestinians to rebuild, guaranteeing their existence on their land.

The reconstruction plan envisages three phases, till 2030, at a cost of \$53 billion. The first phase of six months would focus on the de-mining and clearing of debris, when

Palestinians would be provided shelter in temporary camps within Gaza. Egypt would host an international funding conference. The second phase of about three years would focus on construction, especially of public infrastructure, housing and sources of livelihood. In the final stage, connectivity and industry would be developed and the Palestinian Authority would assume control over both Gaza and the West Bank.

New governance structures would be established in Gaza — Hamas would have to cede power to an independent team of Palestinian experts and technocrats for this purpose, a World Bank supervised trust fund would manage the financial pledges for reconstruction, and the UN Security Council would call for the deployment of an international peacekeeping force in Gaza and the occupied West Bank. The proposal was unanimously endorsed by Arab leaders, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. The US has rejected the Arab proposal, reiterating that Palestinians must relocate as the enclave is not liveable. Israel, too, rejected the proposal, discrediting its reliance on the Palestinian Authority and UNRWA and saying that Arab states were using the Palestinian issue to counter Israel. Even as the US has reportedly begun talks with Hamas, tensions seem to have been aggravated by Trump's ultimatum to hand over the rest of the Israeli hostages.

The Israel-Palestine conflict has a long and troubled history. Israel has struggled to obtain security in its neighbourhood and still needs the support of the US, while the Palestinians fight to retain their land and their home. Their displacement in the West Bank and Gaza and to neighbouring Arab states as refugees has spurred popular resistance in the Arab street, with the potential to destabilise Arab governments if memories of the Nakba or forced deportation are rekindled. There is an urgent need that hostilities do not resume, hostages and prisoners are returned and the humanitarian cost of conflict is addressed. The US and regional powers including Arabs, Egypt, Iran and Turkey would need to provide a supporting hand but trust between Israel and Palestine would be the key to any progress. Any enduring solution would need guarantees for peace and stability and regard for sentiments on either side, through a process of give and take. It may be difficult for Israel to accept the continuance of Hamas-led governance in Gaza. Similarly, it may be impossible for Palestinians and Arab states to accept the permanent displacement of the former from Gaza or the West Bank. For the Palestinian Authority, a moderate Fatah-led leadership, both in Gaza and the West Bank, may be the only option. For this, Fatah will have to regain the confidence of the people, deliver governance on the ground and welcome younger leaders, including those in exile or in detention. The activities of militant elements will need to be curbed; they not only pose a threat to Israel's security but also diminish Palestinian security and stability as their actions invite harsh retaliatory measures. Israel, too, would benefit from durable security and stability through coexistence. On the one hand, the expansion of Israeli settlements in Palestinian lands has eroded the capacity of the Palestinian Authority and led to friction. On the other hand, Israel's model of democracy, economic growth, technological excellence and high standards of living is a magnet for Arab countries, many of which have normalised relations with Israel. In the 21st century, it is necessary to take a fresh look at problems and seek non-conflict-based solutions. There is a crisis of leadership in the Middle East. In some ways, Trump seeks to break the cycle of conflict. Only the transition of self-governance in Gaza and the West Bank, as established in the Oslo Accords, towards the realisation of a two-state solution, can break this vicious cycle, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

## Brazil minister is correct in pushing for mechanisms to complement UNFCCC on climate negotiations

Brazil, Paris climate pact, UNFCCC, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), COP30 Brazil, Marina Silva climate change, Paris Agreement, multilateral climate mechanisms, UN climate governance, climate action commitments, US withdrawal Paris Agreement, NDCs review, climate finance, Brazil climate leadership, climate crisis solutions, global climate negotiations, COP30 Belem, climate finance needs, sustainable development, international climate cooperation. The fact also is that climate negotiation is too serious an issue to be left solely to one UN agency. It requires building alliances at regional levels — between neighbouring countries, among civil society groups and business organisations.

The adoption of the Paris Climate Pact, 10 years ago, instilled hope that the global community had found the resolve to tackle one of the most difficult challenges before it. It spurred countries to draft national plans to combat global warming and paved the way for a "rule book" for climate action. The momentum generated at Paris, however, waned in less than half a decade. National commitments today are nowhere close to meeting the pact's goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The transition to green energy remains fraught, with the developed world, emerging economies and the least developed countries not being on the same page on eliminating fossil fuel use. These failures have raised questions over the processes of the UNFCCC — the UN body which stewards global climate change negotiations. This week, Brazil's Minister for Climate Action, Marina Silva, suggested

setting up "additional multilateral mechanisms complementary to the Paris Agreement framework" to ensure that countries adhere to national commitments. Immediately after the Paris Pact was inked, a section of experts and policymakers advocated that the UNFCCC should transition from being primarily a platform for international treaty negotiations to one that supports and monitors implementation. On paper, the agency today has more than 30 subsidiary agencies that deal with issues including funding, capacity building, assessing loss and damage and adaptation to climate change. However, the continued breach of the temperature threshold set in Paris speaks of the inadequacy of these institutions. Minister Silva has indicated that the mechanism to review national goals related to the Paris Pact needs reform. "The goals are reviewed every five years. Maybe this is not enough," she said. The trouble, however, is that the UNFCCC has limited enforcement mechanisms. One way to strengthen the agency is to accord a greater role to parties other than nations — the IPCC, for example. The agency is currently the umbrella body for climate research. The left and goodwill it has acquired in the last 30 years could be better utilised by giving it a greater role in climate diplomacy. The fact also is that climate negotiation is too serious an issue to be left solely to one UN agency. It requires building alliances at regional levels — between neighbouring countries, among civil society groups and business organisations. Brazil's climate action minister's suggestion could be seen as a precursor to a different — and hopefully more effective — global warming diplomacy.

## Fresh trouble for SpiceJet as 3 aircraft lessors, former pilot file insolvency pleas

New Delhi: SpiceJet is facing fresh round of troubles as three Ireland-based aircraft lessors and a former pilot have filed insolvency pleas in NCLT against the budget carrier, claiming defaults. Three lessors — NGF Alpha, NGF Genesis and NGF Charlie — have filed petitions under Section 9 of IBC, seeking initiation of insolvency proceedings against SpiceJet claiming dues totalling USD 12.68 million (about Rs 110 crore).

SpiceJet, during the proceedings of the National Company Law Tribunal, earlier this week, sought some time to resolve the matter as settlement talks were going on. "Counsel on behalf of the Operational Creditor (SpiceJet) is present and sought time to seek instructions on the future course of action to be taken in the matter," NCLT said in an order. The insolvency tribunal directed to list all three petitions on April 7, 2025, for the next hearing. The lessors had earlier leased five Boeing 737 to SpiceJet. They had served legal notice to SpiceJet wherein they alleged theft of parts of the aircraft, including engines and using them in

other planes. Besides, regarding the plea filed by the pilot, the two-member NCLT bench asked whether claims by the pilot are barred under Section 10A of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC). The NCLT said: "Counsel on behalf of the Operational Creditor is present and sought time to examine the issue specifically in respect of applicability of Section 10A in respect of certain claim amount and also to the limitation issue. In view of this, list the matter on April 15, 2025." Section 10A mandates that no application for initiation of corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) can be filed against any debtor by any financial and operational creditor for any default arising on or after March 25, 2020, for a period of one year. This was a special provision inserted by the government in IBC to help companies after economic activities had resumed post-lockdown in phases. Debt-ridden SpiceJet is already facing several cases before the NCLT from lessors, vendors and other operational creditors, though no final order has been passed in any case.

# Five specialists answer queries on early menopause, fertility, heart health, diet and screening



age ovaries. Maintain healthy weight. Limit alcohol consumption, which may impact ovarian function. Reduce daily caffeine intake to under 200 mg. Reduce exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals found in some plastics, pesticides and industrial products. Manage chronic stress through sleep and relaxation. Fertility options: For women undergoing cancer treatments, discuss fertility preservation options like egg-freezing before therapy begins. Those with a family history of early menopause should consider regular hormonal assessments. There are surgical interventions that preserve ovarian tissue by extracting, freezing and storing it for later use. This tissue can be re-transplanted back into the body when the woman is ready to conceive. Track your menstrual cycle to identify fertile windows using body temperature or ovulation prediction kits. Take prenatal vitamins, particularly folic acid, at least three months before trying to conceive. Schedule regular check-ups to address conditions like PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome) or endometriosis.

A research from Stanford University shows that multi-tasking reduces our efficiency by 40 per cent. For women, this means increased stress and a cognitive overload due to the demand of constantly shifting between tasks. Why multi-tasking drains you: The human brain is not designed to focus on several tasks at the same time. This keeps you in a perpetually problem-solving state and activates the stress response system, leading to high cortisol (stress hormone) levels, increased heart rate, tension, anxiety about pending tasks and the inability to unwind. As the memory is overloaded, it leads to forgetfulness, headaches, brain fog and exhaustion. Preventive strategies: Draw up a routine like you would in school. Delegate tasks and chores both at home and office, setting limits on work commitments, do self-care activities like exercise and yoga. Learn to say no without guilt. Biologically a woman's body is a "happening place," going as she does through hormonal changes, starting from puberty, menstrual cycles, pregnancy, childbirth, lactation and menopause.

Both macro and micro-nutrients are a must: A typical menstruating woman recycles 22-25 litres of blood in her reproductive age span (the total amount of blood in a human body is five litres). It is also a fact that a woman's body



tends to accumulate more fat than men. That's why a woman cannot afford to go low on either macronutrients (carbohydrates, protein and fat) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals). What's the right quantity? Protein intake for women should be no less than 0.8 gm/kg of body weight and 1gm/kg for pregnant women. Carbohydrates should be 130 grams per day, 175 grams per day during pregnancy. About 45-65 per cent of daily calories should come from carbohydrates. Women should aim for around 25 grams of fibre per day. Fat consumption should be 70 grams per day with no more than 20 grams of saturated fat. Saturated fat should not be more than 10 per cent of your daily energy. Trans fat should be no more than two per cent of your daily energy. Increase your intake of Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids. Vitamin D should be 600 international units (IU) per day, folic acid or vitamin B9, 400 micrograms per day, vitamin B12 2.4 micrograms per day, Vitamin C 75 milligrams per day, niacin 14 milligrams per day, 18 milligrams while pregnant and lactating. The calcium quota is 1,000 milligrams per day but for women over 50, it increases to 1,200 milligrams per day. As for iron, 18 milligrams per day suffices for adult women. Pregnant women need 27 milligrams per day, the lactating need nine milligrams per day

and post-menopausal women, about eight milligrams per day. Eat Vitamin C-rich fruits and vegetables to increase iron absorption. Dr Nita Thakre Everybody between 40 and 50 years should take the pap smear, mammography and mammo-sonography to check for cervical, ovarian and breast cancers, says Dr Thakre. When it comes to screening and testing, most women relegate them to secondary concern. Make that your only priority. Apart from complete blood count or CBC (which maps the status of micronutrients), thyroid, lipid and kidney profile tests like all adults, women need specific tests. Gynaecological tests: Everybody between 40 and 50 years should take the pap smear, mammography and mammo-sonography to check for cervical, ovarian and breast cancers. Young women should take the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) test. Those with robust sex lives must also get tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), especially if they develop lesions or warts. Aparna Jaiswal "Don't ignore any chest pain, shoulder pain or pain radiating towards the jaw, nausea, excessive sweating or fainting," says Dr Jaiswal. Despite the cardio-protective properties of estrogen, younger women are reporting cardiovascular diseases and heart attacks in their 30s. A 2020 analysis of the Global Burden of Diseases showed that ischemic heart diseases such as heart attacks were increasing more rapidly among women than men in India.

The ratio of mortality due to such heart diseases in women to men went up from 0.64 to 0.72 between 2000 and 2017, according to the study. Watch your lifestyle: While more women joining the workforce is a good thing, it also takes away their time to exercise, reduces access to home-cooked meals, leads to sedentary lifestyle and increases their risk of smoking and drinking with colleagues. In addition, women are more likely to be under stress or duress due to social factors. Lifestyle modification should now be front and centre. Get tested on time: Women with a family history of heart diseases, just like men, should get tested in their 20s for blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels. Women in their mid-30s should get a stress and treadmill test as these monitor the activity of the heart while one exercises. Be vigilant: Don't ignore any chest pain, shoulder pain or pain radiating towards the jaw, nausea, excessive sweating or fainting.

## Gwyneth Paltrow says alcohol worsened her menopause symptoms: Should you watch your drinking after 50?



Many of you have asked me if drinking alcohol during menopause can worsen its symptoms. Recently the 52-year-old Oscar winning actor Gwyneth Paltrow admitted in a podcast how drinking "every night" was worsening her insomnia, anxieties and made her feel "all over the place." Menopause is a natural phase in a woman's life that marks the end of her reproductive years, typically occurring between the ages of 45 and 55. This transition means that one has to be careful as alcohol, even if you have been used to it before, can worsen symptoms like hot flashes, mood swings and sleep disturbances.

1. Exacerbating Hot Flashes and Night Sweats: These sudden feelings of heat, often accompanied by sweating and flushing, can be triggered by alcohol. While drinking does not directly cause menopause or initiate its onset, excessive consumption can dilate blood vessels, leading to increased body heat and more frequent hot flashes. Additionally, alcohol can interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature, worsening night sweats.

2. Disrupting Sleep Patterns: Alcohol, despite its sedative effect, can disrupt the sleep cycle. While it may initially help with falling asleep, it reduces the quality of rest by interfering with REM (rapid eye movement or dream phase) sleep, leading to night-time awakenings and increased daytime fatigue.

3. Mood Swings and Mental Health: Menopause is already associated with mood fluctuations, anxiety and even depression due to declining levels of the hormone estrogen. Alcohol is a depressant that can contribute to these emotional imbalances. While some women may turn to alcohol for temporary relief, frequent consumption can actually worsen mood swings, increase irritability and heighten feelings of anxiety or sadness. Additionally, alcohol impairs judgment and decision-making. Estrogen plays a crucial role in maintaining bone density, so women lose bone density as its levels drop. Alcohol can interfere with calcium absorption and bone regeneration, further increasing the risk of fractures and bone loss. Estrogen is cardio-protective, so women in menopause lose its benefits and report changes in cholesterol levels and blood pressure. Alcohol consumption, especially in excess, raises the risk of high blood pressure, obesity and heart disease. Alcohol is a known risk factor for liver disease and breast cancer. Menopausal women already experience hormonal fluctuations that can increase their vulnerability to certain cancers. So even moderate drinking (one drink per day) has been associated with an increased risk.

Should You Quit Alcohol Completely?

While eliminating alcohol entirely is a personal choice, moderation is crucial. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines moderate drinking as up to one drink per day for women. Here are some practical tips:

## Can your brain lower stress, anxiety if you quit smartphone use for 3 days? Here's what a study says

If you are reading this on your phone, just consider giving up this privilege for three days. New research shows that this practice can significantly alter brain activity and lower your anxieties. Researchers from Heidelberg University and the University of Cologne in Germany asked 25 young adults to restrict their use of smart phones as much as possible for 72 hours. Only essential communication and work-related activities were allowed. MRI scans before and after the experiment were done to determine changes phone hygiene had on neural patterns and activity. "Associations between changes of brain activation over time and addiction-related neurotransmitter systems were found," the researchers wrote. During the scans run after 72 hours, the participants were tracked for their reaction to image prompts, including pictures of smartphones turned on and turned off, as well as neutral images like flowers. When phone images were shown, there were changes in parts of the brain linked to reward-seeking behaviour and cravings, indicating that phone dependence can be as addictive as nicotine or alcohol. However, cognitive tests showed no severe mood changes or craving despite the limited phone access. Some volunteers had a happier mood but not significant enough for data.

Why is this study significant?

The three-day phone detox showed there was a noticeable reduction in stress and anxiety levels without too much sense of denial, according to Dr Shaunak Ajinkya, psychiatrist at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai. "Some participants initially experienced withdrawal symptoms, like restlessness and a compulsive urge to check their devices. However, after the first day, most reported feeling calmer and more present. The study showed that excessive smartphone use keeps the brain in a constant state of hyperarousal, contributing to chronic stress. Without this digital overload, our brains can relax," he says.

Does digital detox work on young people?

Dr Ajinkya has tried this on Akash, a 19-year-old col-



lege student, who was addicted to watching short reels on YouTube for six to eight hours daily, affecting his studies. He even took his social life online, interacting with friends over messaging and video calls. "He said watching reels was quick entertainment. It helped him escape stress and negative emotions like low self-esteem or a constant desire for validation. He would check his phone frequently during meals, study sessions and social gatherings. His sleep timings had changed," adds Dr Ajinkya. So he planned a gradual reduction of screen time, such as deciding upon a "phone detox day" followed by limiting phone use to specific time slots and turning off notifications to reduce triggers. He nudged Akash to take up more physical activities and develop hobbies that require sustained focus (such as playing the guitar, which he liked). Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) addressed Akash's thought patterns and corrected errors about how he perceived himself and the world. "We even helped parents devise strategies to support Akash without being overly controlling. Over three months, Akash reduced his daily screen time to 1-2 hours and his academic performance improved," says Dr Ajinkya.

Can smartphone overuse lead to brain changes?

A 2023 study found structural and functional changes, particularly in areas responsible for attention and impulse control.

## What does the opioid do to the body? Will trade barriers impact costs of other drugs?



US President Donald Trump has imposed a 25 per cent tariff on goods imported from Canada and an additional 10 per cent tariff on goods from China. He has kept the tariffs on Mexican imports in abeyance until April 2. His grouse is that these countries couldn't stop the smuggling and illegal trade of a highly potent pain medication called Fentanyl. The tariffs have been imposed although deaths from Fentanyl overdose have dropped in recent times. The US recorded 87,000 drug overdose deaths from October 2023 to September 2024, a decrease from 114,000 the previous year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Fentanyl is a potent, fast-acting synthetic opioid, meaning it can be chemically manufactured in a laboratory. To compare, opioids such as morphine and codeine are derived from the opium poppy plants. These are a class of medication usually used for the management of severe pain in cancer patients or those who have undergone various surgeries.

What is the health impact of Fentanyl addiction?

These drugs can be extremely addictive. What makes Fentanyl a bigger problem is that it can be 30 to 100 times more potent than heroin or morphine and is fast-acting, leading to a rapid and high number of overdose deaths. Fentanyl-related overdoses resulted in more than 69 per cent of the total overdose deaths in the US.

Does India manufacture Fentanyl?

With India providing affordable, generic medicines to the world, it also manufactures synthetic opioids such as Fentanyl and Tramadol. However, it is not the legal export of the drug that is a cause of concern. Illicit trade of Fentanyl and its precursor chemicals NPP and ANPP are what the US is targeting. While China continues to be the primary source of these chemicals, there has been some shift of illicit manufacturing to India after China strengthened its regulations on NPP and ANPP in 2018. A 2020 intelligence report from the US Drug Enforcement Administration says that a tip-off from it led to the takedown of an illicit laboratory in Indore in 2018. An Indian national associated with the Mexican Sinaloa Cartel was supplying precursor chemicals, according to the report. The report also said that 100kg of NPP was seized and four Indian nationals arrested by Mumbai's Anti Narcotic Cell in December 2018 in another incident. Again, the chemical was destined for Mexico and deliberately mislabelled. Earlier this year, two India-based companies, Raxuter Chemicals and Aths Chemicals, were charged with criminal conspiracies to distribute and import Fentanyl precursor chemicals to the US, according to the US Department of Justice.

Which opioids are used in India?

In India, heroin and its derivatives like smack continue to be the most common opioids leading to addiction. An estimated 63 lakh people are addicted to heroin as compared to 25 lakh to pharmaceutical opioids, according to 2019 survey called Magnitude of Substance Use in India by the AIIMS National Drug Dependence and Treatment

Centre.

What will be the impact of tariffs on India's pharmaceutical industry?

Any tariff imposed on pharmaceuticals by the US is likely to have a significant impact on the Indian industry, considering US is the largest importer of the country's drugs. The US accounted for 31.3 per cent of all drugs exported from the country in 2024. The second largest importer is the UK, which accounted for only 2.8 per cent of the imports, according to data from Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil). Around 10 per cent duty is imposed on pharmaceutical products from the US, while barely any duty is imposed on Indian drugs in the US. Any reciprocal tariff may increase the price of the products in the US. This is important considering Indian companies supplied 47 per cent of all generic medicines prescribed in the US. In fact, Indian companies supplied more than half of the prescriptions of five of the ten most common therapy areas — hypertension, mental health, medicines to control lipids, medicines for nervous system disorders, and anti-cancer drugs. Medicines from Indian companies provided \$219Bn in savings to the US healthcare system in 2022, according to data from IQVIA.

## Private lunar lander runs into trouble and may have fallen over

Cape Canaveral: A privately owned lunar lander touched down on the moon with a drill, drone and rovers for NASA and other customers Thursday, but quickly ran into trouble and may have fallen over. Intuitive Machines said it was uncertain whether its Athena lander was upright near the moon's south pole — standing 15 feet tall — or lying sideways like its first spacecraft from a year ago. Controllers rushed to turn off some of the lander's equipment to conserve power while trying to determine what went wrong. It was the second moon landing this week by a Texas company under NASA's commercial lunar delivery programme. Sunday's touchdown was a complete success. The company's newest Athena lander dropped out of lunar orbit as planned. The hourlong descent appeared to go well until the final approach when the laser navigation system began acting up. It took a while for Mission Control to confirm touchdown. "We're on the surface," reported mission director and co-founder Tim Crain. A few minutes later, he repeated, "It looks like we're down ... We are working to evaluate exactly what our orientation is on the surface." Hours after the landing, Intuitive Machines CEO Steve Altemus said there was conflicting data about how Athena landed and whether it was on its side. The lander was near the intended target site, but a sweep by NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter in the coming days will confirm its location and orientation, he said.

## New Sebi chief Tuhin Kanta Pandey vows to improve trust, plans to disclose conflict of interest in its board to public



Sebi but also with others — Sebi plus all stakeholders. Together, we can build a more conducive ecosystem," he said. The chairman further said that increasing participation by domestic institutional investors (DIIs), including mutual funds and pension funds, has resulted in greater domestic ownership and made Indian markets more resilient. He, however, emphasised the need for having both domestic and foreign capital to support the growth momentum. The presence of such long-term foreign capital would further support infrastructure growth, innovation, and entrepreneurship in India, Pandey noted. "We at Sebi are conscious about the need to create a conducive environment to attract foreign capital. We will be happy to engage with FPI and AIF (alternate investment fund) industry participants to address their difficulties and further rationalise regulations to promote ease of operation," he said.

It can be noted that foreign investors have sold over Rs 2 lakh crore since October, resulting in Sensex and Nifty falling nearly 15 per cent. "We need long term capital through both equity and debt issuances as a source of stable funding fostering sustainable economic growth," Pandey said. New products like real estate investment trusts (REITs), infrastructure investment trust (INVTs), and municipal bonds have huge potential to boost infrastructure development in the country. These products not only provide a diversified source of funding but also reduce reliance on traditional sources of capital, he stated. The Sebi chairman said that the domestic securities market has played a crucial role in channelising savings into productive investments, thereby fuelling economic growth. As of March 2020, there were 49 million unique investors in the Sebi ecosystem which is now around 136 million. Investors in mutual funds have risen 2.4 times in five years to 53 million from 22 million. Inflows into risk-oriented mutual funds during the current year (till January) are of the order of Rs 5.3 lakh crore. Over the last 10 years, Indian companies have raised an average of Rs 2.2 lakh crore per year through equity issuance in the securities market. The current fiscal year so far (April-January) has seen a record equity issuance of Rs 4 lakh crore, twice the capital raising of Rs 2 lakh crore witnessed in the entire FY24, he said. This access to funding through the capital market drives expansion, enhances productivity, and fosters innovation — all of which contribute to economic growth, he said.

Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey on Friday said the market regulator will come out with a plan to disclose any conflict of interest of its board members to the public as a step to improve trust and transparency. Pandey, who took over as the chairman on March 1, said that the capital markets regulator will engage with foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to understand their difficulties and improve ease of operation for them.

"We need to not only create trust of all stakeholders in us (Sebi) but we also need to maintain that trust. To that extent, we need to be more transparent, including on various other measures such as conflict of interest of the (Sebi) board and so on. We will be coming forward with our own plan to further transparently reveal this conflict of interest to the public," Pandey said while addressing an event in Mumbai. It was his first public appearance after taking over as Sebi chairman. The statement comes as Pandey's predecessor Madhabi Puri Buch came under attack from US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research, which has now shut shop, for having conflict of interest. Hindenburg had alleged that Puri Buch and her husband, Dhaval Buch, "had stake in obscure offshore entities used in the Adani money siphoning scandal". The Buchs had denied the allegation.

Pandey reiterated that trust and transparency, teamwork, and technology will shape the future of domestic markets. "We must use technology to enhance transparency and ensure market institutions operate with integrity. For that, we need teamwork. Teamwork is not just within

## Donald Trump establishes US Bitcoin reserve: What is it, how will it work?

United States President Donald Trump has signed an executive order, which establishes a Strategic Bitcoin Reserve and a stockpile of other digital assets — a measure he had promised to fulfil during his Presidential bid last year. "Bitcoin is the original cryptocurrency," the executive order said. "Because there is a fixed supply of BTC, there is a strategic advantage to being among the first nations to create a strategic bitcoin reserve."

The reserve will be capitalised with bitcoin owned by the Department of Treasury that was forfeited as part of criminal or civil asset forfeiture proceedings. Other agencies will evaluate their legal authority to transfer any bitcoin owned by those agencies to the Strategic Bitcoin Reserve, the order said. It did not have a positive impact on the price of Bitcoin, however, as the virtual coin was trading over 4% lower at the time of publishing. The executive order also established a US Digital Asset Stockpile, consisting of digital assets other than bitcoin owned by the Department of Treasury that was forfeited in criminal or civil asset forfeiture proceedings.

A fact sheet prepared by the US White House said that currently, no clear policy exists for managing these assets, "leading to a lack of accountability and inadequate exploration of options to centralise, secure, or maximise their value". "It is estimated that the U.S. government owns about 200,000 bitcoin; however, there has never been a complete audit. The E.O. directs a full accounting of the federal government's digital asset holdings," David Sacks, the White House czar for AI and cryptocurrency, wrote in a post on X.

The United States will not sell bitcoin deposited into this Strategic Bitcoin Reserve, which will be maintained as a store of reserve assets. The Secretaries of Treasury and Commerce have been authorised to develop budget-neutral strategies for acquiring additional bitcoin, provided that those strategies impose no incremental costs on American taxpayers. "With a fixed supply of 21 million coins, there is a strategic advantage to being among the first nations to create a Strategic Bitcoin Reserve. The United States currently holds a significant amount of bitcoin but has not maximized its strategic position as a unique store of value in the global financial system. Premature sales of bitcoin have already cost U.S. taxpayers over \$17 billion," the fact sheet

## Indian agriculture sector must open up, says US Commerce Secretary

United States' Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick on Friday said that the Indian agriculture sector must open up for US products but indicated that the US would be open to accepting quotas and limits where there are sensitivities. Speaking at the India Today Conclave, Lutnick said that the US is interested in a broad-based trade deal where "everything", including agriculture, is on the table and that the US is keen on a "macro, large-scale, broad-based trade agreement with India that takes everything into account".

"It will require a different kind of thinking—big thinking," he said. "The Indian market for agriculture has to open up. It can't just stay closed. Now, how do you do that, and at what scale? Maybe you do quotas, maybe you set limits. You can be smarter when you have your most important trading partner on the other side of the table." Think tank Global Trade and Research Institute (GTRI), responding to Lutnick's comments, said that while these proposals were framed as mutually beneficial, most serve US interests at the cost of India's economic and strategic priorities.

"From pushing for a comprehensive trade agreement to demanding lower tariffs and greater market access, these suggestions could weaken India's trade position if accepted uncritically. India's response must be firm, data-driven, and aligned with national priorities to ensure balanced trade relations with the US," GTRI said.

US President Donald Trump on Friday said that India has agreed to cut tariffs after being exposed for being re-



said. Last week, Trump had mentioned four other coins apart from Bitcoin which would be part of this stockpile — Ethereum, XRP, Solana and Cardano. The White House said that the US government will not acquire additional assets for the US Digital Asset Stockpile beyond those obtained through forfeiture proceedings, similar to the Bitcoin reserve. "The Secretary of the Treasury may determine strategies for responsible stewardship, including potential sales from the U.S. Digital Asset Stockpile. Agencies must provide a full accounting of their digital asset holdings to the Secretary of the Treasury and the President's Working Group on Digital Asset Markets," the White House said. Since the victory of Trump in the United States Presidential elections, the crypto market has picked up, responding to signals that Trump could go easy on the virtual currency.

It was also anticipated that Trump having Elon Musk — who has long been an advocate for cryptocurrency — as a key adviser could further bolster investors' belief in bitcoin and other digital virtual assets, even if concerns around conflict of interest remain. Trump's pick to lead the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Paul Atkins, is widely considered a cryptocurrency advocate. The agency has also recently dropped multiple investigations and lawsuits against cryptocurrency firms that alleged securities violations. Among them are investigations against Robinhood and Coinbase. Robinhood CEO Vlad Tenev had earlier said that he made a \$2 million donation to Trump's inaugural campaign fund.



strictive from a trade point of view and for making it difficult for American companies to do business in India. "India charges massive tariffs; you can't even sell anything into India. They are restrictive.

They've agreed, by the way, that they want to cut their tariffs way down now, because somebody is finally exposing them for what they've done," Trump said at a press briefing on Friday. Under the Bilateral Trade Agreement, New Delhi plans to offer steep tariff concessions on US products in exchange for concessions on sweeping tariffs announced by the US.

## Markets decline in early trade amid unabated foreign fund outflows



Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty faced volatile trends in early trade on Friday as uninterrupted foreign fund outflows and uncertainties over global trade war dampened investors' sentiment. After two days of breather, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex declined 243.51 points or 0.33 per cent to 74,096.58 in the morning trade. The NSE Nifty dipped 53.35 points or 0.24 per cent to 22,491.35.

From the Sensex pack, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra, Zomato, Power Grid, ICICI Bank, Infosys, ITC, Hindustan Unilever and Bharti Airtel were among the laggards. On the other hand, Tata Motors, Reliance Industries, Tata Steel, Adani Ports, Larsen & Toubro, and Axis Bank were the gainers.

"Trump dilly dallying on tariffs with the latest decision to postpone imposition of tariffs on Canada and Mexico to April 2nd is being viewed by markets seriously. Markets feel that Trump is keen to negotiate deals rather than stick to high tariffs for the long term," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said. In Asian markets, Tokyo and Seoul were trading lower, while

Shanghai was flat. Hong Kong stock markets were quoting in the positive zone. US markets ended lower in overnight deals on Thursday. According to Vijayakumar, this acknowledgement of the fact that high tariffs for long term will impact the US economy, too. The sell-off in the US stock markets also is an indication that Trump's policies might impact growth and earnings in the US. "China and Germany are implementing reforms to stimulate their domestic economies from Trump's policies. This change in the global construct can impact stock markets. The dollar index is steadily softening; this is good news for India.

"India's growth is recovering and stock market valuations are fair now. Despite FII selling exceeding DII buying, the market is moving up indicating increasing retail, HNI and UHNI buying. This trend can continue," he said. Meanwhile, Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,377.32 crore, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,617.80 crore on net basis on Thursday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude edged up by 0.07 per cent to USD 69.51 a barrel. Traders are closely watching the US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's commentary and the central bank's balance sheet to be released later on Friday. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump said he has postponed 25 per cent tariffs on most goods from Mexico for a month after a conversation with that country's president. The announcement came after his Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said tariffs on both Canada and Mexico would "likely" be delayed. On Thursday, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 609.86 points to settle at 74,340.09, marking its second straight day of gains. The broader Nifty of NSE advanced 207.40 points to close at 22,544.70.

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

Over 30,000 taxpayers declared foreign assets worth more than Rs 29,000 crore after a special nudge campaign by the Income Tax Department that began in November 2024, government sources said. About 24,678 taxpayers reviewed their income tax returns (ITRs) and 5,483 taxpayers filed belated returns for assessment year 2024-25, declaring foreign assets worth Rs 29,208 crore and additional foreign income of Rs 1,089.88 crore, they said.

In addition, 6,734 taxpayers revised their residential status from resident to non-resident. Around 62 per cent of nudged taxpayers responded positively, voluntarily revising their ITRs to declare foreign assets and income, sources said. In November last year, citing compliance with global disclosure norms, the Income Tax Department had urged them to disclose details of foreign assets and income correctly in their income tax returns and file revised returns by December 31, if there was a requirement to update the information. The Department had also started an e-campaign in the next few days to facilitate filing of details of foreign assets and income by taxpayers. "The number of taxpayers disclosing foreign assets and income on a voluntary basis has steadily grown from 60,000 in AY 2021-22 to 2,31,452 taxpayers in AY 2024-25. This year, due to extensive outreach and awareness efforts, voluntary disclosures witnessed a significant 45.17 per cent growth compared to AY 2023-24," a source said, adding that the focus is on the "Trust First" approach.

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



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

## Nitin Gadkari blames faulty DPRs, poor civil engineering for increasing road accidents



Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said the Indian Road Congress, the premier body for road & highway standards in India, has become a "pleasure trip organisation". Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said the Indian Road Congress, the premier body for road & highway standards in India, has become a "pleasure trip organisation". Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said that road accidents and fatalities in India are increasing and "the most important culprits are civil engineers", substandard detailed project reports (DPRs), consultants, and concessionaires.

In his address at the two-day Global Road Infratech Summit & Expo (GRIS), Gadkari said: "The most important culprits are civil engineers. I do not blame everybody, but after 10 years of my experience, I have come to this conclusion. Culprit are those who are making DPRs. Because of small civil engineering mistakes, there are hundreds of deaths." He further said that even though there are mistakes, no one is held accountable. "Even small things like the road signages and marking system are very poor in the country. These can be copied from countries like Spain, Austria and Switzerland and implemented here," Gadkari said. He also said that the Indian Road Congress (IRC), the premier body for road & highway standards in India, has become a "pleasure trip organisation".

"Our people are taking advantage of IRC. It is just a part-time organisation, pleasure trip organisation. You need continuous research and find out what is best available in the world and on the basis of that you have to recommend us. Now my target is how many person I am going to suspend, how many contractors to blacklist... Nobody is ready to rectify the mistakes," said Gadkari. He said that the industry and the government should collaborate to find solutions for building safer infrastructure in place of just holding seminars and discussions. KK Kapila, president-emeritus, International Road Federation (IRF), said that the theme of the summit— "Vision Zero: Sustainable Infratech and Policy for Safer Roads"— represents a holistic approach to road safety, combining the latest technological advancements with innovative practices to create safer roads for

everyone. "By prioritising safety in every aspect of road design, construction, and management, this theme seeks to move towards a future where road accidents become a rarity, ultimately aiming for zero fatalities," said Kapila.

## Market extends rally, surges 0.93% as FII selling eases and DIIs buy; Small-caps recover

After the 1 per cent gain on Wednesday, stock markets continued their upward momentum on Thursday, rising by 0.93 per cent as the selling pressure from foreign institutional investors (FIIs) subsided and domestic institutional investors (DIIs) remained net buyers, snapping up battered stocks at attractive valuations. In a notable reversal, small-cap stocks, which had borne the brunt of heavy selling in recent weeks, regained some lost ground. This resurgence suggests that investors are beginning to capitalise on the attractive valuations in the large-cap and small-cap segments.

DIIs, led by insurance companies, have purchased stocks worth Rs 17,000 crore in March so far while FIIs pulled out Rs 13,466 crore in the last four sessions. While on March 3, FIIs sold Rs 4,788 crore stocks, their sales came down to Rs 2,895 crore on March 5 and Rs 2,377 crore on March 6. DII investments in domestic-oriented sectors after heavy selling provided some stability, said an analyst with a brokerage.

Led by the 2.6 per cent gain in RIL, the Sensex rallied by another 0.83 per cent to reclaim the 74,000 level at 74,340.09 and Nifty Index rose by 0.93 per cent to 22,544.70 on Thursday. Battered small-cap stocks also gained ground on Thursday with the small-cap index rising by 1.63 per cent. The BSE Mid-cap Index rose by 0.65 per cent. The broader market sentiment has now pivoted toward a bullish bias, suggesting the potential for continued upside momentum. "The Nifty index has carved out a solid base around its psychological support of 22,000, with 22,200 serving as a critical buffer. Each minor dip is being countered by aggressive buying, effectively warding off any substantial downside. The swift recovery, driven by short covering from sellers, underscores the bullish strength," said Dhupesh Dhameja, derivatives analyst, SAMCO Securities. Analysts said a decisive breakout above 22,700 is crucial for sustaining the rally, as lingering call writing and technical hurdles could pose challenges.

# Rohit & Co's toughest challenge: How to hate the nice guys from New Zealand

GNS News Agency, March 8

"It is tough to hate them, be angry at them. Imagine, this was their historic win but the celebrations were so mild. No shouting or sledging, no fuss. They shook hands with us and just moved to their dressing room. Had it been Australia or England ...", the frustrated voice would trail and fade. If killing with kindness was an art, the congenial cricketers from the earth's extreme outpost have mastered it. Of late, India has gotten defanged by these silent, disarming, almost self-deprecating, opponents at important events - most painfully the ICC World Test Championship final in 2021 and the 50-over World Cup semi-final in 2019. On Sunday, they meet again in the ICC Champions Trophy final in Dubai. As conceded by the dejected India player, India would hope to get angry. Not that easy, as they need to hate a team that doesn't instigate or insult. India needs to search for the devil in mild-mannered soft-spoken men with angelic faces. And anyone who vaguely knows the modest-to-a-fault captain Mitchell Santner or the equally self-effacing senior pro Kane Williamson will tell you it is tough to paint them as villains. New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra (SECOND FROM LEFT) celebrates the wicket of South Africa's Aiden Markram with teammates like Mitchell Santner (LEFT) during the ICC Champions Trophy semi-final cricket match at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. (AP Photo) New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra (SECOND FROM LEFT) celebrates the wicket of South Africa's Aiden Markram with teammates like Mitchell Santner (LEFT) during the ICC Champions Trophy semi-final cricket match at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. (AP Photo)

Not just the two, the Kiwis, in general, are among the most popular cricketers on the IPL circuit too - the truly global annual T20 jamboree. Owners find them the least problematic and most accommodative. Their teammates say they are the most giving. It has taken New Zealand years

to build this 'nice guys' reputation and for that, they need to thank the fine ambassadors that have visited these shores over the years. Richard Hadlee was a friend and mentor to Kapil Dev, it didn't matter if the two were involved in the race to be the highest Test wicket-taker. New Zealand's most gifted batsman ever, Martin Crowe would talk fondly about the time he spent and the tips he got from batting legend Sunil Gavaskar during his county days. One of our own. However, it was at the start of this century when India got a chance to know a New Zealander much better. It so happened that a farmer's son, an international cricketer with a modest record, was made India's first-ever national coach. He was John Wright. This was the time when Indian cricket was limping back to normalcy after the body blow of the match-fixing scandal. Wright was a simple man with a sharp mind. He too had that typical Kiwi disarming 'bechara' look that Santner and Williamson have. He was unlike the other 'white men' India had dealt with - the English and Australians. He was firm but not authoritative. He didn't behave like a superior being, didn't consider himself as god's gift air-dropped to the Third World for educating the natives. India's archaic system did frustrate him but he was ready to work around it. Wright introduced India to modern cricket and made Sourav Ganguly's boys world-beaters, but you would never hear that from him. Wright's integration into the Indian system was like that old story about the arrival of the Parsis. Like sugar in milk, Wright remained invisible but spread sweetness. In contrast, Aussie coach Greg Chappell's Indian sojourn was like chocolate mixed with milk. It changed the colour of the team and left a bitter-sweet taste. Wright would return as the Mumbai Indians talent scout and would do the country another massive favour. He mined a raw diamond, Jasprit Bumrah, who would get polished into a kohinoor. Another silent cricketing Dronacharya would make Chennai Super Kings his home. Stephen Fleming,

too, had the same 'bechara' disarming look. He too was a cool calculating feline, a predator in sheep's clothing. Fleming continues to be MS Dhoni's robust sounding board.

Like Wright didn't mind Sourav Ganguly getting all the credit for the team's success, Fleming is happy to be consigliere to the Godfather, the Thala. It is their consistent civility that makes the Kiwis endearing. It's what has made India sub-consciously develop a fondness for the cricketers from the peaceful paradise at the corner of the earth. One cricket tour to New Zealand is enough to get introduced to the friendly community that, as a habit, downplays its achievements. The most famous Kiwi, Edmund Hillary, climbed Mt Everest but never failed to give credit to his sherpa, Tenzing Norgay. This gets reflected in everyday life. Even the famous New Zealand woollens come with a Ba-code - scan it to get a picture of the sheep responsible for the warmth you are getting. No one steals anybody's thunder. Everyone's effort gets acknowledged. There is a distinct air of casualness on the streets where kids are encouraged to walk bare feet. Christchurch comes across as a quaint make-believe world. Kids playing frisbee in soft sunlight on neatly manicured lawns; a well-fed dog jumping around as his owner reads a book on an easy chair, old couples sitting in street-side cafes waving to tourists in flower-decked trams. The world looks at the tiny Pacific island as a utopia. "Let's move to New Zealand" - is now a pet phrase for those disgusted with their own country and looking for new beginnings. Reports say that when Donald Trump came to power, enquiries in the USA about migration to New Zealand in America went up by 2000 percent.

New Zealand cricket, Champions Trophy New Zealand's players pose for photo with trophy after winning the tri-series final against Pakistan, in Karachi, Pakistan. (AP) New Zealand's appeal is its friendly people. It's a chatty



place where strangers indulge in small talk for hours. A plumber fixing a leaking tap at the prime minister's residence can get asked to stay back for a cup of tea. On the 2009 tour to New Zealand, one lazy afternoon, the team manager explained the Kiwi knack to innovation and being hands on. He said that when you have so few people and such large swathes of farmland, there will be isolation and thus innovation. For them, DIY isn't a superstore but a way of life. The manager went on to narrate his dressing room's work distribution. Batsman Grant Elliott kept the dressing room litter-free, pacer Ian Butler was the team's transport in-charge, Martin Guptill was given the duty of taking care of the national flag. Everyone had a non-cricketing responsibility. It was this upbringing that kept the cricketers grounded. Thankfully, the IPL riches have failed to corrupt the Kiwi DNA. In this social media-obsessed world where once-scooped human traits of self-promotion and bragging are getting increasingly legitimised, the Kiwis still stick to old human values. Rohit Sharma and his boys have their task cut out. There is so much to like about the Kiwis that it gets impossible to hate them.

## Ravi Shastri: 'If there's one team that can beat India, it's New Zealand'



GNS News Agency, March 8

Former India coach Ravi Shastri said India are the firm favourites to win the 2025 Champions Trophy but New Zealand won't give them a walkover in the final. India will take on New Zealand in the final of the 2025 Champions Trophy at the Dubai International Stadium on Sunday. "If there's one team that can beat India, it's New Zealand," Shastri said in 'The ICC Review'. "So India start as favourites but only just," he said.

Shastri also highlighted Virat Kohli's current form as a potential game-changer, while also acknowledging Williamson's ability to seize crucial moments. "Now (on) current form, Kohli. When these guys get hot and you let them get their first 10 runs, then they're trouble. Whether it's Williamson, whether it's Kohli," Shastri said. "So from New Zealand, I would say Williamson. To an extent, Ravindra, he is a fabulous young player. But these guys when they smell the coffee and you let them, in a final, get to that 10-15, then they're doubly dangerous." Ravindra, at just 25, has already accumulated five centuries in ICC 50-over tournaments - the youngest to achieve the feat. "I just like the way he moves in the crease," Shastri said.

"There's an element of fluency, which is fabulous to see. He's either forward, he's back, he'll cut, he'll sweep it, play the quicks well, and he's got a very good temperament. "You don't get hundreds in big tournaments like this just like that. You've got to have something up your sleeve, and I think he's immensely talented." "He's (Williamson) very stable and there's an element of calmness, a no-nonsense element about him the way he goes about his job," Shastri said. "He's like a saint, a sage, just sitting, meditating. Lot of people look at the big shots, I look at the way he moves in the crease. There's an element of fluency. "Joe Root when he's batting at his best. He's forward, back. Kohli (as well). When people move in the crease, the footwork is sound. "It's a joy to watch. And then with their experience, their talent, the volume of runs they've got, doesn't matter what format they play," added Shastri.

## Will Young on Champions Trophy final vs India: 'It is cool to be trying to achieve the same thing 25 years late'

New Zealand's Will Young plays a shot during the ICC Champions Trophy semifinal cricket match between New Zealand and South Africa at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, Pakistan. (AP) New Zealand's Will Young plays a shot during the ICC Champions Trophy semifinal cricket match between New Zealand and South Africa at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, Pakistan.

New Zealand opener Will Young said the Mitchell Santner-led team is eager to repeat what Stephen Fleming's side has achieved 25-years-ago. In 2000, New Zealand had defeated India by four wickets to win their first ICC title. "There were some iconic names in that squad and those are the ones plenty of guys in this squad looked up to back in the day," Will Young told ICC. "It is cool to be trying to achieve the same thing 25 years later. "I was eight years old at the time and just starting to fall in love with the game. "I am well aware of New Zealand's exploits in that tournament and it was fantastic to see them win. "I'm thinking back to before we boarded the plane to come over here, we had an unveiling of the Champions Trophy squad. Scott Styris was there that day and told a few stories about the team and their exploits in that tournament.

## Virat Kohli is able to play the way he is playing because of Shreyas Iyer: R Ashwin

GNS News Agency, March 8

R Ashwin has showered praise on India's No. 4 Shreyas Iyer. The former India cricketer credited Virat Kohli's success to Shreyas Iyer's dominance against the spinners in the middle overs in the ongoing Champions Trophy. Shreyas Iyer might not have scored a century or claimed the Player-of-the-Match award so far, but he is marginally behind the leading run-getter against spin in the tournament, and easily the most prolific against spin in Dubai. Iyer has managed 195 runs in four outings so far in the tournament, and Ashwin said he could be the game-changer against New Zealand in the Champions Trophy final. "For me, the game-changer will be Shreyas Iyer. It is because of his recent form," Ashwin said on his Hindi YouTube channel "Ash Ki Baat."

"He was doing a post-match with Robin Uthappa. Robin asked him, how he is so composed? Then he said, 'I have worked on my



breathing technique.' This guy has had an excellent 2023 World Cup. He has batted well against New Zealand. He has played well at the Wankhede in Mumbai. And once again, in this tournament, he has looked crackerjack," said Ashwin. Ashwin also lauded Iyer for working on his game against short-pitched bowling. "He has worked well on his short-ball game as well. Of course, he got out in the last game. But it shouldn't matter. I think this is Shreyas Iyer's biggest strength. He wants to get better at what he is not good at," he said. Against Pakistan, Iyer stitched a 114-run stand for the third wicket with Virat Kohli, who

remained unbeaten on 100. Against New Zealand, Shreyas walked in with India reeling at 30 for 3, then he forged a match-changing 98-run stand with Axar Patel. Shreyas scored 79. Against Australia in the semifinal, India were again in a spot of bother at 42 for 2, but Iyer put together a 91-run stand with Virat Kohli to steer India out of trouble. "There was a question with Gauti in the press conference. What was the conversation with Virat? Because he got out against a leg-spinner. Gauti gave an amazing answer. A guy has played 300 games. Obviously, he will get out. But apart from that, there is one thing: Virat

Kohli is able to play the way he is playing because Shreyas Iyer is playing this way against spin. "So, the captains are in a catch-22 situation. There will be a partnership between Shreyas and Virat. When there is a partnership between Virat and Shreyas, the captains can't enforce a spin choke. Shreyas is removing all the pressure from Virat. So, these two in the middle overs have forged a formidable pair. "And for Virat's success, Shreyas Iyer has played a part in it. And for Shreyas's success, Virat has a part in it. Because this is what people call playing in partnerships. "Because if fast bowlers attack Shreyas Iyer, Virat Kohli can easily score runs; he can even hit the odd boundary. So, this is a combination that is made possible by Shreyas Iyer's batting against spin. In these conditions, you can't enforce a spin choke against India because Shreyas is batting like this. If Shreyas gets out, then it is a problem. "But I think Shreyas Iyer will once again be a game-changer."

## ICC Safety and Security Manager Dave Musker thanks Pakistan police: The professionalism of the people I have been involved with is exceptional



GNS News Agency, March 8

Champions Trophy 2025 hosted by Pakistan came after 29 years amidst security concerns over the country. Pakistan's leg of the tournament concluded the semifinal between South Africa and New Zealand in Lahore. The ICC Safety and Security Manager Dave Musker praised the arrangements and professionalism of the security during the tournament. "Just wanted to do a short video to thank all the Pakistani police. Police and the Army have been absolutely superb. Prior to the tournament, there were concerns over by visiting teams over to Pakistan. I personally had not doubts, the professionalism of the people I have been involved with is exceptional the cooperation and the respect I have been shown is amazing," he said in a video," Musker said.

The country has organized comprehensive security team for the tournament and Punjab Police will take care of the security in Lahore and Rawalpindi. As reported by Pakistani news outlet Geo TV, over 12,000 officers and personnel will be deployed to ensure the security during the matches. A total of 18 senior officers, 54 DSPs, 135 inspectors, and 1,200 upper subordinates will be on duty, while 10,556 constables and over 200 female police officers will also be assigned security and checking duties. Apart from the security measures, Pakistan's national carrier Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has announced special charter flights for the fans. There will be nine special charter flights that will be operated between Karachi, Islamabad, and

Lahore during the event for the smooth transportation of both fans and teams. PIA will be also showcase the culture of Pakistan during these flights.

## Not good for progress of Indian football in the long run, says Bhaichung Bhutia

GNS News Agency, March 8

Less than two months ago, Indian football icon Sunil Chhetri took to Instagram with a lighthearted post: "Nobody told me picnics would be so much fun. I went to my first, and now I want more." Having bid farewell to international football last June at 39, after an illustrious 19-year career, he was embracing retirement, enjoying life while still playing club football for his beloved Bengaluru FC.

Well, those picnics will have to wait. In an unpredictable turn of events, India head coach Manolo Marquez has called the 40-year-old Chhetri out of retirement for the crucial March FIFA window. India, winless in 2024, face a friendly against the Maldives before a must-win AFC Asian Cup qualifier against Bangladesh on March 25. India are placed in a group alongside Bangladesh, Hong Kong, and Singapore and only the top team advances. Former India skipper Bhaichung Bhutia didn't hold back, saying that having to call back India's highest goalscorer from retirement is "not a good sign for the development of Indian football" and it's "sad and unfortunate" that India can't find a replacement for him. "I can understand that there's huge pressure on Manolo and the federation (AIFF) after the disaster of 2024 where he hasn't won a single match (out of 4 games in charge), but it's not really good for the development and progress for Indian football in the long run," Bhaichung told The Indian Express. "It's wonderful for Sunil to come back and play for India. But overall, for Indian football's development, it's definitely not a good sign.

## R Ashwin on India having advantage of playing in Dubai: 'Tournaments are won on the basis of performances not excuses'

GNS News Agency, March 8

India's Axar Patel, left, celebrates with teammates after the dismissal of Australia's Glenn Maxwell during the ICC Champions Trophy semifinal cricket match between India and Australia at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai. (AP) India's Axar Patel, left, celebrates with teammates after the dismissal of Australia's Glenn Maxwell during the ICC Champions Trophy semifinal cricket match between India and Australia at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai. R Ashwin has made a scathing attack on those who have said that India are having an advantage playing in Dubai in the ongoing Champions Trophy. "Tournaments are won on the basis of performances, not excuses," Ashwin said on his Hindi YouTube channel "Ash Ki Baat." "I am laughing when people ask our captain and coach the same question about having an advantage playing in Dubai. In the 2009 Champions Trophy, South Africa played all their games at the same venue and even then they failed to qualify for the knockouts. It was not South Africa's fault that they didn't qualify then. Teams qualified only because they play good cricket," he said. India have won all their matches in Dubai, including against the eventual finalists, New Zealand. "India is in the final because they have played solid cricket. No matter what happens in the final, they deserved to be finalists because of the kind of cricket they have played. Please don't throw mud at our own cricketers because of someone else's narrative. "I know a Test team that travels to India, loses the series, and then blames it on the pitches. Imagine an Indian cricketer coming out and saying such things if we lost a series overseas. We never do that. "If India wins this trophy, we will be winning the title back-to-back. Let's celebrate them. Don't buy into this narrative." In the 2023 ODI World Cup, India traveled 8400 km in their league stage alone. "In the 2023 World Cup, we played at nine different venues. I was with the team, I traveled with the team. I agree with David Miller, a one and a half hour flight does increase lactic acid in your body. But you must understand it is not in the Indian team's hands. The ICC has made the fixtures. This schedule was decided even before an Indian became ICC chief," he said.

## Mohammad Amir eyes IPL contract in 2026



GNS News Agency, March 8

Pakistan Canada T20 World Cup Pakistan's Mohammad Amir, second left, celebrates with teammates after the dismissal of Canada's captain Saad Bin Zafar during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup cricket match between Pakistan and Canada at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in Westbury, New York, Tuesday, June Pakistan pacer Mohammad Amir said he will be eligible to play in the Indian Premier League (IPL) in 2026 and if opportunity will come, he would love to explore it. "Next year tak meri opportunity ban rahi agar hua to kyu nahi (By next year, I will have the opportunity to play in the IPL and if given the chance then why not).

I will play in the IPL," Mohammad Amir said on show "Haarna Mana Hai." Amir whose wife Narjis is a UK citizen and the left-arm quick is hoping to get an UK passport, which will open the doors for him to play in the IPL. When show's host Tabish Hashmi asked Amir, "What will be his reactions when he will be criticised in Pakistan for playing in the IPL?" Amir, who is now retired from international cricket, without taking names said: "Pakistani cricketers were banned in the IPL, but our former cricketers were doing commentary and were also coach of the franchise."

## Bollywood's crimes against women: Consent proof in TBMAUJ, patriarchy apologist in Mr and Mrs Mahi



'What do we do now?' Ten years ago, Reese Witherspoon gave a powerful speech at an event where she pointed out that in most popular films, at a critical juncture in the plot, a breathless and confused-looking woman turns to a man and asks him, "What do we do now?" Reese pointed out that this idea that a woman wouldn't know how to handle a crisis was completely bizarre but she noticed that no one in Hollywood cared enough and they didn't mind presenting women as distressed damsels. Drilling this idea into the audience's head that a woman is helpless and wouldn't know how to fend for her survival seems to have worked for Hollywood and Bollywood, is no different. In the last few years, there has been a resurgence of those retro masala action films which revolve around the hero. The hero is a god in this universe but the women around him come across as purely incidental.

A film like Jawan, which actually tried to promote itself

Neil Nitin Mukesh says Katrina Kaif 'had a problem with' his skin colour while filming New York, targeted him for laughing on set: 'We were enemies, there were fights'



Neil Nitin Mukesh, Katrina Kaif, John Abraham in a still from New York. Neil Nitin Mukesh on how things started off difficult with Katrina Kaif during New York shooting. The late 2000s and early 2010s saw Hindi cinema go through quite an interesting phase, where films that were made for the NRI audience slowly evolved into films that were made about the NRI audience. This audience became an integral part of Indian cinema, and Bollywood consistently catered to this subset. One of the more nuanced films of this era was Kabir Khan's New York, which was headlined by Katrina Kaif, John Abraham, and Neil Nitin Mukesh. The film, which hit the screens in 2009, remains a fan favourite, especially for its songs, and the understated chemistry between Katrina and Neil. In an interaction with Filmlyggyan, Neil opened up about why New York and Katrina will always be special for him. "We were enemies on the first day with constant fights, arguments, etc... There was some problem between us, and I had no clue what it was. I got to know that it was some issue with my skin colour, and then it was the kind of character I was playing, but there was something happening between us," said Neil.

Neil also revealed that he was quite disappointed with how things were turning out on the first day on the sets. "I was just coming from the rather intense Johnny Gaddar. New York was my second film, and I am someone who actually learnt acting, spoke the language, and I was doing my best. She was a bigger star than me during that time, and still is a bigger star. So, when we were repeating the same line 10-15 times, I wasn't sure where I was going wrong," said Neil, who shared that he reached out to Kabir to understand if there was something wrong on his part. "He reassured me that nothing was wrong, and I should just continue doing what I was doing."

Then, Neil opened up about a scene where John and him were laughing away from the camera, and Katrina started dissing him. "I didn't understand why I was the only targeted when both of us were laughing. Then, I did speak to her and she said that New York was her first intense film after doing a slew of comedies. Once that was clarified, everything else fell into place, and it has since been a relationship built out of love and respect," said Neil, who also said that his friendship and bonding with her was so genuine and pure. "She is a beautiful co-star, a beautiful actor, and she put in a lot of efforts for the film. I still believe New York is the best film in her career. I respect her friendship even now," said Neil, who also narrated an incident that cemented their friendship even further. "I once had a very high fever, almost 104 degrees, and I was alone. It was Katrina and her team who stayed with me that day, ensured I took my medicines and had enough rest. Such pure affection and love can only be felt with people who feel like yours, right? I am thankful to the producers and director for giving me such a film, and such an opportunity." Neil, who was recently seen in the ZEE5 film, Hissaab Barabar, after a five-year break, has been opening up about his struggles to get a film, despite starring in over 30 films over almost two decades, and associating with quality filmmakers like Sriram Raghavan, AR Murugadoss, Pradeep Sarkar, Kabir Khan, Madhur Bhandarkar, Vishal Bhardwaj, and Sooraj Barjatya

by pushing the idea of 'women empowerment', was all about Shah Rukh Khan. The film had two leading ladies, Deepika Padukone and Nayanthara, and a bunch of female supporting characters played by the likes of Sanya Malhotra and Priyamani, but in the end, the women were incidental to the larger plot of the film. Or a film like Fighter, which starred two of the biggest stars of Hindi cinema, Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone, the heroine's job was just to fawn all over the hero as he continues to reject her advances over and over again. Her character's story was independent of the movie and came across like an afterthought. Female characters in most of these films exist so they can be wronged and the hero can go on his 'revenge journey', or they exist to be the romantic love interest. There is hardly a scenario where their character is independent of the man, and still holds relevance to the plot. A glance at a poster of any of the aforementioned films will tell you that female characters can easily be removed from this universe, and the film will go on just as smoothly. And then, there are those films where top actresses claim equal real estate on the poster, have the same amount of screen time as the man, but they are presented in a highly regressive fashion. In the last couple of years, films like Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya, Mr and Mrs Mahi, Bawaal, Satyaprem Ki Katha have all been promoted as love stories (with some or the other twist), but all these films have a fundamental problem at their core - all of them see women as lesser beings.

Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon-starrer Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya was presented as a love story between a man and a 'woman', who is actually a robot. As you watch him supposedly falling in love with her, you realise that he probably loves her because she can't say no to him. She is a robot who just says 'yes'. She is a 'woman' who is designed to obey his commands, and does not have the capacity to argue with him. There is no question of consent or conflict because she does everything he asks. At this point, you wonder if this is even a 'love story' or you are watching a man with a Siri-like human doll. But the film never addresses the psychology of a man who actively chooses to have a slave that serves him round the clock and is al-

## Ibrahim Ali Khan, Khushi Kapoor film rehashes every Karan Johar romcom, without his sparkle

Take the Dharma template because, duh, this is a Dharma film, borrow deets from a bunch of romcoms, shake 'em up, and you get Nadaaniyan. There's the swish high-school from 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai', which lead character Pia Jaisingh (Khushi Kapoor) helpfully describes as having 'no-uniform, resort-type vibes', just in case we miss it. Ms Braganza (Archana Puran Singh, reprising her role, older but not wiser) is back. No student ever seems to go to class: that's not changed, either. And those who've been missing that shooting star, so cute, ya, fear not: it gets a look-see, too. It's not just the school which gets a visual upgrade. The students do too, if their clothes are anything to go by. It's all very 'Student Of The Year', with guys fighting over girls, divided by class: the sole outsider is Arjun Mehta (Ibrahim Ali Khan) who lives in Greater Noida, horror, and has working parents (Jugal Hansraj and Dia Mirza). The rest are tony Delhi's 'pampered putters and bigdail betis': this is an actual line in the film, not kidding. Ms P changes her designer outfits and bags in every scene, calling herself 'a poster princess of privilege and entitlement', doing our work for us. The Noida, sorry Greater Noida, boy has six packs. We know this because he lifts his T-shirt to show them off, which makes him, for reasons never quite made clear, the best candidate to head the school's debating team. He also runs, swims, and goes 'owwww', when poked in the shoulder.

Pia has besties called Rhea and Sahira or is it Saira, who only show up when she's in the frame, having no lives of their own, of course. She also has parents (Sunil Shetty, Mahima Chaudhary) who aren't exactly the best of friends. They always wanted a son, and got a daughter. She's a poor little rich girl, whom no one takes seriously, and that's her biggest problem. This is a film which has been created by-and-for hashtags, with zero insights into the demographic it represents. Pia tells Arjun that if he agrees to a hare-brained scheme she's cooked up to stay in favour with her BFFs, he will get to be 'on her grid'. Oooh. There are 'red flags' and 'green flags', 'elitism' and 'classism', 'adulthood' and 'parenting', phrases which feel are meant to be cool but seem grafted on for attention. 'Patriarchy' rears its ugly head. Pia's mother

## Priyanka Chopra's mom Madhu alludes to 'conventionally not good looking superstars' who are 'minting millions': 'If you are ugly but talented...'

Priyanka Chopra's mother, Madhu, is a doctor and cosmetologist who has a practice in Mumbai. In a recent interview, Madhu said that there are many superstars in India who can't be called "conventionally good looking" but they are "minting millions." Madhu said that if one is "ugly" but talented, they can still make it big, but she added that it's always the good-looking people "who make it to the mainstream." Talking to Pinkvilla, Madhu said, "There are so many people, I wouldn't like to name them, they are not good looking at all. But they are wonderful actors." She continued, "In Hollywood or anywhere, it's the good-looking guys or good-looking girls who make it to the mainstream. It is not necessary, but it is one of the hard facts, you have to accept that. If you are ugly but you are talented, you can go really far." Madhu said that there are superstars in India who fall in the same category, and can't be called "conventionally good looking." "There are so many people in the Indian industry who are like that. So many superstars, you can't call them conventionally good looking but they are minting millions," she said and added, "So if one is talented, all of this is immaterial."

Many Bollywood stars have spoken about being conventionally not-so-good looking in the past. In an earlier interview with CNN, Shah Rukh Khan said that his female co-stars find him a "long-running fluke" as they don't find him good-looking. "I don't know myself, most friends laugh at me that I have become a film star, especially the actresses who worked with me earlier on, their first reaction was 'eeks'. They find it very surprising, they think I am a

ways there to inflate his ego. The film, very bluntly, literally kills the 'woman' the moment she starts disobeying. The filmmakers chose to present the robot in a woman's form, even though this could have been a man, but perhaps, it was some sort of fantasy of theirs that was being fulfilled to have a woman around who would just never say no. In Satyaprem Ki Katha, starring Kartik Aaryan and Kiara Advani, where the woman says no to physical intimacy to her newly wedded husband, people started applauding the 'wokeness' of the male character who understood the basics of a consensual relationship. It was almost as if people were so overwhelmed by his understanding of consent that they chose to look away when he appointed himself as her saviour. Satyaprem (Sattu), played by Kartik, is an unemployed man who somehow gets married to Katha, played by Kiara. As soon as she confides in him that she has been sexually assaulted in the past, he decides that he has to 'save her'. Sattu announces in a huge family gathering that Katha was raped, and she looks at him shell-shocked. In his opinion, this is how she should deal with her fear but he never bothers to ask how she feels about it. He even decides the legal course that Katha must take without checking with her. The film constantly corners Katha and talks about her like she is not even in the room, just so it can portray Sattu as a saviour. The title of the film itself announces that Katha belongs to Satyaprem, as if she is no one in this universe without him. In a universe where we are told 'Voh stree hai, voh kuch bhi kar sakti hai (She is a woman, she can do anything)', you find out that she is just as powerless as any other film. Stree 2, starring Shraddha Kapoor in the titular role, builds itself up as the story where the woman is the supreme being. She even tries to save the day but in the end, it is Rajkumar Rao's Vicky who has to be trained to save everyone because her powers are just not enough. She is an immortal mythical being but she is shown to be less powerful than a regular human man. Here, it feels like the filmmakers are having their cake and eating it too. They get to have a film which appears to have a strong female protagonist but ultimately, they are making a film where a woman dances to "Aaj Ki Raat" while trying to lure the male monster.



speaks of 'hamaara status aur achcha khandaan': a jealous suitor who goes by the name of Ayaan Nanda, uses the phrase 'nawaab nahin naukhar' for Arjun, and is boastful of his command over 'ladkiyaan, ghadiyaan aur gaadiyaan'. A character is quickly made to retort, 'haww this is 2024 (the film was clearly finished last year), bringing up 'toxic masculinity', but the whole thing comes off as tone deaf, and offensive, in a plot that feels like a rehash of every Karan Johar rom com ever made, without his trademark sparkle. Khushi Kapoor has a little more to do here than debutant Ibrahim Ali Khan, who is good-looking but single tone. The former has had a couple of films under her belt, plus is given more detailing: the latter can take heart from the fact that his father spent some years doing no-account films and unprepossessing roles before coming into his own. But this is 2025, and there's his justified pushback against constructed, designed artifacts, so Khan Jr is going to have to catch up sooner versus later. Early on in the film, a character says, omnisciently, this is a terrible idea. If you'd told me that there would be a film that would make me nostalgic, in a good way, about 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai', I would have said, tell me another. But here we are. Nadaaniyan movie cast: Khushi Kapoor, Ibrahim Ali Khan, Suniel Shetty, Mahima Chaudhary, Jugal Hansraj, Dia Mirza, Archana Puran Singh

## 'I traumatised Priyanka Chopra by sending her away at seven years old': Mom Madhu Chopra admits she still regrets her 'heartbreaking' decision



Priyanka Chopra has previously spoken about spending most of her childhood away from her parents in Bareilly, and in a recent interview, her mother Madhu Chopra said that she still regrets sending a young Priyanka to boarding school without mentally preparing her. Madhu said that she does not have many regrets about the way her kids grew up, but she still wonders what Priyanka went through as she was pushed into a boarding school at the tender age of seven. She admitted that she has never asked her daughter if she ever felt lonely.

In a chat with Pinkvilla, Madhu said that the only time she faced self-doubt as a parent was when she sent Priyanka to boarding school. Priyanka was just seven years old when she was sent to study at Lucknow's La Martiniere Girls' School. "When I sent her to boarding school, I had some self doubt at that time and I still regret it. Otherwise, I don't regret any of my decisions," she said. When asked why she regretted the decision, Madhu said that she "traumatised" a child without preparing her for the realities of boarding school. "Chote se bache ko traumatise kia maine. Usko mentally prepare nahi kia tha ki aap boarding mein jaa rahe hain. (I traumatised a kid. I did not prepare her mentally that you are going to stay at a boarding school)," she said. Madhu recalled that she took Priyanka for an admission test. She did well so Madhu "left her there." "That was heartbreaking for both of us but she was confident and she stayed, did well, but it was very traumatising for me, still is."

Madhu was asked why she sent Priyanka to boarding in the first place, and she recalled the incident that compelled her to do so. "She was playing with her doll and she told her father, 'Can't you see I am busy?' I heard that and I realised this is how I speak. So self doubt seeped in and I felt like my parenting was going wrong," she shared. "She was loved and we felt like our love was spoiling her so we sent her away but this was not a good decision at all. Only she knows what she went through. After getting so much love, she must have felt abandoned. But she did good," she said. She also mentioned that it is "unfair" to send a child to a boarding school without telling them what to expect. When asked if Priyanka ever felt "lonely", Madhu said, "I have no idea. I have never asked her. But she missed us, she hated not being with parents." Madhu said that Priyanka spent most of her life away from her parents. From a very young age, she was living with her maternal grandparents because Madhu was finishing her education. Then, she was sent to boarding. As soon as she came back from Lucknow, she moved to the US to study. And after returning from US, Miss India happened. "She spent very little time with me," she said and added, "In retrospect, I realise that her development was wholesome."

## Alia Bhatt could experiment because she got opportunities at a young age, says Viineet Kumar Singh: 'I still don't have a house, worried about bills'

A few months ago, actor Viineet Kumar Singh spoke about Alia Bhatt and said that he was a struggler when she was young enough sit in her father Mahesh Bhatt's lap, and now, when she is a movie star, Viineet still finds himself struggling to get his next part. Now, the actor has explained the intention behind his statement, and said that he really appreciates the work that Alia does. He claimed to have spoken about her mainly to highlight the disparity in the kind of opportunities that they both got in their career. He also spoke about Ranbir Kapoor and how the actor called him after he saw his work in Ugly in 2013.

Talking on The Raunac Podcast, Viineet said, "My intention behind saying all of that was, I still don't have a house." He was presumably talking about owning a house. The Chhaava actor said that Alia has experimented a lot with her roles in her career, and given some excellent performances. But, he added that he still doesn't have that privilege because he has to constantly worry about paying the next month's bills.

"Alia, since the time she started and even now, look at the number of experiments she has done. Look at Highway, Gangubai Kathiawadi, Udta Punjab, so many films and look at her range. I am trying to say that when an actor gets an opportunity at the right time, then they get a chance to experiment upon themselves and they can shine. Half your life gone is trying to pay the next month's bills. I want that freedom that if I want to work on myself for 6 months, then I should be able to do that," he said and added in the same conversation, "I only spoke about Alia because I like her work." Viineet Kumar Singh also spoke about Ranbir Kapoor and said that after getting a congratulatory call from the actor in 2013 after Ugly, he makes sure that he congratulates Ranbir on his good performances. "Ranbir had called me back in 2013 when he watched Ugly. I didn't even have his number but he called me. I thought someone was pulling my leg," he said. He said that the reason behind bringing up Alia and Ranbir was just that he enjoys their work. "You only talk about those who are on your mind, and whose work you appreciate, it's only natural."



long-running fluke." Ranveer Singh shared with Bollywood Hungama that he was told by YRF head Aditya Chopra that he wasn't conventionally good looking. "Adi sir gave me a reality check at the beginning of my career. He was like, 'you are good looking but not in a conventional way. You are not Hrithik Roshan, so better you act well.'" Even Priyanka was told that she wasn't conventionally good looking when she first started in Bollywood. Filmmaker Suniel Darshan told Bollywood Hungama, "When I first saw her, I was shocked because she wasn't a conventional beauty. We spoke for about 15 minutes. Her voice was so zabardast (powerful), and her eyes were so khatarnak (dangerous). I decided within those 15 minutes to cast her and told her that one day she would have a stature similar to that of Rekha."