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SICA hosts memorial Carnatic concert in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: South Indian Cultural Association, a well-known cultural organization from twin cities, organised a memorial concert in remembrance of noted social scientist Dr Radha Chakravarty and VS Meenakshi, daughter of late Sir Alladi Krishna Swamy, one of the primary architects of the Indian Constitution.

The event featured a Carnatic vocal concert by Sikkil C Gurucharan of Chennai accompanied on violin by VSP Gayatri Sivani, Dr DSR Murthy on mridangam and M Chandrakanth on ghatam. Thanbura support was provided by Sri Sheik Khaja Imdad.

Iran war may push fuel prices up: Harish Rao

Sangareddy: Former Minister T Harish Rao said that the US and Israel's war with Iran put the entire world under serious stress including the Telangana people living in the Gulf. He observed the prices of essential commodities were going up as the war hit imports and exports between the countries. Rao feared that the prevailing situation may force the oil companies to hike the prices of petrol and diesel which will burden the people during the festival season.Telangana Travel Guide

Centre rushes to allay LPG fears, says domestic users top priority

New Delhi, March 10

The government on Tuesday issued orders to rationalise the distribution of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) amid continuing supply disruptions through the Strait of Hormuz which handles bulk Indian import consignments.

Dismissing concerns around LPG and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) supplies in the country, top sources said there was no shortage and no cause for panic.

They said no LPG distributor was running dry and all bookings (provided refill orders are made after 25 days) are still being honoured in the standard 2.5 days.

"Local LPG production has increased. LPG and LNG consignments are arriving from sources other than those that need to transit the Strait of Hormuz. Every petrol pump is dispensing oil and cooking gas supply is being maintained," said sources.

They said crude oil prices had stabilised today at \$87 a barrel and retail price of petroleum and diesel would not be raised.

"Overall, India has entered this disruption better prepared than at any other time in history," said top sources, adding that India was procuring crude from 40 countries and had 70-day LPG and LNG storage capacity, provided everyone stuck to the new rules. Further, where 55 per cent of India's crude oil import was being routed through the Strait of Hormuz 10 days ago, today 70 per cent crude is being sourced from non-Hormuz routes, a senior source said.

To address concerns of hotels associations across India, the ministry also set up a three-member committee of executive directors of IOC, BPCL and HPCL today to engage stakeholders.

The broad LPG, LNG supply management exercise involves the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas issuing Natural Gas (Supply Regulation) Order, 2026 "in view of disruptions in LNG shipments caused by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East."

The government said there was "no LPG crisis, only supply management."

The order stems from the Centre's assessment of stalled LNG shipments through the Strait of Hormuz and several suppliers invoking force majeure clauses which excuse parties from fulfilling obligations due to unforeseen events.

Issued under Section 3 of Essential Commodities Act, the order lists four priority categories for LPG, LNG allocation.

Highest priority I sector will see 100 per cent of the

Cong moves resolution in LS seeking Speaker's removal; heated debate erupts

NEW DELHI, MARCH 10

The Congress initiated a move to bring a no-confidence motion against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday, triggering sharp exchanges in the House over procedural rules and who should preside over the proceedings during the discussion.

Congress MP Mohammed Jawed formally moved the resolution seeking the removal of Speaker Birla. The motion has reportedly been signed by 118 Opposition MPs, who have accused the Speaker of displaying "partisan" conduct, particularly after Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi was allegedly not allowed to speak in the House.



Soon after the motion was introduced, a debate began over procedural issues after AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi and Trinamool Congress MP Saugata Roy raised points of order regarding whether Jagdambika Pal, who was presiding over the session, could continue to conduct the proceedings.

Raising the matter, Asaduddin Owaisi referred to parliamentary rules and argued that when a motion seeking the removal of the Speaker is under consideration, the Speaker cannot preside over the proceedings. Owaisi pointed out that since no Deputy Speaker had been appointed, the person presiding in the Chair had effectively been nominated with the approval of the Speaker and, therefore, should not conduct the debate on the motion.



average gas consumption during the previous six months being maintained. This will cover domestic piped natural gas (PNG), compressed natural gas (CNG) used in transport, LPG production including shrinkage requirements, and essential pipeline operational needs such as compressor fuel

For priority sector II, fertiliser plants will receive at least 70 per cent of their average gas consumption over the past six months. However, the gas must strictly be used for fertiliser production and the units concerned will be required to furnish certification to the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) through the Ministry of Fertilisers.

Under priority sector III, industries such as tea manufacturing and other industrial consumers connected to the national gas grid will receive about 80 per cent of their average consumption over the previous six months, depending on operational availability.

Similarly, priority sector IV covers industrial and commercial consumers supplied through City Gas Distribution (CGD) networks. These consumers will also receive around 80 per cent of their past average consumption, subject to availability.

To ensure sufficient supply for priority sectors, the order provides for curtailment of gas supply to certain non-priority sectors. These are petrochemical units, including facilities such as ONGC Petro Additions Limited, GAIL's Pata Petrochemical Complex, Reliance O2C and other high-pressure high-temperature gas consumers, which will face reductions first, followed by power plants if required.

Oil refineries will also absorb part of the impact of LNG supply disruptions by reducing gas consumption to approximately 65 per cent of the average usage during the previous six months, depending on operational feasibility.

The implementation mechanism will be coordinated by Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) in consultation with PPAC. GAIL will manage supply diversion and submit invoice prices of diverted gas volumes to PPAC, which will notify a pooled price for gas redirected from non-priority sectors.

"Entities receiving pooled gas will have to provide an undertaking accepting the pooled price and ensure that the diverted gas is not resold," officials said.

The order directs stakeholders involved in natural gas production, import, marketing and transportation—including ONGC, Reliance Industries, Oil India Limited, Vedanta, GAIL, LNG terminal operators, pipeline operators and city gas distribution entities to immediately comply with the revised supply schedules and allocation mechanisms.

The government has also clarified that the provisions of the order would override existing gas sale agreements and other commercial contracts if there is any inconsistency. In addition, all entities dealing with natural gas, LNG or re-gasified LNG will be required to furnish detailed information on production, imports, stocks, allocation, supply and consumption to the Centre through PPAC, which has been designated as the nodal agency.

***Jagjial Staff Reporter, March 10 (Indian Chronicle): "Former Minister and Congress senior leader, Tatiparthi Jeevan Reddy, has urged the government to allocate funds for the Tummadi Hetti Barrage project, a dream project of the Congress party. Addressing a press conference at Indira Bhavan in Jagtial, Jeevan Reddy emphasized the importance of the project for the development of North Telangana. "He recalled that the late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy had initiated efforts to utilize the Godavari river water for the region. The Tummadi Hetti Barrage was planned to harness the Pranahita river water, but the project has been stalled at the tender stage. The 7th block of the barrage collapsed in October 2023, halting water transfer. "Jeevan Reddy suggested that the government can recover costs from the contractor and even consider criminal prosecution if needed. He highlighted that the Congress party had included the project

Mangalagiri: The Andhra Pradesh government has decided to review the implementation of development programmes and welfare schemes. A two-day meeting of district collectors is being held today and tomorrow at the AP Secretariat. The meeting will commence at 10:30 am with a speech by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, who will discuss key development issues with officials.

On the first day, progress on Swarnandhra-2047 goals and district-wise development targets will be reviewed, with the CM providing guidelines for future steps. The second day will focus on public health, welfare schemes, revenue, and summer water supply. A special law and order review will also take place Thursday evening, with the CM assessing security and policing measures. Officials see this as an opportunity to accelerate district development and improve public services.



Parthasarathy alleges YSRCP left AP buried in debt



Mangalagiri: Housing and information and public relations minister Kolusu Parthasarathy on Tuesday launched a strong attack on former chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, alleging that the previous YSRCP government prioritised businesses linked to the ruling family rather than genuine development, leaving Andhra Pradesh with a heavy debt burden.

Speaking to the media at TDP state headquarters in Mangalagiri, the minister said the coalition government inherited liabilities of nearly Rs 9.75 lakh crore, comprising about 164 major debt components. Despite the financial strain, he said the present administration is simultaneously pursuing welfare and infrastructure development.

In contrast, he alleged, the previous government focused largely on cash-transfer schemes without creating durable public assets.

Referring to data from the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), Parthasarathy said the state's total borrowings for 2024-25 stood at Rs81,071 crore. Of this, Rs 27,025 crore was borrowed between April and June during the previous regime. After the coalition assumed office in July 2024, it borrowed Rs 53,866 crore over the next nine months, out of which Rs 16,141 crore was spent on capital expenditure. He claimed that during the comparable period under the previous government, no spending was directed towards asset creation.

The minister said the coalition cleared pending salary arrears of about Rs20,000 crore owed to government employees within its first year in office. He also blamed the earlier administration for failing to secure matching grants for key central schemes such as Jal Jeevan Mission and AMRUT, which he said resulted in the loss of significant funds.

Parthasarathy further alleged that the previous government favoured Bharati Cements through price increases and directed nearly Rs 400 crore in advertisements to the Sakshi Media Group. He added that key projects such as the Polavaram irrigation project and the capital city Amaravati were neglected earlier but are now being expedited by the present government.

Uppal Division BJP Leaders Witness Lok Sabha Budget Session in Delhi, Meet National BJP President Nitin Nabin

***KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 10 (Indian Chronicle): "BJP leaders from Uppal Division visited Delhi and witnessed the Lok Sabha Budget Session in Parliament. Later, they met BJP National President Nitin Nabin on Tuesday as a courtesy. "On this occasion, Nitin Nabin instructed the leaders to work actively towards bringing the BJP to power in Telangana. "Those who participated in the meeting included BJP senior leader Shamirpet Dharmareddy, Uppal Division BJP President Marneni Phanindra, Division General Secretary Theega Vittal Rao Mudiraj, Division Treasurer Duvvala Ramesh, and others. Speaking on the occasion, the leaders expressed confidence that under the leadership of BJP National President Nitin Nabin, the BJP will certainly come to power in Telangana. They also stated that they would work wholeheartedly for the party's prestige and strive to bring the BJP to power in the state by following his directions.



Ex Minister Jeevan Reddy Urges Funding for Tummadi Hetti Barrage Project

in its election manifesto and Rahul Gandhi had promised to construct the barrage. "The project would benefit not only North Telangana but also provide drinking water and industrial needs for Hyderabad and Rangareddy districts. Jeevan Reddy proposed redesigning the canals to transfer 148 meters of water and utilizing the Jaipur Vagu to Sundilla lift to transfer water to Ellampalli. "He estimated the project cost to be around ₹10,000 crores and urged the government to allocate ₹5,000 crores annually for two years. Jeevan Reddy appealed to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, and Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy to prioritize the project. "The meeting was attended by Congress leaders Kotta Mohan, Junnu Rajender, Durgayya, Gajula Rajender, Puppala Ashok, Radha Kishan, Rajinikanth, and Dhyavara Srinivasulu.



Indian Chronicle

English Daily

US-based Indians can tap market opportunities back home

Indiantechology talent has been one of the major contributors to the US technology industry for several decades now. That is the reason that many leaders of Indian origin are spearheading global technology giants, including Sundar Pichai, Satya Nadella and Shantanu Narayen. Moreover, top tech firms of the US are the major beneficiaries of the H1B visa programme under which Indian technology talents are hired for working in the US. However, the current US administration under President Donald Trump has taken many steps to restrict the free mobility of Indian tech talent to the US. The MAGA base of Trump and his Republican party has turned against Indian talent migration.

Their argument is that the H1B visa is being exploited by the US and other foreign companies to exploit American workers. Unemployment rate of American people in the technology field is being blamed for the same. Respecting the popular sentiment, the Trump administration has introduced a prohibitive entry fee of \$100,000 on new H1B visa applicants. On Thursday, the Department of Homeland Security of the US issued an interim final rule ending the automatic extension of Employment Authorisation Documents (EAD). This move is likely to affect the spouses of H1B migrants in the US. Similarly, Governor Ron DeSantis directed Florida's state university system not to use H1B visas, saying it was a "poor reflection" on the universities themselves. These measures indicate that the US is systematically trying to reduce migration of Indian talent- technology, academia and others. Now, one wonders what has changed so suddenly that Indians are no longer welcome in the US. Firstly, an undercurrent of discontent against Indians has been there for some time now. Though Indians are no way a dominant community in the US, their presence in the technology sector is visible. From top CEOs to mid-level workers, Indo-Americans are holding critical positions in the US technology industry. To put things in context, the US is leading the world in the technology space with globally dominating multi-trillion companies. So, Indian presence in this prestigious sector has been an eyesore for many. Secondly, though Indians are lesser in number, the per capita income and living standards of most Indian families are better among all immigrant communities.

Presently, a certain sense of insecurity against Indians has crept in. Thirdly, the Republican party has successfully fanned this sentiment to benefit from it politically. As Indians are numerically insignificant, their voice and lobby efforts are not enough to change the direction of Trump's policies. Therefore, Indians may have to live with it for years to come. Globally, geopolitics is shifting gears and new alignments are emerging. In this context, Indo-US relations may not see several crests and troughs. Indians and Indian companies have to stay prepared for such eventualities. There is no denial that the people-to-people relationship between India and the US remains strong. However, perception matters a lot in diplomatic relationships.

Counciller Laxmi felicitated leaders



“Jagti Staff Reporter, March 10(Indian Chronicle):“Counciller Arav Lakshmi ACS Rajulu was felicitated by the leaders of Jagti District Padmashali Sangha on Tuesday. The ceremony took place at the local Markandeya Temple. Bhoga Gangadhar, President of Jagti Town Padmashali Service Society, and Kokula Prabhakar, Treasurer, honoured Counciller Arav Lakshmi Rajulu. They

praised the couple's past services as councillors. The event was attended by Padmashali Sangha leaders Vemula Deva Rajam, Singam Gangadhar, Siripuram Gangaram, Singam Bhaskar, Chitla Gangadhar, Akkinapalli Kashinatham, Vemula Pochamalla, Edamala Venkat Reddy, Bondukuri Srinivas, Illendula Purushottam, Pendem Gangadhar, Malyala Gangadhar, and Thuniki Anjana.

Research on Bejjur vultures, Field Biologist awarded Ph.DS. Harpal Singh,



Adilabad, March 10“M. Ravikanth is a well known name among conservationists in erstwhile united Adilabad district or for that matter those who are concerned with Amrabad Tiger Reserve located in the Nallamala forests in Telangana. He has put in many years of service in Kagaznagar Forest Division and ATR) as a field biologist.“But that is not why he is being mentioned here. Ravikanth is in the news because he has been awarded Ph.D. a rare occurrence in the subject, for study on Long billed vultures (LBV) and White rumped vultures (WRV) by the A.V.C. College, Mannampandal, Myladuthurai, Tamil Nadu.. The study titled Population Breeding Ecol-



ogy of Long billed Vultures (Gyps indicus) and White rumped vultures in Kagaznagar forest division in Penchikalpet mandal and Dechilpeta respectively,“Through monthly surveys carried out in breeding colonies population abundance and age structure were assessed 2010 to 2021 at Palaraju cliff habitat in case of LBV and between 2015-2021 at Lakkameda cliff at Dechilpet in case of WRV. The LPVs are popularly known as Bejjur vultures because the scavenger birds were discovered at the Palarapu cliff which was located in Bejjur mandal before it became Penchikalpet mandal.“The study points out towards the declining population of both the types of vultures. The study has suggested some measures including undertaking measures to filter hazardous effluents in the Peddavagu from a paper mill nearby besides detailed toxicology studies on vulture and cattle carcasses.

International Women's Day celebrations

Women should step forward with confidence... District Collector Praveenya

“Sangareddy, Indian chronical correspondent March 10:“District Collector P. Praveenya said that if women step forward with confidence, they can achieve any goal.“The International Women's Day celebrations organized by the Women, Child and Elderly Welfare Department at the Collectorate Auditorium on Tuesday were held in a grand style.“District Collector P. Praveenya and TGIC Chairperson Nirmala Jayaprakash Reddy, who were present as the chief guests for the program, lit the lamp and inaugurated the program.“Speaking on the occasion, District Collector Praveenya said that if women move forward with confi-



dence, they can easily achieve their desired goals. He said that now more than ever, women employees in public services and women representatives in public service are coming forward in large numbers. He said that women are contributing to the development of society by showing their uniqueness in all fields. He said that women have more foresight and the ability to organize work systematically is greater among women. He said that if women are encouraged and their self-confidence is increased, they can excel in all fields.“He said that the government is taking steps to strengthen women economically in all ways through the Indira Mahila Shakti program. He said that women are being included in all programs and the government has undertaken a program to create a complete health profile for all women in self-help groups. He advised women who care about the health of their family members to also take special care of their own health. He said that the advancement of women contributes to the development of society.“Speaking, TGIC Chairperson Nirmala Jayaprakash Reddy said that women and men are equal in society. He said that the first teacher of children is the mother and that the responsibility of raising children with discipline and making them good citizens lies with the mother, regardless of gender. He said that if there is a change in society, there should be a change in women first. He said that many welfare schemes implemented by the government are being implemented in the name of women. He wished that women should take advantage of the opportunities and rise to a higher level.“District Legal Services Authority Secretary Soujanya said that it is very important for women to be aware of their rights and laws. On this occasion, she explained about various laws related to the protection of women.“Later, mementoes and certificates were presented to women employees who have provided excellent services in various departments and were honored. Nutrition kits were given to the women who participated in the program.“Earlier, several speakers spoke on the importance of Women's Day, while children's home students and Anganwadi teachers performed various cultural programs and impressed.“Municipal Chairperson Kuna Vanitha Santosh Kumar, “DWO Lalitha Kumari, DRDO Jyoti, district officials, DM&HO, CDPOs, women employees of various departments, and others participated in the program.

Grand International Women's Day Celebrations in Venkat Reddy Nagar

“— Celebrations organized under the leadership of Akarapu Arun patel

““— Former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy attended as Chief Guest

“Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, March 10 (Indian Chronicle):“International Women's Day celebrations were held with great enthusiasm and grandeur at the Venkat Reddy Nagar Division Bus Stop premises under the leadership of Uppal Constituency Youth Congress President Akarapu Arun Patel.“The event, held on Monday night, was attended by former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy as the chief guest. Congress Party woman leader Akarapu Sharanya Arun Patel, Assistant Commissioner (Sales Tax) Madhavi, senior Congress leader Billakanti Yadaiah, Ragi Latha Venkat Reddy, Yadamma Bilaganti, Sujana, and Nagalakshmi were also present and inaugurated the program.“Speaking on the occasion, former Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy said that International Women's Day is an annual global celebration recognizing and honoring the achievements of women in social, economic, cultural, and political fields. She stated that the day is dedicated to acknowledging women's accomplishments in various sectors and advocating for gender equality.“Later, Akarapu Arun said that women play a crucial role in the development of society and expressed his hope that every woman should progress economically and socially. He assured that he would strive to ensure that every government welfare scheme reaches the deserving beneficiaries.“On this occasion, women excelling in various fields were honored. All the women celebrated by cutting a cake and spent joyful moments with cultural activities and games. ASHA workers, Anganwadi teachers, and women above 60 years of age were felicitated with shawls during the program. Women Congress leaders Lakshmi Govind, Dhanalakshmi, Sandhya, Chaitanya, Pavani, Vijaya, Sunitha, Shobha, Praveena, Yakkamma, G. Lakshmi, Jayashree, Madhavi, Sharada, Dhanushree, Kiranmayi, Anitha, Sandhya, Rani, and several Congress party workers participated in the event.“A woman represents strength and trust. We sincerely thank everyone who



made this celebration a grand success and express our heartfelt gratitude to Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy for accepting our invitation and attending the program,” the organizers said.

Road Must Be Completed Without Any Quality Defects

– Ramantapur Division Congress President Mohammed Rafeeq Instructs Contractor

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 10 (Indian Chronicle):“Ramantapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafeeq personally inspected the ongoing asphalt (dambur) road works in the Old Ramantapur area on Monday night. He strictly instructed the contractor to ensure that the road is laid according to proper standards without any compromise in quality. He emphasized that the road construction should be durable and beneficial for the public for a long time. Mohammed Rafeeq stated that, with the support of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamla Parameshwar Reddy, all pending road-related issues in the Ramantapur area will be resolved in phases. He further said that resolving public problems is their primary objective.“Field Inspector Mahender, Mohammed Latif Bai, Mohammed Muzaffar, Thota Shankar, Raj Kumar, Gupta Prasad, Mohammed Nayeem, Mohammed Akhli, Mohammed Jahangir, and others participated in the program.



Collector Calls for Transparent Conduct of Intermediate Exams



“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 10,“District Collector K. Haritha has directed officials to ensure that Intermediate examinations in the district are conducted in a transparent and smooth manner.“On Tuesday, the Collector made a surprise inspection at the examination centre set up at the Government Junior College in Koutala mandal headquarters. During the visit, she reviewed the examination arrangements and enquired with the Chief Superintendent about the number of students who were absent from the examination.“Speaking on the occasion, the Collector instructed officials to take all necessary measures to ensure that the examinations are conducted peacefully without any untoward incidents.“Considering the intense summer heat, she also directed authorities to make arrangements for drinking water and ORS packets at the examination centre for the convenience and safety of students.

Work Together to Fulfil Savitribai Phule's Ideals: Ajmeera Shyam Naik

Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 10, Tributes Paid to Savitribai Phule on 129th Death Anniversary. Asifabad Constituency Congress Party In-charge Ajmeera Shyam Naik said that Savitribai Phule, who dedicated her life to the advancement of women's education and the upliftment of oppressed communities in India, remains a great source of inspiration for everyone. "The 129th death anniversary of Savitribai Phule was observed with great respect on Tuesday at the Akhil Bharatiya Mali Sangh District Office in the district headquarters. The programme was held under the leadership of District President Gurnule Mengaji. Ajmeera Shyam Naik attended the event as the chief guest and, along with leaders of various organizations, paid floral tributes to the portrait of Savitribai Phule. "Speaking on the occasion, he said that Savitribai Phule is remembered in history as the first woman teacher of India. He praised her efforts and struggles



for building a society based on equality, free from caste discrimination. "He further stated that the ideals of Savitribai Phule will truly be fulfilled when women excel and achieve success in all fields.

10th Grade Public Examinations Must Be Conducted in a Peaceful Atmosphere – District Collector Ankit..

Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Bhadradi Kothagudem Staff Reporter, March 10, Indian Chronicle: District Collector Ankit has directed officials from relevant departments to complete all necessary arrangements to ensure that the 10th-grade public examinations—scheduled to be held from March 14 to April 16—are conducted in a meticulous and peaceful environment. On Tuesday, a review meeting regarding the conduct of these examinations was held with officials from various departments at the IDOC office. Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector emphasized that since these examinations are crucial for the academic progress of students, officials must exercise the utmost vigilance in their conduct. He issued directives to ensure that all necessary infrastructure facilities are provided at the examination centers and to take proactive measures to prevent any difficulties for the students. He stated that a total of 73 examination centers have been established across the district. He further revealed that 12,731 regular students and 404 private candidates are expected to appear for these examinations. He stated that the examinations would be conducted daily from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM. The collector directed officials to take measures to ensure the mandatory availability of drinking water, electricity, restrooms, and adequate seating arrangements at all examination centers. He advised them to coordinate with the police department to implement stringent security arrangements, thereby preventing any untoward incidents during the conduct of the examinations. Finally, he instructed the concerned officials to exercise extreme caution regarding the transportation and security of the question papers. It was suggested that measures be implemented, such as enforcing Section 163-B in the vicinity of examination centers and imposing controls on photocopying shops. Concerned officials were directed to take necessary steps regarding transportation arrangements to ensure that students reach the examination centers on time. Health Department officials were instructed to keep essential medical facilities ready at the examination centers. The District Collector emphasized that all departments must work in coordination. The meeting was attended by Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Vidya Chandana, District Education Officer Nagalakshmi, Municipal Commissioner Sujatha, District Medical and Health Officer Tukaram Rathod, DPO Sudheer, officials from the relevant departments, and other participants.



Collector Participates in Sanitation Drive at Children's Park

Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 10, Keep Parks Clean and Pleasant for Visitors: Collector Haritha. District Collector K. Haritha has stressed the need to maintain parks in a clean and pleasant condition while also promoting environmental protection and sanitation measures for the benefit of visitors. "As part of the Praja Palana – Pragathi Pranalika programme, the Collector participated in a sanitation drive organized by the municipality at the Children's Park in the district headquarters. She was accompanied by Additional Collector M. David, Municipal Chairman Mengre Akash, Vice Chairman M.D. Ahmed, and municipal councillors. "Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that regular sanitation works should be carried out to ensure a clean and refreshing atmosphere for visitors. She advised the public not to throw plastic waste in open places and instead use designated dustbins. "She also instructed the park authorities to water the plants and grass regularly so that they do not dry out during the summer. "The Collector emphasized that the municipal administration should pay special attention to maintaining cleanliness in and around the park. She directed officials to carry out daily sanitation works in the town and remove garbage regularly. "To prevent the spread of mosquitoes, she instructed officials to spray anti-mosquito chemicals where necessary. She further stressed the importance of creating public awareness on urban cleanliness, environmental protection, and sanitation. "Maintaining a clean town is the responsibility of every citizen, she said, adding that public representatives and officials must work together to develop and beautify the town. "Municipal Commissioner Gajanand, councillors Vinod, Swapnarani, Krishamma, sanitation workers, and others participated in the programme.



Voluntary Cleanup Drive in the Vicinity of the IDOC Office



Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Bhadradi Kothagudem Staff Reporter, March 10, Indian Chronicle: As part of the 99-day action plan—being implemented under the government's prestigious 'Praja Palana Pragathi Plan' (People's Administration Progress Plan)—a voluntary cleanup drive (Shramadanam) was organized on Tuesday in the areas surrounding the IDOC office. District Collector Ankit personally participated in the cleanliness drive, actively engaging in the removal of waste from the office premises. Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Vidya Chandana, along with various district officials and staff members, also took part in this initiative.

Women's Empowerment is the Foundation for Social Progress: Former Corporator Bannala Geetha ----International Women's Day Greetings from Former Corporator Bannala Geetha

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 10 (Indian Chronicle): "On the occasion of International Women's Day, celebrations were held grandly in East Kalyanpuri. Former Chilkanagar Division Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj attended the event as the chief guest. Marking International Women's Day, the Child Vikas Foundation organized a special program in the Chilkanagar Division. Former Corporator and GHMC Standing Committee Member Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj inaugurated the program by cutting a large cake. Speaking on the occasion, Geetha Praveen said that every woman should play her role in achieving women's empowerment and support the progress and welfare of women. She stated that International Women's Day is a special occasion to honor women and recognize their immense contribution to society. From family to every sector of society, women play a vital role and are progressing on par with men. She extended her heartfelt International Women's Day greetings to everyone. She also congratulated Child Vikas Foundation Chairman Pushpa Reddy and Manager Ramesh, appreciating their organization for being run with nearly 90 percent women staff, and praised their efforts in empowering women. "On this occasion, about 100 women who completed tailoring training were awarded certificates by Geetha Praveen. "Later, Child Vikas Foundation Chairman Pushpa Reddy, along with the women members of the



organization, honored former Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen with a shawl and presented a memento. Speaking during the felicitation, Pushpa Reddy said that during her five-year tenure, Geetha Praveen had developed the Chilkanagar Division with funds worth ₹126 crores and stood as an inspiration for many women. She praised Geetha Praveen's services and expressed hope that she would achieve many higher positions in the future. Prominent personalities including Gone Phillips, Dr. V. Shyamala (Sub-Inspector), Dasari Glory Anand (Supreme Court Advocate), Dr. Gugu Shyamala (Writer, Researcher and Social Activist), Sujatha Burla, Dr. Anita (Sharada Foundation Social Activist), and a large number of women participated in the program.

Former Minister Jeevan Reddy Urges Funding for Tummadi Hetti Barrage Project

Jagti Staff Reporter, March 10 (Indian Chronicle): "Former Minister and Congress senior leader, Tatiparthi Jeevan Reddy, has urged the government to allocate funds for the Tummadi Hetti Barrage project, a dream project of the Congress party. Addressing a press conference at Indira Bhavan in Jagityal, Jeevan Reddy emphasized the importance of the project for the development of North Telangana. "He recalled that the late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy had initiated efforts to utilize the Godavari river water for the region. The Tummadi Hetti Barrage was planned to harness the Pranahita river water, but the project has been stalled at the tender stage. The 7th block of the barrage collapsed in October 2023, halting water transfer. "Jeevan Reddy suggested that the government can recover costs from the contractor and even consider criminal prosecution if needed. He highlighted that the Congress party had included the project in its election manifesto and Rahul Gandhi had promised to construct the barrage. "The project would benefit not only North Telangana but also provide drinking water and industrial needs for Hyderabad and Rangareddy districts. Jeevan Reddy proposed redesigning the canals to transfer 148 meters of water and utilizing the Jaipur Vagu to Sundilla lift to transfer water to Ellampalli. "He estimated the project cost to be around ₹10,000 crores and



urged the government to allocate ₹5,000 crores annually for two years. Jeevan Reddy appealed to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, and Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy to prioritize the project. "The meeting was attended by Congress leaders Kotta Mohan, Junnu Rajender, Durgayya, Gajula Rajender, Puppala Ashok, Radha Kishan, Rajinikanth, and Dhyavara Srinivasulu.

Will the fate of the Chandrugonda RTC bus stand change?

Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Bhadradi Kothagudem Staff Reporter, March 10, Indian Chronicle: Smt. Kapuganti Venkatalakshmi, the donor of the land for the Chandrugonda bus stand, stated that her son, Mr. Satyababu, had previously donated land worth lakhs of rupees to the RTC in memory of his father, Mr. Kapuganti Rangayya, for the convenience of the villagers. She lamented that despite generating revenue from this site, the RTC has failed to provide even basic amenities; consequently, the bus stand has become a hub for anti-social activities. She noted that informing RTC officials about this issue on multiple occasions has yielded no results. Furthermore, the villagers have submitted a representation to the RTC Station Manager requesting the appointment of a bus controller at the stand, pointing out that buses are currently failing to enter the premises. They also requested that boarding facilities be provided for long-distance buses. The public is now waiting in hope, wondering if the fate of the bus stand will finally change—at least now. They earnestly requested the RTC authorities to take immediate measures to ensure that buses begin entering the bus stand as soon as possible. "Today,



as part of the 'Praja Palana Pragathi Plan' (People's Administration Progress Plan), various works are being carried out within the premises of the RTC Bus Stand in Chandrugonda Gram Panchayat. These activities include the removal of weeds and dilapidated structures, as well as the cleaning of drains and roads. The program saw the participation of the MPDO, MPO, RTC station manager, Sarpanch, deputy Sarpanch, Panchayat secretary, governing body members, and village elders.

Demand to Fulfil Promises Made to Telangana Activists: Former TRS State Secretary Neredham Bhaskar Goud



KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 10 (Indian Chronicle): "On the occasion of the March 10 Million March, Telangana activist and former TRS State Secretary Neredham Bhaskar Goud, who is also a BC JAC leader from the Uppal constituency, paid rich tributes to the Telangana martyrs at Gun Park on Tuesday. He also shared memories of the Telangana movement with fellow activists present at the event. Speaking on the occasion, Bhaskar Goud said that Telangana activists should be given due respect so that they can live with dignity and pride. He recalled that the unity and courage shown by the people of Telangana during the Million March played a crucial role in achieving statehood. "He stated that the bravery displayed by the people of Telangana on that day continues to inspire future generations. Bhaskar Goud urged the Congress government to fulfill the promises made to Telangana movement activists. He demanded that

250 square yards of house site be allotted to every activist and called upon the Congress government to implement all the assurances it had made for the welfare of the movement participants. Telangana activists Madhav, Satyaraj Goud, Narasimha, Suman, Sudhakar and others participated in the program.

Mega Job Mela organised by Adilabad district police

“S. Harpal Singh, Adilabad, March 10”Comparatively, Adilabad still remains a backward district with the rate of unemployment assumed to be the highest among surrounding districts.. Its unemployed tribal youth often fail to get employment just because they cannot afford to travel out of their respective places.“This disadvantage was taken note of by the district police headed by Superintendent of Police Akhil Mahajan who brought employment opportunities closer to home of the job seekers. A Mega Job Mela was the result of the SP’s endeavour in facilitating opportunities especially to the disadvantaged.“As many as 67 companies came to the job mela offering 4,000 jobs in various sectors to eligible youth. The event was a runaway success, in a manner of speaking as over 6,500 unemployed girls men and women attended it.“Some 2,100 of the youth landed with jobs in various sectors set to earn a monthly salary between Rs. 13,000 and Rs. 40,000. The jobs were secured in IT, Health care, Banking, Automobile, Nursing, Marketing, Driving, Security, Pharma , HR and duties at Air Ports.“Addressing the youth, Mr. Mahajan exhorted



them to discharge their duties sincerely and record progress in life. District Judge M. Prabhakar Rao, MLAs Payal Shankar and Vedma Bojju, Utnoor ITDA Project Officer Yuvraj Marmat and others also attended.

Grand International Women’s Day Celebrations at Ramanthapur TV Colony Former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Attends as Chief Guest

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 10 (Indian Chronicle):“International Women’s Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm at TV Colony in Ramanthapur. Former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy attended the event as the chief guest.“On the occasion, a cake was cut in her presence and the Women’s Day celebrations were held in a joyful atmosphere. She extended her heartfelt wishes to all women and appreciated their contributions to society.“Later, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy distributed prizes to the winners of various cultural programs conducted as part of the celebrations.“Women and local residents including Bhavani, Indumathi, Radha, Kavitha, Radha Reddy, Tanuja, Gouri, Ashwini, Hemavathi, Devi, Sujatha, Anuradha, Sandeep, Bhaskar, Raghuveer, Satti Reddy, and Salla Prabhakar Reddy, along with many women from TV Colony, participated in the program.



Training for Sarpanches and Ward Members on the 99-Day Action Plan: District Collector Ankit Inspects Arrangements.

“Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Bhadradi Kothagudem Staff Reporter, March 10, Indian Chronicle: District Collector Ankit inspected the arrangements being made at the Kothagudem Club on Tuesday for a training program scheduled for the 12th of this month. This program is intended for newly elected Sarpanches and Ward Members regarding the 99-day action plan currently being implemented as part of the ‘Praja Palana Pragathi Plan’ (Public Administration Progress Plan). The Collector directed officials from relevant departments to take necessary measures to ensure the efficient conduct of the program, including providing all essential amenities for the public representatives attending the training. On this occasion, the Collector personally inspected the meeting hall, seating capacity, and the designated dining area within the Kothagudem Club, offering several suggestions. He instructed officials to arrange adequate seating within the venue, organized on a Mandal-wise basis, to ensure the comfort of the public representatives attending the training program. The collector directed that the venue be adorned with flex banners to create awareness among the public representatives regarding the various welfare schemes implemented by the government and the development initiatives undertaken by different departments. He further instructed that measures be taken to ensure the venue is inspected and certified by fire safety officials prior to the commencement of the program. Additionally, he issued instructions to the concerned departmental officials to undertake appropriate measures for sanitation management within the premises, thereby ensuring a clean and hygienic environment. He directed officials to prepare the necessary training materials in advance to ensure the smooth conduct of the training program and program and to arrange technical facilities—such as LED screens and sound systems—for the event’s execution. He instructed them to



set up a dedicated registration counter for every participant attending the training program and to take measures to issue them identification cards. Furthermore, he directed officials to make comprehensive arrangements for meals for all public representatives attending the training session. With potential emergency situations at the training camp in mind, the collector ordered that measures be taken to ensure the availability of an ambulance, along with necessary medicines and medical personnel. It was stated that experienced master trainers would participate in this training program to provide instruction to public representatives on various topics, including the measures required to effectively deliver government welfare schemes to the public, the efficient utilization of funds, and the implementation mechanism for the 99-day action plan—a key component of the ‘Praja Palana’ (Public Administration) progress plan. Accompanying the collector during this inspection were additional collector (local bodies) Vidya Chandana, RDO Madhu, Tahsildar Pullayya, DPO Sudheer, Kothagudem Municipal Corporation Commissioner Sujatha, and officials from various concerned departments.

Rs 10,016 Fixed Deposit for Little Girl Manushree at Komatlagudem Post Office



“Avn Reddy Khammam bureau March 10 (Indian Chronicle):“A thoughtful initiative was taken by members of the YSR Youth in Komatlagudem village of Chinthakani mandal, Khammam district, during the celebrations of the Sri Ankamma Thalli Jatara festival.“As part of the festivities, a ‘Dance Baby Dance’ program was organized in the village, which became a major attraction. Several children showcased their talents through dance performances and entertained the audience.“On this occasion, remembering the services of former Chief Minister Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy, the Komatlagudem YSR Youth members presented a consolation prize of ₹10,016 to Manushree, daughter of Rambabu and Saritha (Kanathala family).“In a commendable step for the child’s future, the youth members deposited the entire prize amount as a fixed deposit in the local post office on Tuesday. They stated that the decision was taken with the intention of supporting the girl’s future education and development.“Manushree’s parents expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the YSR Youth members for their thoughtful support.“YSR Youth representatives also thanked village elders, youth volunteers, organizers, and all villagers who helped make the event successful. They said the program stood as a good example of social service and encouragement for young talent.“Village elders and residents appealed to voluntary organizations and youth groups to come forward and extend support to financially weaker families, emphasizing that today’s children are the responsible citizens of tomorrow.

The District Medical and Health Officer (DM&HO) of the Bhadradi Kothagudem district visited the Manuguru Area Hospital today and conducted a review regarding the food poisoning incident that occurred at the MJPTC BC Hostel in Manuguru

“Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Bhadradi Kothagudem Staff Reporter, March 10, Indian Chronicle In this context, it was reported that a total of 17 students fell ill. Of these, 16 students were admitted to the Manuguru Area Hospital for treatment. One student received primary treatment and was subsequently sent back to the hostel. The remaining students are currently undergoing treatment at the hospital and are in a stable condition. They are being treated under the supervision of the area hospital’s pediatrician. During the visit, the DM&HO interacted directly with the students to gather details regarding the food they had consumed. He also inquired about the symptoms they were experiencing. Most students reported suffering from vomiting and abdominal pain. Subsequently, the DM&HO visited the MJPTC BC Hostel in Manuguru and inspected the medical camp being conducted there by RBSK teams and the medical staff from the Manuguru Primary Health Centre (PHC). He reviewed the students’ health status and issued instructions to ensure that necessary medical services are provided. On this occasion, the DM&HO instructed the hostel’s staff nurse to immediately inform nearby medical authorities whenever students develop any health issues and to take measures to provide immediate first aid whenever necessary. Currently, the students’ health condition remains stable, and the medical staff is providing necessary treatment while keeping them under continuous observation.



Houses must be rebuilt at the same place where they were demolished

Bandari Ailayya CPI (ML) New Democracy, Khammam District Secretary

“Arvapalli Nagesh khammam Staff Reporter March 10 (Indian Chronicle):“Today, police stopped leaders of CPI (ML) New Democracy who went to Ambedkar Bhavan to meet and console the displaced people of Velugumatla under the leadership of the Khammam district committee of the party.“Speaking on the occasion, CPI (ML) New Democracy Khammam District Secretary Bandari Ailayya said that poor people of Velugumatla had been living for several years on Bodhan land, which was not related to the government, by constructing small houses and surviving with great hardship due to lack of proper employment. He stated that suddenly the government machinery came down heavily on these poor people and demolished their houses without issuing any prior notices or warnings. The painful situation of their homes being destroyed is still fresh before everyone’s eyes.“He said that after demolishing the houses in Velugumatla, the affected families were forced to stay at Ambedkar Bhavan, where they are facing severe hardships. He alleged that the government has not provided any assistance to the displaced people and that they are struggling even for drinking water and food while staying in Ambedkar Bhavan.“Ailayya demanded that district ministers and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy should immediately respond and do justice to the poor people. He urged the government to construct houses at the same place where the houses were demolished and to provide immediate financial assistance of ₹1 lakh to each affected family. He criticized the government for betraying the people who



trusted it and voted it to power.“He warned that if the state government and district ministers fail to provide justice to the displaced families of Velugumatla, CPI (ML) New Democracy will launch strong protest movements under the party’s leadership.“District leaders Kola Lakshminarayana, Bajjuri Venkataram Reddy, Giri, Pamula Mohan Rao, Shaik Subhan, Sudarshan, V.V. Rao, Lakshmi, Janaki, Suresh, Umashankar, Madhava Rao, John Reddy Patel, Sangamma, Annappurna, Mastan, and Srikanth Gandhi and others participated in the program.“With revolutionary greetings“Pamula Mohan Rao“City Secretary, CPI (ML) New Democracy.

District Collector Inspects EVM Godown



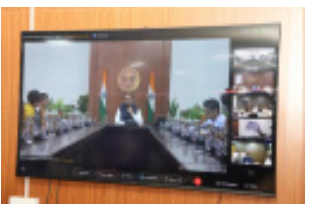
“Arvapalli Nagesh khammam Staff Reporter March 10 (Indian Chronicle):“As part of the quarterly inspections, District Collector Anudeep Durishetty on Tuesday inspected the EVM godown located in the Collectorate premises along with Additional Collector P. Srinivasa

Reddy and representatives of various political parties.“Initially, the Collector examined the seal of the EVM godown. In the presence of political representatives and officials, the seal was opened and the team entered the storage room to inspect the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and VVPATs. After the inspection, the godown was sealed again. The District Collector also signed the inspection register.“During the visit, the Collector reviewed the functioning of the alarm system and fire safety equipment. He instructed the security personnel to continuously monitor the CCTV cameras and remain alert at all times. He emphasized that the security of election materials is extremely important and directed the concerned officials to ensure constant supervision.“The District Collector was accompanied by Election Section Supervisor M.A. Raju, R&B DE Lakhan Naik, AE Lalitha, Election DT Ansari, representatives of Aam Aadmi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Bharat Rashtra Samithi, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Indian National Congress, and Telugu Desam Party, along with other officials.“Issued by:“District Public Relations Officer’s Office, Khammam.

Training Program for Public Representatives on March 12... District Collector Anudeep Durishetty All arrangements completed for the training program

“Awareness on government priority programs“District Collector participates in VC conducted by CS on implementation of Praja Palana Pragati Pranalika““Arvapalli Nagesh khammam Staff Reporter, March 10 (Indian Chronicle):“District Collector Anudeep Durishetty informed that a training program on the Praja Palana Pragati Pranalika initiative will be organized on March 12 at Bhakta Ramadasu Kalakshetram for public representatives including Sarpanches, Municipal Chairpersons, and Ward Councillors. The District Collector participated from the Khammam Collectorate Camp Office in a video conference conducted by Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao with Collectors of all districts on Tuesday regarding the implementation of the Praja Palana Pragati Pranalika program.“During the meeting, the Chief Secretary discussed in detail the sanitation works, file clearance process, and the training program planned for Sarpanches and Councillors on March 12, and offered several suggestions.“Speaking on the occasion, District Collector Anudeep Durishetty said that a preparatory meeting was already held under the leadership of the district in-charge minister regarding the Praja Palana Pragati Pranalika program. He stated that sanitation management and file clearance activities are being successfully implemented across the district.“The Collector mentioned that during field-level visits, the participation of Sarpanches, Municipal Chairpersons, and Ward Councillors in sanitation management activities was clearly observed. He reiterated that a training session for these public representatives will be conducted on March 12 at Bhakta Ramadasu Kalakshetram.“He added that all necessary arrangements have been completed for the train-

ing program and steps have been taken to ensure that every public representative receives an invitation.“The Collector also stated that invitations have been sent to VVIPs and VIPs as per protocol. Necessary arrangements such as food, seating, and proper audio-visual systems have also been put in place for the participants.“The morning session of the training program will focus on the implementation of the Praja Palana Pragati Pranalika, explaining the 10 themes and the role of various departments and public representatives. After lunch, awareness will be provided on the Panchayat Raj (PR) Act and the Municipal Act.“After the video conference, the District Collector directed the concerned officials to prepare a minute-to-minute program schedule for the training session. Since training on the PR Act had already been given earlier, he instructed that limited time be allocated for it while ensuring that the key aspects of the Municipal Act are clearly explained.“He also directed that an interactive session with public representatives be conducted after the training program. The Collector emphasized the need to explain government priority initiatives such as Indiramma housing, education, and healthcare programs, including the challenges faced during implementation and the measures being taken to resolve them.“The video conference was attended by Khammam Municipal Corporation Commissioner Abhishek Agastya, ZP CEO Deeksha Raina, CPO A. Srinivas, DRDO K. Sriram, DPO Rambabu, Municipal Commissioners, and other officials.“Issued by: District Public Relations Officer Office, Khammam.



‘No Kings’ protests against Trump across U.S.



GNS News Agency, March 10

Large crowds of protesters marched and rallied in cities across the U.S. on Saturday for “No Kings” demonstrations decrying what participants see as the government’s swift drift into authoritarianism under President Donald Trump. People carrying signs with slogans such as “Nothing is more patriotic than protesting” or “Resist Fascism” packed into New York City’s Times Square and rallied by the thousands in parks in Boston, Atlanta and Chicago. Demonstrators marched through Washington and downtown Los Angeles and picketed outside capitols in several Republican-led states, a courthouse in Billings, Montana, and hundreds of smaller public spaces. Mr. Trump’s Republican Party disparaged the demonstrations as “Hate America” rallies, but in many places the events looked more like a street party. There were marching bands, a huge banner with the U.S. Constitution’s “We The People” preamble that people could sign, and demonstrators wearing inflatable costumes, particularly frogs, which have emerged as a sign of resistance in Portland, Oregon.

It was the third mass mobilisation since Mr. Trump’s return to the White House and came against the backdrop of a government shutdown that not only has closed federal programmes and services but also is testing the core balance of power, as an aggressive executive confronts Con-

gress and the courts in ways that protest organisers warn are a slide toward authoritarianism. In Washington, Iraq War Marine veteran Shawn Howard said he had never participated in a protest before but was motivated to show up because of what he sees as the Trump administration’s “disregard for the law”. He said immigration detentions without due process and deployments of troops in U.S. cities are “un-American” and alarming signs of eroding democracy. “I fought for freedom and against this kind of extremism abroad,” said Howard, who added that he also worked at the CIA for 20 years on counter-extremism operations. “And now I see a moment in America where we have extremists everywhere who are, in my opinion, pushing us to some kind of civil conflict.” Demonstrators in costume attend a “No Kings” protest against U.S. President Donald Trump’s policies outside City Hall in Los Angeles, California, U.S., Mr. Trump, meanwhile, was spending the weekend at his Mar-a-Lago home in Florida. “They say they’re referring to me as a king. I’m not a king,” the President said in a Fox News interview that aired early on Friday, before he departed for a \$1 million-per-plate MAGA Inc fundraiser at his club.

Nationwide demonstrations in San Francisco hundreds of people spelt out “No King!” and other phrases with their bodies on Ocean Beach. Hayley Wingard, who was dressed as the Statue of Liberty, said she too had never been to a protest before. Only recently she began to view Trump as a “dictator”. “I was actually ok with everything until I found out about the military invasion in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Portland — Portland bothered me the most because I’m from Portland, and I don’t want the military in my cities. That’s scary,” Wingard said. Salt Lake City demonstrators gathered outside the Utah State Capitol to share messages of hope and healing after a protester was fatally shot during the city’s first “No Kings” march in June. And more than 1,500 people gathered in Birmingham, Alabama, evoking the city’s history of protests and the critical role it played in the Civil Rights Movement two generations ago. “It just feels like we’re living in an America that I don’t recognise,

Exposition of holy relics of Buddha in Russia's Kalmykia draws over 90,000 devotees



The exposition of a portion of the sacred relics of Lord Buddha, currently enshrined at a monastery in Russia’s Kalmykia, has drawn more than 90,000 devotees since it was brought to that country a week ago, officials said. The relics, originally enshrined at the National Museum in New Delhi, was ferried to Russia in a special Indian Air Force aircraft and reached Elista, the capital city of the Republic of Kalmykia on October 11. As part of the exposition, it was later temporarily enshrined in the main Buddhist monastery in Elista, known as the Geden Sheddup Choikhorling Monastery, also called the “Golden Abode of Shakyamuni Buddha.”

This is a significant Tibetan Buddhist centre, opened for the public in 1996 and is surrounded by the Kalmyk steppe, the Indian Culture Ministry earlier said. Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha arrived in Elista on Friday (October 17, 2025), and will lead an Indian delegation that will accompany the holy relics when they are ferried back to India on October 19, the Ministry said on Saturday. The exposition will strengthen the people-to-people ties between India and Russia, he said during his interac-

tion with local media after paying homage to the relics. In a powerful display of spiritual devotion and shared cultural heritage, the exposition has drawn an “unprecedented response” in the Republic of Kalmykia, Russia. As of today, more than 90,000 devotees have paid their reverent homage to the relics, enshrined at the iconic Geden Sheddup Choikhorling Monastery, the Ministry said in a statement. The sacred relics of the Buddha were earlier to be exhibited in Kalmykia from September 24-28 as part of an exposition. The delay happened due to “certain unforeseen logistical and technical circumstances,” sources earlier said. On his arrival, Mr. Sinha was received by the First Deputy Chairman of the Government of Kalmykia, Tserenov Erdni Nikolayevich, Deputy Chairman Dzhambinov Ochr Vladimirovich and India’s Deputy Chief of Mission Nikhilesh Giri, the statement said. The sacred relics, recognised as a national treasure of India, were brought to the capital city of Elista, accompanied by a high-level delegation led by Keshav Prasad Maurya, Deputy Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, and senior Indian monks. The delegation is conducting special religious services and blessings for the predominantly Buddhist population of Kalmykia, the only region in Europe where Buddhism is the predominant religion, it said. This historic exposition, the first of its kind in the Russian Republic, is a testament to the deep civilisational bonds between India and Russia, it further said. It revives the enduring legacy of the 19th Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, the revered Buddhist monk and diplomat from Ladakh, who was instrumental in reviving Buddhism in Mongolia and reigniting interest in the Buddha Dharma in Russian regions like Kalmykia, Buryatia, and Tuva, the ministry said. The event has been organised by the BTI section of the Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), the National Museum, and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA).

Netanyahu plans to run for PM again in Israel’s 2026 elections

Jerusalem: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has announced that he will run for office again in the 2026 parliamentary elections. He made the announcement during an interview with Israel’s Channel 14 on Saturday (local time), where he was asked if he intends to seek another term. “Yes,” he replied. When asked whether he expects to win, Netanyahu said, “Yes.” In the last Israeli elections in 2022, Netanyahu’s right-wing Likud party won 32 seats, and he was recommended by 64 members of the 120-seat Israeli parliament, or Knesset, to be qualified to form a government.

Netanyahu was sworn in as the country’s prime minister in December of that year, and has been leading an extreme-right coalition ever since. Netanyahu will turn 76 next week. He served as Israel’s prime minister from 1996 to 1999 and again from 2009 to 2021, before being ousted in June 2021 by a centrist coalition formed by Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett. In a separate development, Netanyahu’s office announced that the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip will not open until further notice. Its opening will be under consideration in accordance with how Hamas implements its part in the return of the deceased hostages and the implementation of the agreed framework, the Israeli Prime Minister’s Office said in a statement. The Palestinian Embassy in Cairo announced earlier in the day



that the Rafah border crossing will reopen on Monday to allow Palestinians residing in Egypt who wish to return to Gaza to pass. The Israel Defense Forces said early on Saturday in a statement that it had received the body of the 10th deceased Israeli hostage held in Gaza from Hamas, apart from all the remaining 20 living hostages. A ceasefire, mediated by Egypt, Qatar, Turkey, and the United States, went into effect on Oct. 10. Its first phase includes the exchange of prisoners and detainees, the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza, and a partial withdrawal of Israeli forces. Under the agreement, Hamas is obliged to return the bodies of 18 more deceased Israeli hostages.

Israel says Hamas hands over '2 coffins of deceased hostages' to Red Cross in Gaza

GNS News Agency, March 10

Israel’s military said Hamas handed over “two coffins of deceased hostages” from Gaza to the Red Cross late while Israel increased pressure on the militant group to share the rest more quickly under their ceasefire. No names were immediately released. Israel announced earlier on Saturday that Gaza’s sole crossing with the outside world, Rafah, would stay closed “until further notice,” tying it to Hamas’ release of remains. On Thursday, it had said the crossing likely would reopen on Sunday. Hamas has now handed over the remains of 12 of the 28 dead hostages in Gaza, a key step in the week-old ceasefire process meant to end two years of war. The militant group says devastation and Israeli military control of certain areas of Gaza have slowed the handover. The statement by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office on the Rafah crossing came shortly after the Palestinian embassy in Egypt said it would reopen on Monday for people returning to Gaza. Hamas called Netanyahu’s decision a violation of the ceasefire deal. The Rafah crossing has been closed since May 2024, when Israel took control of the Gaza side. A fully reopened crossing would make it easier for Gazans to seek medical treatment, travel or visit family in Egypt, home to tens of thousands of Palestinians.

Israel has been returning the bodies of Palestinians with no names, only numbers. Gaza’s Health Ministry posts photos of them online, hoping families will come forward. “Just like they took their captives, we want our captives. Bring me my son, bring all our kids back,” said a tearful Iman Sakani, whose son went missing during the war. She was among dozens of anxious families waiting at Nasser hospital. One woman knelt, crying over a body after identifying it. As part of the ceasefire agreement, Israel on Saturday returned 15 bodies of Palestinians to Gaza, bringing the total it has returned to 135. Meanwhile, Gaza’s ruins were being scoured for the dead. Newly recovered bodies brought the Palestinian toll above 68,000, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry. Thousands of people are still missing, according to the Red Cross. The ministry, part of the Hamas-run government, does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count. But the ministry maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by UN agencies and independent experts. Israel has disputed them without providing its own toll. Hamas-led militants killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted 251 people in the attack on southern Israel that sparked the war on October 7, 2023. A push for hostages’ remains Israel also said the remains of a 10th hostage that Hamas handed over on Friday were identified as Eliyahu Margalit. The 76-year-old was abducted from kibbutz Nir Oz during the October 7 attack. His remains were found after bulldozers plowed areas in the southern city of Khan



Younis. US President Donald Trump has warned that he would greenlight a resumption of the war by Israel if Hamas does not return the remains of all dead hostages.

Hamas has said it is committed to the ceasefire deal, but that the retrieval of remains is also hampered by the presence of unexploded ordnance in the territory’s vast ruins. The Israeli organisation supporting families of those abducted said it will continue holding weekly rallies in Tel Aviv until all are returned. “We don’t want to go back to fighting, God forbid, but this whole ordeal must end, and all the hostages must be returned,” said Ifat Calderon, aunt of freed hostage Ofer Calderon. Hamas has urged mediators to increase the flow of aid into Gaza as closures of crossings and Israeli restrictions on aid groups continue. “Vast parts of the city are just a wasteland,” UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher said on Saturday while visiting Gaza City, where international food security experts declared famine earlier this year. UN data on Friday showed 339 trucks have been offloaded for distribution in Gaza since the ceasefire began. Under the agreement, about 600 aid trucks per day should be allowed to enter. COGAT, the Israeli defense body overseeing aid in Gaza, reported 950 trucks -- including commercial trucks and bilateral deliveries -- crossing on Thursday and 716 on Wednesday, the UN said. Israel has said it let in enough food and accused Hamas of stealing much of it, which the UN and other aid agencies deny. Hamas accuses Israel of violations. Hamas again accused Israel of continuing attacks and violating the ceasefire, asserting that 38 Palestinians had been killed since it began. There was no immediate response from Israel, which still maintains control of about half of Gaza. On Friday, Gaza’s Civil Defense, first responders operating under the Hamas-run Interior Ministry, said nine people were killed, including women and children, when their vehicle was hit by Israeli fire in Gaza City. The Civil Defense said the car crossed into an Israeli-controlled area in eastern Gaza. Israel’s army said it saw a “suspicious vehicle” crossing the so-called yellow line and approaching troops. It said it fired warning shots, but the vehicle continued to approach in a manner that posed an “imminent threat.”

Nirav Modi claims ‘sensational developments’ to come in U.K. extradition case

Nirav Modi, in prison for over six years, has told a United Kingdom court there are “sensational developments” to come when his Indian extradition case on fraud and money laundering charges reopens for a hearing in London next month. The 54-year-old fugitive diamondaire appeared in the dock before High Court Judge Simon Tinkler at the Royal Courts of Justice in London on Friday (October 17, 2025) to present his defence in an unrelated case, involving an over \$8 million unpaid Bank of India debt. The Judge turned down Mr. Modi’s application for a stay on the proceedings on the grounds of technical and medical constraints in prison, which is set to proceed to a trial scheduled in January 2026. “They (Bank of India) refer to my extradition... I’m still here. There will be some sensational developments, and I have never used these words before,” said Mr. Modi, during a pre-trial review hearing. The fugitive diamond merchant, wanted in India in the estimated \$2 billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) loan scam case, told the court he was “extremely hopeful” of either being discharged or granted bail after the court agreed to accept new evidence despite a “high bar” in such matters. The U.K.’s Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has confirmed that Nirav Modi “has lodged an application to reopen his (extradition) appeal”, with the Indian authorities submitting their response ahead of a hearing expected towards the end of November. Defending him-

self as a “litigant in person”, Mr. Modi read from copious handwritten notes as he addressed the Judge. Officers sat guard as his prisoner, dressed in a worn-out white t-shirt and pink track pants, spoke in mumbled tones about struggles with his eyesight and lengthy delays over access to a computer behind bars, which he stressed made any trial unfair and imbalanced. “I understand this is an adversarial process, and they (Bank of India) can say anything against me. But they keep on making assumptions; I would say, spend one day in prison... There needs to be some basic common sense,” he said, appearing to lose his calm at one stage. Bank of India, represented by barrister Tom Beasley and RWK Goodman’s Milan Kapadia, are pursuing Mr. Modi’s personal guarantee related to a loan to Dubai-incorporated Firestar Diamond FZE. They argued that a stay on the proceedings would be unfair to the bank, as it would push the long-pending claim off indefinitely. “If he is extradited, he will likely remain in custody... He will also be in a different time zone,” Beasley told the court, adding that the bank “remains sceptical” about Mr. Modi’s “claimed lack of funds”. Justice Tinkler ruled that on balance the need to preserve the court’s timetable outweighs other considerations and that all efforts to ensure an “equality of arms” in the case have been made.

Drought, sand storms, evacuations: How Iran’s climate crisis gets ignored



GNS News Agency, March 10

London: Iran and Israel fought a 12-day war in June. Although a ceasefire was declared the same month, news coverage of Iran continues to focus on the conflict’s aftermath and the Middle East’s tense political situation. Meanwhile, Tehran – home to more than 10 million people – is facing one of its worst water shortages in decades. Dams near the capital are at their lowest levels for nearly 70 years – the Karaj dam (one of the city’s major suppliers), which has 25 million cubic metres of water storage, is 86% empty. In the centre of the country, the city of Isfahan is sinking as subsidence swallows cars and pedestrians. Land subsidence is mainly caused by over-extraction of ground water for agriculture – more than 90% of Iran’s water is extracted for agricultural use. Many of Iran’s iconic lakes have turned into a bed of salt. Even though schools and roads in Tehran were evacuated in September due to their risk of collapsing, international media coverage of this major environmental problem remains alarmingly low – limited mostly to local and Persian-language diaspora outlets.

Earlier this year, the country’s southern provinces were blanketed by sand and dust storms that sent thousands to hospitals and disrupted infrastructure. Again, this went mostly unreported outside Iran. There has also been little international coverage of the environmental impact of the war on Iran. In contrast, local media have reported that Israel’s missile attacks on oil depots close to Tehran released 47,000 tons of greenhouse gases into the city’s atmosphere, causing air pollution. They claimed surface and groundwater systems, soil and wider ecosystems have all been damaged by the leakage of industrial wastewater, urban sewage and other forms of pollution including noise, vibration, radiation and heat – all of which pose a threat to the lives of humans, animals and plants. For months, international news outlets have focused their coverage of Iran on questions about its nuclear programme and worsening ties with the west. They have covered espionage, sanctions, cybersecurity and Iranian officials’ statements about uranium enrichment and nuclear weapons. This is not surprising. An analysis by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford found that newsrooms covering the Middle East will mainly report on war and conflict. Other academic studies underline that long-term but far-reaching environmental issues are far down their list of

priorities. Even inside Iran, the news media has largely concentrated on the war. During the conflict, conservative Iranian state-affiliated news outlets such as Tasnim, Mizan and Kayhan focused almost entirely on military developments and official narratives of “national defence” and “foreign threats”. But when the fighting ended, some Iranian newspapers, particularly those which advocate for gradual social, political and press freedom (along with the state-run IRNA news agency), started to cover the drought and water shortages. The conservative Iranian news media outlets are now covering these stories a little, but less so than the reformist media, such as Payamena and Shargh. Today, the Middle East faces some of the world’s worst environmental crises – including droughts, floods, sand and dust storms with enormous consequences. Across Iran’s provinces, many rivers and wetlands have dried up. Air pollution is getting worse and power cuts are devastating lives and livelihoods.

What does the world know?

My research looks at how the media reports climate change across the Middle East and North Africa, and particularly in Iran. I also write for news organisations about water and climate change. In doing this research, I have found that Iran’s environmental problems are largely driven by decades of government mismanagement and the overexploitation of water resources – including excessive dam construction and groundwater use for agriculture. Even on the few occasions when international media outlets have covered Iran’s water crisis in recent months, the lead section of the coverage is often tied to the war. While reporting on war is essential to expose its human costs and security, environmental coverage is equally important. Climate change will not pause for a ceasefire, and neglecting it risks overlooking a crisis that affects everyone.

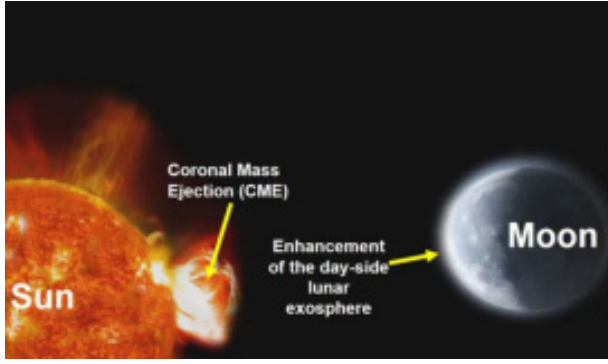
Passenger bus crash in north-eastern Brazil leaves 17 dead

The bus was carrying about 30 passengers, police said. The number of injured, who were taken to nearby hospitals, was not immediately clear. The vehicle crashed in Saloá, a city in the state of Pernambuco, and was bound for the city of Brumado, in the neighbouring state of Bahia.

Police said the driver lost control of the bus, crossed into the opposite lane and hit rocks on the roadside. He then returned to the correct lane but crashed into a sand embankment, causing the vehicle to overturn.

The cause of the crash is under investigation. The driver suffered minor injuries and tested negative for alcohol, police said. Bahia Governor Jerônimo Teixeira said on X that his administration was supporting rescue efforts and the identification of victims. “I am following the situation with my team and deeply mourn the loss of lives, the injuries and the suffering of all the families,” he wrote.

Chandrayaan-2 detects Sun's fury on the Moon's atmosphere



Bengaluru: In a landmark scientific breakthrough, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced that its lunar orbiter Chandrayaan-2 has made the first-ever observation of the effects of Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs) from the Sun on the Moon's exosphere. The observation was made using the Chandrayaan-2's Atmospheric Composition Explorer-2 (CHACE-2) instrument onboard the orbiter. During a rare solar event on May 10, 2024, a series of CMEs impacted the Moon, leading to a significant increase in the total pressure of the dayside lunar exosphere — the extremely thin atmosphere surrounding the Moon.

ISRO scientists reported that the number density of neutral atoms and molecules in the exosphere increased by more than an order of magnitude, confirming theoretical predictions that had never before been validated through direct observation. The Moon's exosphere, classified as a surface boundary exosphere, is highly sensitive to solar activity due to the absence of a global magnetic field. The CME event enhanced the liberation of atoms from the lunar surface, temporarily altering the Moon's atmospheric conditions. ISRO said the findings not only deepen scientific understanding of lunar space weather but also have implications for future lunar missions and the design of human habitats on the Moon.

"The Earth's Moon has a very thin atmosphere, which

falls under the category of 'exosphere', implying that the gas atoms and molecules in the lunar environment rarely interact despite their coexistence. The boundary of the exosphere is the surface of the Moon and hence the Moon's exosphere falls under the category of 'surface boundary exosphere,' ISRO said. It said that the exosphere on the Moon is produced by a number of processes, which involves the interaction of solar radiation, solar wind (ions of Hydrogen, Helium and a small quantity of heavier ions emanated from the Sun) and the impact of the meteorites with the surface of the Moon. These processes liberate atoms/molecules from the surface of the Moon, which become a part of the exosphere. "In general, the exosphere of the Moon is highly sensitive to even small variations of the factors that are responsible for its creation, and such a factor is the emission of the coronal mass of the Sun, known as CME (short form of Coronal Mass Ejection). CMEs are events when the Sun ejects significant quantities of its building material, comprising mostly Helium and Hydrogen ions. These effects are significant on the Moon, as Moon is an airless body, that too deprived of any global magnetic field, the presence of which would have shielded (even partially) the solar effects on its surface," ISRO said. It said that this opportunity to directly observe the effects of the CME impacting on the Moon came in a rare occurrence, on May 10, 2024, when a series of coronal mass ejections (CMEs) were hurled by the Sun. This increased quantity of the solar coronal mass that impacted on the Moon enhanced the process of knocking off the atoms from the lunar surface, thereby liberating them to the lunar exosphere, which manifested as the enhancement of the total pressure in the sunlit lunar exosphere. "This observation would provide scientific insight in the understanding of the lunar exosphere and space weather effects on the Moon. Apart from pushing the edge of our scientific understanding about the Moon and the lunar space weather (effect of the Sun's emissions on the Moon), this observation also indicates the challenges of building scientific bases on the Moon. Lunar base architects need to account for such extreme events, which would temporarily alter the lunar environment, before the effects subside." ISRO concluded.

Ashwini Vaishnav: "Data is the new oil, data centres are the new refineries"

New Delhi: Underlining India's ambitious digital transformation agenda, Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnav, on Saturday described data as "the new oil" and data centres as "the new refineries." Speaking at the 'NDTV Word Summit' here, the minister emphasised the government's vision of Aatmanirbharta, saying India aims to become self-sufficient in critical minerals and digital infrastructure in the coming years.

"We must make sure that the talent in our country finds opportunities here rather than going out," Vaishnav told the gathering. Commenting on India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), Vaishnav said the government is "going big on digital credit," as part of its effort to make financial services more accessible through technology. Hailing the fast and efficient rollout of the 5G network within the country, the minister noted that India's achievement has drawn global attention.

"India rolled out 5G at a pace that amazed the world. We have the second-largest 5G network in the world. This helped us reach out to far-flung areas. About 90 per cent of the country is covered with 5G network," the minister noted. Vaishnav also highlighted India's growing presence in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), announcing that Bengaluru-based startup Sarvam will launch its indigenous AI model by December this year or January next year, adding he is excited to use Sarvam's model once it is released. The minister also praised Google's proposal to



establish an AI hub in Visakhapatnam with \$15 billion investment, claiming that it will support the development of AI research in India. "It is crucial that our nation has computer facilities. The ability to conduct quality research and create AI applications will greatly improve once we have them," he stated. According to Vaishnav, 6G will completely replace the current 4G and 5G networks in terms of telecom technology. "6G will be completely different — a new paradigm. Everything in your hand will be a part of that network," he said. The minister emphasised India's leadership in digital infrastructure worldwide, pointing out that more than 13 countries are currently utilising India's UPI framework and that more than 50 countries have expressed interest in implementing the Aadhaar architecture.

Who is Erika Kirk, Charlie Kirk's widow and new CEO of Turning Point USA?

Turning Point USA announced on September 18 that Erika Kirk, the widow of its co-founder Charlie Kirk, has been unanimously elected as the organisation's new Chief Executive Officer and chair of the board. The board noted that Charlie Kirk had privately expressed the wish that his wife succeed him if he were unable to continue, saying he had "prepared all of us for a moment like this." Born and raised in Arizona as Erika Frantze, she first came into the public eye when she was crowned Miss Arizona USA in 2012. Alongside pageantry, she was also a collegiate basketball player at Regis University in Colorado, where she represented the women's team.

According to her official website, Erika later pursued a double major in Political Science and International Relations at Arizona State University, followed by a Juris Master's degree in American Legal Studies from Liberty University. In 2022, she completed a doctorate in Biblical Studies. These academic credentials were matched by her professional and ministry experiences, which ranged from working in real estate in New York to developing projects overseas, including an orphan initiative in Constanța, Romania.

Beyond academics and athletics, Erika Kirk built a public presence through faith-driven projects and media work. In 2006, she founded the non-profit organisation Everyday Heroes Like You, which focuses on highlighting community service. She also created BIBLEin365, a devotional programme that encourages daily scripture study. Her podcast, Midweek Rise Up, became another avenue through which she sought to merge biblical teachings with leadership and personal development. In recent years, she launched Proclaim, a faith-based clothing line manufactured in the United States. Her official biography describes her as a "social entrepreneur and passionate ministry leader," with an emphasis on integrating faith into everyday life. In May 2021, Erika married Charlie Kirk in Arizona. Their marriage drew attention within conservative political circles, where both shared platforms that combined political activism with expressions of faith. The couple had two children, a daughter born in 2022 and a son in 2024.

What is Turning Point USA?

Turning Point USA is a U.S. conservative youth organisation co-founded by Charlie Kirk in 2012. It grew into one of America's most influential right-wing campus groups, with chapters on hundreds of college and high school campuses nationwide. The group describes its mission as promoting conservative ideas among students; it has attracted millions of followers through campus events, social media, and summer training programmes.



Why was she chosen as CEO of Turning Point USA and what does that role entail?

On September 10, 2025, Charlie Kirk died after being shot while speaking at a Turning Point USA event at Utah Valley University. Eight days later, on September 18, TPUSA's board unanimously elected Erika Kirk as CEO and chair of the board, citing Charlie Kirk's prior expressed wish that, in the event of his incapacitation or death, his wife should continue his work. The board, in their announcement, said her leadership should carry forward the organisation's work, even in the face of what they described as efforts to undermine or destroy the group's legacy.

Liquor shop applications dip in Karimnagar, revenue too

Karimnagar: A total of 7,079 applications have been filed for liquor shops across the erstwhile Karimnagar district, marking a decline of 3,630 compared to the previous licensing round. Despite the fall in applications, there has been not much change in revenue collected, even though the application fee was raised from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 3 lakh. During the last term, the State government had earned Rs 214.18 crore from application fees. In fact, despite the fee hike this time around, it collected a little less, Rs 212 crore. In 2023-2025, authorities received 10,709 applications for 287 wine shops. The number has now fallen to 7,079 for the upcoming 2025-2027 term. Although the government extended the deadline for submitting applications till October 23, by Saturday, the previous cut-off date, 3,630 fewer applications had been received.

The economics of palliative care in India



Medical care is becoming increasingly expensive, and this is a fact that can no longer be neglected or ignored in our country. But even as costs rise, parallelly, there is a rising demand for various healthcare services given the ageing population and the plethora of chronic diseases. At this juncture, there is a critical need both for integrated palliative care (PC) services and a need to understand the economics of PC. Economics of PC

There is no doubt that PC intervention improves the quality of life (QoL) of patients, family and their caregivers right through the disease trajectory, with end-of-life care (EOC) and further into the bereavement period. However, it is imperative to analyse the cost-effectiveness of PC given the length of the trajectory compared to the initial phase of general medical/surgical care. The economics though, clearly work in favour of PC: palliative interventions are both beneficial and economical, and therefore justifiable to the patient and/or family, considering all of the elements provided. This can be understood with a detailed look at the elements of PC care. The mainstay of PC therapy is supportive, symptom control and the avoidance of unnecessary interventions or devices that could prolong suffering with no possibility of cure. Since PC focuses primarily on symptom control, only essential medicines are used. Medical/surgical intervention decisions are made only if the quality of life of the patient and day-to-day activities of daily living can be improved. Compassionate care and open communication with the patient/family/caregivers help make meaningful decisions, taking into consideration various facets of care including financial aspects. This means that the patient or family will not have to grapple with or be caught unawares by huge bills, while however, understanding the importance of continuing essential care. Palliative care also helps give patients and their families a voice: machines, peripherals and medications which may not contribute to cure or improvement in QoL may be continued either because there is no PC team within the hospital or there is a lack of standard operating procedures (SOPs) to wean a patient to PC and/or supportive care; this can be exacerbated by a hospital's own economic considerations and lack of awareness among patients.

Palliative care therefore, is a 'High Touch, Low Tech' style of management. Take cancer as an example. Standard therapeutics such as surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and targeted therapies can help save many lives. But in cases where the patient becomes non responsive to treatment the patient, and the family must be guided towards supportive care, to live the rest of their lives with pain management, and to be able to encounter death with dignity. In India however, recognition of this continues to be low amongst cancer specialists. The same scenario extends to other chronic disease states such as post-Covid frequent respiratory disorders with on and off hospitalisation. Diabetic wound management is another area where care from home could prevent deterioration that leads to limb amputations. Chronic kidney disease, chronic neurological disorders (Alzheimer's/ Parkinson's and other dementia states) require long-term supportive care but not necessarily frequent hospital admissions if good palliative teams are in charge. Tethering patient to various life-supportive devices and lines could be both expensive, and, in some cases, futile. Research has shown that increasing palliative care capacity could bring down costs for hospitalised adults with serious and complex illnesses. This includes decreasing the number of days spent in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) and thereby reduced charges, as well as curtailing medicine costs through discussions on essential medicines and prescribing lower-priced brands. A PC team will also discuss, upfront, the financial capabilities of the family, whether or not there is insurance available, the cost of follow-ups and continuity of care during the EOC phase, family bereavement and counselling. Such discussions help the patient and family become aware of the exact situation at hand and help minimise costs from the very early stages of treatment onwards.

When patients do not have adequate information about, or a clear understanding of the treatment outcome of an incurable chronic disease, they may undergo multiple investigations and procedures that are not warranted, which adds not just to their financial burden but also causes psychological stress, worsening the original illness. If rising costs do not allow a patient to be managed at a hospital, alternatives such as assisted living and senior care facilities should be considered. These institutions too, must ensure that they integrate PC physicians when it comes to the care plans of residents. There are many questions that continue to remain unanswered in the healthcare scenario in India. Who bears the costs and who takes care of the pain of patients? Why is the quality of life of the patient and family not prioritised? Who handles end-of-life care processes? Why are patients not being handled from the start of a disease until the end? Why are we not providing death with dignity for so many of our patients? Nature taught us through the painful lesson of the COVID-19 pandemic that supportive care and integration of various healthcare disciplines can lead to wonders. It is time now to integrate palliative care within all domains of healthcare, to provide all patients with compassionate care through their medical journeys.

Muslim panchayat member in Kerala carries out last rites of Hindu woman from Chhattisgarh



was recovering from mental illnesses could not recollect the location of her home or her relatives. After her death on Friday, the Christian nuns running the centre got in touch with T. Safeer, the panchayat member of Chittattumkula, where the centre is located. Learning about his dilemma, Mr. Safeer, a practising Muslim, stepped in to take up the role of the deceased's son to carry out the funeral rights according to Hindu rites. T. Safeer, member of the Kadinamkulam grama panchayat in Thiruvananthapuram, performing the last rites of Chhattisgarh native Rakhi. | Video Credit: special arrangement

"The attempts to find out her surviving relatives were futile. When someone expresses such a wish, we have to do whatever we can. My religion has taught me to give the utmost respect to the body of a human being, be it of a close relative or an unknown person. Since I often take part in funerals and other functions of people from all the religions in my ward, I was somewhat familiar with the rites to be carried out. The person at the Kazhakkuttam crematorium also guided me. My religion did not become a hindrance to me in this. Rather, the Imam of the local Jamaath congratulated me. He said this was the right thing to do," Mr. Safeer told. This was not the first time that Mr. Safeer has carried out the last rites to someone from another religion. Two weeks ago, when another person lodged at the rehabilitation centre passed away due to illnesses, he conducted the funeral according to Hindu beliefs. "We could locate her brother and daughter, but both of them were mentally unstable and unable to do anything in this case. I had carried out the last rites as I did this time, but since no one took photos or videos, hardly anyone knew about it. We later immersed her ashes on the Papanasam beach," says Mr. Safeer, whose act is being hailed on social media as yet another instance of the "real Kerala story."

When 44-year-old Rakhi, a native of Chhattisgarh lodged at the Benedict Menni Psycho Social Rehabilitation Centre in Kadinamkulam grama panchayat in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, was close to the end of her life after being stricken by cancer, the only wish she conveyed to authorities was that she wanted her last rites to be conducted as per the Hindu custom. But, the woman who

Telangana's rural women redefine ambition, drive change and prosperity

GNS News Agency, March 10

In Kotakonda village, about 20 km from Telangana's Narayanpet town, the steady hum of a sewing machine once defined Seelam Chandrakala's life. She stitched clothes for a meagre income while her husband's wages as a mason barely kept the family afloat. With a young son in school and their only piece of land filled by her brother-in-law, survival left little room for dreams. In Narayanpet district, known for its handloom sarees but also its poverty, women are expected to limit themselves to tailoring, farm labour or odd jobs. Few would dare to imagine stepping into traditional male bastions. But six months ago, Chandrakala and a handful of self-help group (SHG) members did just that — rewriting the script for themselves and for the district. They started working at a fuel station — Telangana's first women-run petrol bunk. At first, customers were openly skeptical. Some would ask mockingly, "Do you really manage this petrol pump?" while others declared that the women wouldn't last long, since it was "a man's job." But what began in doubt has since turned into a story of defiance and success. Today, six months later, Chandrakala, 31, manages the Narayanpet filling station that has not only survived but thrived.

Her personal journey is proof of what determination and collective strength can achieve. Her husband continues his masonry work, earning between ₹15,000 and ₹20,000 a

month, while she takes home ₹18,000 salary as fuel station manager. Together, they rent a modest home close to the pump, allowing their son, now in class 6, to continue education without interruption. "With this job, we are leading a comfortable life," she says. The fuel station itself is a landmark achievement. Set up by the Zilla Mahila Samakhyas (ZMS), it is the first in the country to be managed by a women's federation. Located at Singaram X Roads in Narayanpet, about 160 km from State capital Hyderabad, the ZMS petrol pump is a point of curiosity and pride today. Inaugurated by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on February 21 this year, it has already recorded a profit of ₹13.82 lakh in its first six months of operations. The idea took root last year when then Collector Koya Sree Harsha attended a ZMS Executive Council meeting. "He asked if we were running any big units. When we said no, he suggested a petrol pump. We readily agreed. Later, he asked if government land was available. We proposed the site beside the DRDA office. That is how we were entrusted with the job of running the fuel station," Chandrakala recalls.

At that time, she was serving as the president of ZMS, a position she had held for three years after joining a self-help group under the government's Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) in 2013 and steadily rising through the federation's ranks. For her, the task was not only about running a business but proving a point too. "

Amir Khan Muttaqi: Taliban's diplomatic front



Visiting the Deoband Darul Uloom during his recent India tour, the Taliban's Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, described the institution as "Madar e Ilmi", or alma mater, which in a way provided a glimpse of Mr. Muttaqi's evolution as a fighter and a diplomat. Born in 1970 in a Pashtun family in Zarghun village of Helmand province, Amir Khan Muttaqi's life has been intertwined with the history of his conflict-torn country. His family had migrated to Helmand from Paktia. The Afghanistan that he was born into was to change radically even as he started his early education in his village. Among the waves of Afghans who left their homes after Soviet intervention began in December 1979 were Mr. Muttaqi and his family from Helmand. He shifted to the Afghan refugee camps that had come up near Peshawar, Pakistan. The refugees also provided young fighters for resisting the Soviet invasion and Mr. Muttaqi was one of the teenagers who joined the anti-Soviet jihad of the 1980s, funded by the CIA and guided by Pakistan's ISI. It was during his years as a refugee in Pakistan that the young Pashtun fighter picked up Urdu which he uses today with his Pakistani and Indian interlocutors. In Peshawar, seven political parties came up in the refugee camps (the Peshawar Seven). Prominent leaders from these groups were Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, Hazrat Sibghatullah Mojaddedi, Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, Maulana Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, and Mohammed Yunus Khalis. Of them, Maulana Mohammadi and Khalis extended full support to the Taliban when the outfit was launched in the 1990s. Mr. Muttaqi joined the Islamic Revolutionary Movement of Afghanistan of Maulana Mohammadi, who had also groomed other Taliban leaders such as its founder Mullah Omar. Like Mohammadi before

them, Mullah Omar, Mr. Muttaqi, and Hibatullah Akhundzada, the current leader of the Taliban, studied in madrasas that followed the curriculum of Darul Uloom Deoband. It was because of this link Mr. Muttaqi described Deoband as his 'Madar e Ilmi'.

Among all the Taliban commanders, Mr. Muttaqi is known for being a negotiator, a role that was given to him by the late Mullah Omar. Muttaqi is one of the few Taliban leaders who have survived all the violent phases of Afghanistan's recent history. As a young Taliban leader, he became the Minister of Information and Culture and general spokesperson of the Taliban in 1996 when the outfit took power in a chaotic situation. He was serving as the Minister of Education when the war with the U.S. began in Afghanistan in 2001, following the 9/11 attacks, leading to the overthrow of the first Taliban regime. He survived the most intense phase of violence that continued till negotiation was started with the Taliban during the first term of U.S. President Donald Trump in 2017-18. Return to Kabul. Mr. Muttaqi was part of the U.S.-Taliban negotiation and was present at the signing of the deal in Doha on February 29, 2020, when the Taliban delegation was led by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. Though the deal was opposed by the Ashraf Ghani government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Taliban carried out a hybrid war on the ground following the deal and captured Kabul by August 2021. Mr. Muttaqi then became the Foreign Minister. Ever since, Mr. Muttaqi has travelled to China, Russia, Pakistan, Doha, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, India and other countries. Over the last four years, the most challenging aspect of Mr. Muttaqi's assignment has been presenting Afghanistan as a rational actor even as it continued to impose its no-education policy on young women, who are also restricted from joining the workforce. Mr. Muttaqi has also carried out a few difficult discussions successfully since taking charge, including the one regarding the release of American hostage Amir Amiri, who was released in September 2025 after President Trump's Special Representative on hostage affairs, Adam Boehler, held discussions with him. Apart from the conflict with Pakistan, Mr. Muttaqi's biggest challenge continues to be the fact that only Russia has so far given diplomatic recognition to Taliban as the ruler of Afghanistan. It remains to be seen if he can convince other major powers to recognise the Taliban as the de jure rulers of Afghanistan.

The power of not being loved



There are moments in life when a person feels profoundly unloved. This may happen even while surrounded by relations, achievements, and the outward extravagance of living. There can be an opulence of choice, an abundance of material wealth, and friendships that appear plentiful; yet in the quiet winds of the inner self, a clear truth sometimes whispers: I am still alone. This is not necessarily a sign of illness or disorder; it is, in fact, a deeply human experience. At some point in the journey, everyone encounters it, through personal loss, strained relationships, or the subtle but painful absence of reciprocity, even from one's own children, whose love we often expect to picture the completeness of life.

Take, for instance, a marital relationship. At times, it can become one-sided, demanding, consuming, and devoid of genuine gratitude. Even those closest to us may not be truly receptive to our feelings, let alone offer the warmth of real reciprocation. At some point, situational displays of affection reveal themselves as hollow, leaving behind a deeper sense of isolation. Yet, within this absence lies a peculiar strength, a power forged quietly in silence and struggle.

The power of not being loved does not arrive gently. At first, it strikes as an ache, a quiet trauma that unsettles the heart, leaving us raw with questions of worth and be-

longing. Loneliness in such moments feels heavy, almost unbearable. And yet, with time, the same absence begins to shift its shape. What once wounded slowly hardens into strength. It grows into emotional resilience, a quiet inner resource that teaches us how to stand without leaning too heavily on others. In that stillness, dependence on validation fades. Loneliness, no longer a wound, it becomes a space, an opening where independence takes root, where the self learns endurance, and where silence itself begins to nourish. Philosophically, the power of not being loved points to profound existential lessons. Humans are wired for connection, recognition, and celebration, yet life does not always provide these gifts. The absence of love teaches us to face this truth squarely: not every bond will be mutual, not every gesture acknowledged. This confrontation strips away illusion and forces us to create meaning for ourselves. In this sense, loneliness is not emptiness but a mirror, reflecting our capacity to endure, to create, and to transform longing into insight.

Over time, this inner transformation goes further. The love withheld by others begins to arise from within. Deprived of affection on the outside, we discover a hidden wellspring inside. It blossoms into a universal, unadorned love — free of demand, free of expectation. This love is not transactional but an effortless outflow of being. In such a state, one becomes a fountainhead of joy in the lives of others, giving freely what was once denied. The very absence of love awakens in us the capacity to generate it for the world. Thus, the power of not being loved lies in paradox. On one hand, it reveals our vulnerability and deep hunger for connection. On the other, it uncovers hidden strength — the ability to live, act, and create even when uncelebrated. At its highest expression, it transforms us into givers of love, turning deprivation into abundance. Yet resilience must not harden into refusal. True love can still enter our lives, sometimes much later, and the greatest strength lies in remaining open to receive it. In this balance, self-reliant yet receptive, we honour both our independence and our humanity, becoming stronger for ourselves and gentler toward the world.

Taiwan's main opposition party elects new leader in a race clouded by claims of China meddling

By a wide margin, Cheng Li-wun — the only female candidate in the race who positioned herself as a reformist — defeated former Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin and four others contesting the leadership of the China-friendly party. The Nationalists, also known as the KMT, maintain strong political influence in Taiwan despite losing three consecutive presidential elections to the independence-leaning ruling Democratic Progressive Party. The KMT holds enough seats to form a majority bloc with its allies in the legislature and survived two recall elections just months ago that were sparked by concerns over their lawmakers passing changes seen as diminishing the power of the executive and favouring China, which considers the island as its own territory. Scheduled to take office in November, Ms. Cheng could influence how Taiwan handles its relationship with Beijing and other key policies and domestic and international political matters. She will also anchor the party in the 2026 local elections. The KMT is also likely to field a candidate challenging President Lai Ching-te's DPP in the 2028 race. During her campaign, Ms. Cheng pledged to turn KMT from a flock of "sheep" into "lions," opposing Mr. Lai's proposal to boost defence budget to 5% of GDP, or gross domestic product, local media reported. She was once a DPP member. In a news conference after the win, the party's second elected female chair said the Nationalists would uphold the principles of equality, respect and mutual benefits in handling external relations. "We must not let Taiwan become a troublemaker. Second, we must not let Taiwan become the sacrifice of geopolitics," she said, adding her party would also be a peacemaker. Beijing has a particularly strained relationship with Mr. Lai, whom it accuses of being a separatist. It has threatened to use force to bring Taiwan under its control, if necessary, and has increasingly mobilised military, diplomatic and economic pressure in an attempt to undermine Lai's administration. Traditionally, KMT has had warmer ties with Beijing, with Chinese politi-



cians visiting for exchanges. Supporters of the KMT see the ties as beneficial to the island democracy's stability and economy, but its critics are wary of the influence Beijing exerts. Over the past week, Jaw Shaw-kong, Hau's supporter in the party, alleged that China was involved in an organised interference, citing videos attacking Hau and supporting Ms. Cheng. The head of Taiwan's National Security Bureau, Tsai Ming-yen, said it found over 1,000 videos discussing the election on TikTok, in addition to 23 YouTube accounts posting related content, with over half of the YouTube accounts based outside of Taiwan. He did not say which candidates these videos supported or directly answer whether they were based in China. Ms. Cheng rejected the allegations of China's influencing her party as "very cheap labels," urging politicians to return the island's politics to rationality. Chen Binhua, a spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, said on Wednesday that Cheng's election was the party's internal affair and the views of some mainland Chinese internet users did not represent the government's position. DPP spokesperson Wu Cheng cautioned that Chinese interference was obvious and the KMT should carefully guard against it, saying his party hoped that the new chair would prioritise Taiwan's safety over party interests.

Why do elephants face a jumbo challenge? | Explained



The story so far: The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) released its report, the 'Status of Elephants in India', on October 14. The estimation of 22,446 elephants across four landscapes elicited comparison with the 2017 figure of 29,964, although the report said the DNA-based method, used for the first time to estimate elephants, "may be treated as a new monitoring baseline for further research".

Why was the new methodology adopted?

The first elephant population estimation was conducted in 1929 across the forests of the United Province, comprising present-day Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Estimates till 1978 relied on the direct total count method, involving the averaging of figures obtained from three direct visual counts conducted at 10-day intervals at the forest beat level. The inception of Project Elephant in 1992 led to a shift in population estimation practices every five years, employing diverse methods, including total count, tracking-based total count, registration count, water hole count, sample count, transect count, and dung count. The choice of method varied across sites for elephant population monitoring, making comparison difficult. The Synchronised Elephant Census was conducted in 2005, 2010, and 2017, using total (direct) count, sample block count, line transect dung (indirect) count, and waterhole count. The limitations of this method led to the Synchronised All-India Elephant Estimation (SAIEE) method for 2021-25.

Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) occupy a fraction of their historical range in the Indian subcontinent. The last pre-SAIEE estimate in 2017 put their number at 29,964, down by 87 from the 2012 count. Now, the SAIEE has revealed that there are 22,446 elephants, a drastic drop of 7,518 over eight years. However, wildlife experts from WII and State Forest Departments advised against any comparison because the new programme sought to eliminate the drawbacks of the previous methods and could not be undertaken in areas such as the Andaman Islands (25 elephants in 2017), primarily due to a low budget. They said the SAIEE data would serve as the baseline for estimation using the method in future. SAIEE entailed dividing India into 100 sq. km cells and then into 4 sq. km grids, each uniquely coded so that subsequent inferences could be compared on the same spatial scale and extent. Enumerators surveyed 6,66,977 km on foot covering 1,88,030 trails

and transects, and collected 21,056 elephant dung samples during the three-phase exercise. The focus of the first phase was on data collection with these components: carnivore and mega-herbivore sign encounters, ungulate (hoofed animals) abundance, vegetation status, human disturbance, and dung counts. Phase Two involved assessing habitat characteristics and anthropogenic impacts, such as vegetation cover, forest patch size, human footprint etc. Phase Three emphasised spatially explicit abundance estimation, with human impact and habitat characteristics factored in.

How have the landscapes fared?

The study was conducted across four elephant-bearing landscapes. The Western Ghats landscape encompassing Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu accounted for 11,934 elephants, which is 53.17% of the all-India estimate. Karnataka led the chart with 6,013 elephants, followed by Tamil Nadu with 3,136 and Kerala with 2,785 elephants. The North Eastern Hills and Brahmaputra Flood Plains, comprising seven (minus Sikkim) northeastern States and northern West Bengal, offered the second-best habitat with 22.22% of India's elephants. Assam topped the table here with 4,159 elephants. The other two landscapes — Shivalk Hills and Gangetic Plains (Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar) and Central India and Eastern Ghats comprising seven States, including Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Odisha, and southern West Bengal — recorded 9.18% and 8.42% of the country's total elephants. Uttarakhand recorded the most elephants (1,792) in these two landscapes, followed by Odisha with 912.

What does the study portend?

The study points to rapid fragmentation of elephant landscapes due to expanding commercial plantations (coffee and tea), invasive plants, farmland fencing, human encroachment, mining, and developmental projects. This fragmentation has prompted elephants to venture into areas devoid of the animal for at least 200 years, resulting in conflicts with humans lacking cultural coexistence experience and posing a threat to elephant populations. A case in point is Andhra Pradesh to which herds migrated from three adjoining States. The first herd moved from the Hosur-Dharmapuri forests of Tamil Nadu to Kuppam and Palamaner Forest Divisions of Chittoor district in 1980. More elephants from Tamil Nadu and Bannerghatta in Karnataka migrated between 1988 and 1986. While Karnataka harbours the highest number of wild elephants in India, it is also one of the major hotspots for human-elephant conflict. For instance, the contiguous forests of Nagarhole, Bandipur, and BRT Hills face threats from frequent forest fires, development projects and plantations of acacia and eucalyptus. Similar issues have escalated human-elephant conflicts in Kerala. Tamil Nadu's most critical habitats are the Nilgiris and Coimbatore Forest Division, where conflicts have claimed 150 human and 170 elephant lives so far. Experts underscore the need to engage with communities for sensitisation campaigns in elephant-occupied areas and newly colonised places.

The changing face of breast cancer: why more young Indian women are at risk



Come October, we don our pink ribbons, celebrate stories of cancer survival, and talk of hope. But beneath the symbolic gestures lies an alarming narrative: breast cancer is creeping into younger lives in India. Long associated with women over 50, breast cancer is no longer a disease that afflicts older age groups alone. Recent data points to a substantial number of cases being diagnosed in women aged under 40. In several Indian studies, about 15 to 20% of breast cancer patients are in this younger age group, statistics far higher than many Western populations, which show just 2 to 6% of patients in the same age group. In Bengaluru and other parts of Karnataka, hospitals report that breast cancer cases among women aged 20-40 years have doubled in the past five years. This surge signals a growing health crisis and underlines an urgent need to rethink awareness, diagnosis, and prevention.

Why is this happening?

There is no single cause; however, a convergence of risk factors is believed to be fuelling this upward trend. Changing reproductive patterns: Early menarche, late menopause, later age of first childbirth or fewer children accelerates lifetime exposure to oestrogen and progesterone cycles, which are implicated in breast cancer risk. Shorter durations of breastfeeding or the absence of it, remove a protective buffer. Infertility therapies and hormonal interventions shift risk dynamics. Lifestyle transitions: Sedentary habits, obesity or weight gain (especially after adolescence), high-calorie diets and processed food intake, increased alcohol consumption, smoking, and exposure to environmental toxins are altering the age at which cancer affects people. Genetic and biological factors: Mutations in genes such as BRCA1/BRCA2 raise risk significantly. Women with these genes may develop cancer at younger ages. Tumours in young women often tend to be more aggressive and present with atypical features.

Delayed detection and low screening rates: Self-breast awareness remains low. Routine screening tests such as mammograms/ultrasounds are rarely done under age 40 in India. According to the National Family Health Survey NFHS-5 (2019-21), only 0.8% of women aged 30-49 years in India have ever undergone a breast examination. Combined screening for breast and cervical cancer is at an abysmal 0.877% and 1.965%, respectively. In low resource settings, lack of access to diagnostics or oncologists compounds the problem. Women still shy away from discussing their health concerns with a doctor. In smaller centres, where the number of doctors available for patients is low, detection is delayed due to these limitations. Urbanisation, pollution and toxin exposures: Endocrine-disrupting chemicals in plastics, pesticides, and cosmetics may subtly alter hormone sensitivity. Pollution and particulate matter have been scrutinised for links to cancer risk. The shift towards indoor lifestyles, less sun exposure (which affects vitamin D production), and disrupted circadian rhythms may play hidden roles in the increased disposition to cancer. Late-

stage diagnosis is more common than early stage diagnosis in India. Young women often present at Stage II or III, reducing chances of an easy cure. Cancer in women generally leads to high emotional trauma, which can scar the patient and her family. The shock of a cancer diagnosis at an age perceived as "too young" also affects body image, fertility, sexuality, relationships, career, and mental health. A cancer diagnosis also adds financial and social burdens on younger women, who often lack robust support systems, health insurance, or income security. Raise awareness young: Promote breast self-examination (BSE) starting in the early 20s. Train community health workers, college clinics, and women's groups to talk openly about breast health. Use social media campaigns, school and workplace health drives to destigmatise breast checks. Tailored screening and surveillance: For women with a strong family history of cancer or known high-risk genes, encourage screening early in their 20s. For the general population, protocols may include screening women in the age group 30-40 years in high-risk categories. Regular clinical breast exams by trained practitioners must be encouraged.

Improve access and infrastructure: Expanding low-cost, radiation-free screening (for example, AI-based thermography or imaging) to underserved regions can help with better diagnosis in these areas. Strengthening diagnostic networks (biopsy, pathology) can help treat suspicious lesions promptly. Rural areas have primary health centres and a few small clinics that service patients. Given their dynamics with people, these centres can integrate breast health into their services on a monthly basis at least. Lifestyle interventions: People must be encouraged to engage in some physical activity (150 minutes/week or more), eat healthy diets rich in fruits, vegetables, wholegrains and nuts, and reduce alcohol and smoking. In addition, policy changes are needed to encourage women to breastfeed their babies with facilities in workplaces and communities, and also to minimise endocrine disruptors and pollution exposures. Genetic counselling and preventive care: People in families with a history of breast/ovarian cancer, generally shy away from discussions, for fear of being stigmatised. Such women must be offered genetic testing and active counselling before pregnancy and after childbirth, including fertility preservation options before they opt for treatment. Where appropriate, they may consider preventive measures (e.g. prophylactic surgeries, chemoprevention) under proper medical advice. Psychological and peer support: Specifically for women in younger age brackets, support can be in the form of counselling or peer groups that help address issues relating to fertility, mental health, stigma, and treatment. Connecting cancer survivors as mentors or role models can help younger women face their battle with cancer with more confidence.

Not all lumps are cancer, but there are red flags that should not be ignored: A new lump in the breast or underarm, especially if hard, painless, or growing. Changes in breast size, shape, or symmetry. Skin changes (dimpling, puckering), nipple inversion or discharge. Unexplained breast pain or persistent heaviness. Swelling of part of the breast, redness, or ulceration. If any suspicious change is noticed — whether you are in your 20s or 30s or 40s — seek medical advice without delay. This Breast Cancer Awareness Month, let us not limit our pink ribbon gestures to older age groups. The rising tide of breast cancer in young women demands early, loud, constant vigilance from all quarters — family, peers, healthcare systems, schools, workplaces, media, NGOs and policymakers. Only this can help comprehensively integrate breast health into women's health at every stage.

Kurinji, now flowering at Tamil Nadu's newly notified reserve forest in Gudalur, after eight years, is an indicator of climate change



"What is special is that it has bloomed at Tamil Nadu's newly notified reserve forest in Gudalur, the Nilgiris," says Supriya Sahu, Additional Chief Secretary, Departments of Environment, Climate Change and Forests. The kurinji is not just a rare flower, but also an indicator of climate change. The flowering offers an excellent barometer of the grasslands. Where there are healthy grasslands, there is mass flowering, while disturbances lead to patchy flowering. "When you provide protection and conserve the area, kurinji will certainly bloom and will bring along with it a lot of wildlife," she adds. Supriya Sahu says the Tamil Nadu Government is on a mission to create new forest areas. "In the last four and a half years, over 90 new forests have been notified in Tamil Nadu which is unprecedented. These are legacy projects because they have been notified under the Tamil Nadu Forest Act, to increase the green cover of the State," she says. "These flowers have a lot of meaning to the indigenous communities who know the timing of the bloom. It's a fantastic sign of the biodiversity coming back to the area which the indigenous communities can take pride in."

One of the rarest flowers in the world, the neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*) blooms once every 12 years on the high altitude grasslands of the Western Ghats. In Gudalur, the mass bloom is of another species of kurinji *Strobilanthes sessilis*, which blooms once in eight years. Both are grassland species but isolated to different altitudes: neelakurinji occurs in grasslands of altitude above 1,300 metres, and *sessilis* in the lower altitudes. "Kurinji blooms are fascinating," says Professor E Kunhikrishnan, an expert on the Western Ghats, adding that there are as many as 60 species of these flowers that are endemic to the Western Ghats, which do not grow anywhere else in the world. "While the neelakurinji is the most famous and charismatic, there is karinkurinji that blooms annually and several others that bloom in the periodicity of four years, eight years, 10 years (over 20 species) and 12 years." The mass flowering often provides a feast for butterflies, honeybees and other insects. The purple flowers hold a large amount of nectar, which especially attract the eastern honeybee. N Venkatesh Prabhu,

District Forest Officer of Gudalur Gene Pool, a key biodiversity conservation site, says "Nadugani is a thriving biodiversity zone with over 100 species of trees endemic to the Western Ghats. Sightings of elephant herds, and tigers are common. It is a haven for bird watchers. Hornbills are sighted in good numbers as well as butterfly congregations. Our botanist has documented the kurinji flowering of Nadugani forest cover which is spread across 600 acres." According to V Sundaresan, botanist at Gudalur Gene Pool, the kurinji blooms can be seen in purple, blue, white, or pink colours. "For every single colour, there will be 10 shades varying from dark to light. There are 33 varieties of kurinji in the Nilgiris," he adds. A mysterious floral species *Naturalist AK Pradeep* from Kottayam in Kerala, who has a neelakurinji named after him (*Strobilanthes pradeepiana*) calls it a deeply mysterious and enticing floral species. He has followed kurinji flowers all the way to Tapti in Gujarat where the Western Ghats tapers and to Agasthya mountain ranges in Ponmudi to photograph and document various species of kurinji along the ranges. His study over two decades proved that of the 450 kurinji species the world over, 150 were in India. He says, "Endemism is the main characteristic of the kurinji. I have photographed the Munnar Hills carpeted by the breathtaking kunthiana blooms. Mass blooming is indicative of a healthy grassland and a thriving wildlife."

Pradeep recalls how in 2011, Udhagamandalam's Doddabeta, where *Strobilanthes homotropa* (that flowers every 10 years) that bloomed in thousands, was reduced to a couple of plants in the next season in 2021. "It needs favourable conditions for germination. Climate change, uncontrolled tourism, and growth of invasive species have an adverse impact. The species seen in one area cannot be found in another. This is precisely what makes the kurinji hills a storehouse of organic wealth," explains Pradeep. "In the Nilgiris, Kodaikanal and Munnar, we lost a major part of the grasslands because of the invasion of black wattle, a species we introduced from Australia," says Kunhikrishnan. Kurinji plants flower only once in a lifetime, a phenomenon seen in bamboo that flowers only once in 40 or 60 years. Once it flowers, its dateline with death is set. The next generation starts from the germination of the seeds. Says Kunhikrishnan, "The gregarious blooms, bring spurts of happiness, and vanish. It's Nature's mystery." Since the plant species is hugely dependent on microclimatic conditions, the blooming is an indicator of its habitat diversity and presence of alpine conditions for its survival. "The blooms help study the ecology, altitude, alpine climate at high elevations near the equator among others. The grasslands are unique, and a quick evolution is happening there. The plant's species diversity indicates its ability to evolve and adapt. These pockets need to be controlled and preserved. Uncontrolled tourism has to be avoided," explains Kunhikrishnan, concluding, "Kurinji is precious."

How are India-Taliban relations changing? | Explained



The story so far: The Indian government framed the visit by Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Amir Khan Muttaqi, and the warm welcome it extended to the Taliban leader, as an outreach to the "people of Afghanistan". The visit coincided with violent clashes on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

How has India grown links with the Taliban?

After years of being seen as "too slow" to engage with the Taliban, the government has gone to considerable lengths in recent months to build ties with the group that controls Afghanistan. In January this year, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri made the first such contact, meeting Mr. Muttaqi in Dubai, and discussed increasing trade between both countries. On May 16, just days after the India-Pakistan conflict ended in a ceasefire, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar spoke to Mr. Muttaqi over the telephone, thanking Afghanistan for its support and condolences over the Pahalgam terror attack. In August, India approached the UN Security Council to request permission from its Sanctions Committee for a visit by the Taliban FM to India. Mr. Muttaqi is on the UNSC's consolidated sanctions list since January 2001, and requires a waiver to travel internationally. The request was denied, but when the request was repeated a month later, it came through, allowing the visit from October 9 to 16. India doesn't recognise the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan", as the Taliban that took control of Kabul in 2021 renamed it. Even so, Mr. Jaishankar met Mr. Muttaqi with full protocol and held delegation-level meetings with him at the official venue, Hyderabad House, and the visitor was accorded security and hospitality any other foreign minister would receive.

What transpired during the talks?

During the talks, Mr. Jaishankar announced India's plans to upgrade its technical mission in Kabul to an embassy, and is expected to appoint diplomats to be posted there shortly. He also handed over the keys to 20 ambulances being donated to Afghanistan, and promised health infrastructure projects, water projects and humanitarian aid. For its part, the Afghan side joined India in condemning terrorism in the region and committed that it would not allow Afghan soil to be used by groups inimical to India. In 2022, UN reports said Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba maintained camps in Eastern Afghan provinces.

In Focus podcast | What's driving India's renewed engagement with the Afghan Taliban regime?

Why has cooperation been enhanced?

Mr. Muttaqi's visit began just as clashes broke out between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan launched airstrikes on Kabul in retaliation for terror attacks by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) that Pakistan claims is

sheltered by the Taliban. The timing suggests India is getting closer to its "enemy's enemy" in an effort to upset Pakistan with a pincer movement months after Operation Sindoor, but there are many other reasons for such an outreach. The first is to neutralise any threat from the Taliban in an increasingly volatile neighbourhood, with governments losing power to protesters; India losing stable partners in South Asia; and China making inroads. Another reason is to build connectivity for trade as land routes are closed. Pakistan refuses to allow transit trade, and the U.S. has now re-imposed sanctions for projects at Iran's Chabahar port, which was being developed by India as an alternate route. In the broader Eurasian region, Russia has officially recognised the Taliban government, the first country to do so, and others like China, Pakistan, Iran, Gulf and the Central Asian states, that have already allowed Taliban embassies, could follow. India cannot afford to be cut out. India has also maintained that working with the regime in power is the only way for it to continue its humanitarian aid to Afghan men and women, and to secure more than \$3 billion in investments that it made between 2001-2021, when the Taliban was out of power. Four years since it took over, the Taliban regime appears stable, with little political or insurgent opposition to its control of the country, and has been able to impose a very strict form of the Islamic Sharia law, that prohibits women from education, work, forces them into burkhas, and bans them from public parks and buildings. Despite the situation, Mr. Jaishankar's opening remarks and the joint statement contained no mention of the restrictions on women, another indicator that New Delhi has decided that the Taliban is here to stay for the foreseeable future.

Is India preparing to recognise the Taliban?

The rapid growth of Delhi's ties with the Taliban, and the setting up of an embassy in Kabul, have raised speculation that India could, like Russia, break with the UN and western countries to give recognition to the Taliban government. This may seem unlikely soon, but much will depend on the next steps New Delhi takes, and the seniority level at which it establishes the embassy. Mr. Muttaqi said once Indian diplomats are sent to Kabul, he expects India to receive Taliban-appointed diplomats in Delhi. This will be significant, as thus far the Afghanistan embassy in Delhi has remained loyal to the previous democratically-elected Islamic Republic of Afghanistan government. As a result, they resisted Mr. Muttaqi's visit to the embassy, and at the two press conferences he held there, tried unsuccessfully, to stop the Taliban delegation from placing the black and white flags of the Emirate there. The black, green and red tricolour of the Republic is still hoisted at the front of the embassy for now, but India's decision to upgrade missions has cast a cloud over its future and that of the staff members there, who now fear for their lives. The Ministry of External Affairs did not protest when Mr. Muttaqi held a press conference on October 10, inviting nearly 20 journalists, all male, to the embassy. However, after public outrage, the Taliban delegation held a second press conference, inviting all journalists without restrictions. There, they faced hard questions on the condition of women, although Mr. Muttaqi maintained that women were "free" and girls were receiving an education in religious madrassas, statements which are clearly untrue.

Can a Taliban led-Afghanistan go from being India's enemy to a friend?

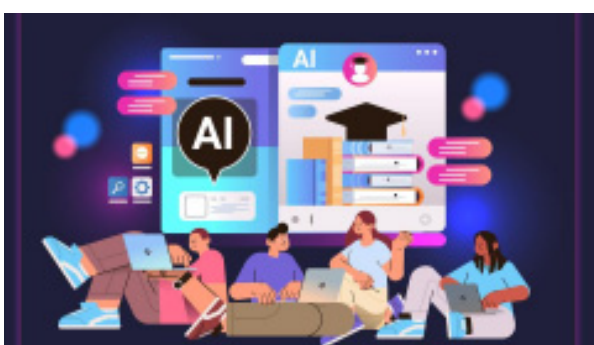
India has much to gain from a friendly government in Kabul, with influence based on its historic friendship with the Afghan people during the 2001-2021 period. India was Afghanistan's first strategic partner; built an air corridor to increase bilateral trade; and worked on a number of development and infrastructure projects there. While the Taliban's current conflict with Pakistan will only enhance New Delhi's role, it must be remembered that the Taliban in power now have had very close ties with Pakistan's military in the past. In addition, the Taliban leadership in Kabul and Kandahar have differences, and as Afghanistan's economy continues to suffer, they may face challenges to the regime's control. For India, building a tactical relationship with Kabul is vital, but a friendship based on shared values and common worldviews seem impossible at present.

Undergraduate programmes that combine business and AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming how the world does business and companies increasingly need professionals who can combine management insight with technical fluency. This intersection of business and AI is creating a new kind of undergraduate programme that combines Business and AI. Below is a curated look at some such courses. Symbiosis Artificial Intelligence Institute, India The BBA in Artificial Intelligence (Honours/ Honours with Research) blends business strategy with AI fundamentals. Students explore data-driven decision-making, algorithmic marketing, and AI ethics preparing graduates for roles at the intersection of AI applications, digital innovation, and business leadership. Lovely Professional University, India The BBA in Artificial Intelligence, Information Technology, and Business Analytics is an interdisciplinary degree that merges management education with analytics and information technology teaching students to deploy AI and data systems to optimise real-world business processes. It is ideal for those targeting roles in data consulting, business analytics, or product management. Chitkara University, India

The BBA in Artificial Intelligence in Business offers 2+2 Pathway with Arizona State University, the U.S., allowing students to begin their studies in India and complete them in the U.S. It also offers exposure to AI in entrepreneurship, marketing analytics, and international business. BITS Pilani Digital, India The B.Sc. in Artificial Intelligence and Data Science is offered in a flexible online format and provides a foundation in AI, ML, and Data Science. Ideal for those who want to combine technical AI expertise with business applications without committing to a full-time on-campus programme. Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence, U.A.E. The B.Sc. in Artificial Intelligence (Business Stream) integrates management, data governance, and AI entrepreneurship. The three-year English-taught B.A. in Artificial Intelligence for Business offers a balance of AI theory, product design, and ethical leadership and an understanding of how automation, robotics, and machine learning influence corporate decision-making. Its international campuses in Barcelona, Munich, and Geneva provide strong cross-cultural business exposure. ESSEC Business School, France The B.Sc. in Artificial Intelligence, Data and Management Sciences combines data engineering, business analytics, and management principles and prepares graduates to make strategic decisions using AI tools while understanding their ethical and societal implications. La Salle Campus Barcelona, Spain

The Double Degree in Business Intelligence and Data Analytics and Management of Business and Technology develops expertise in data processing, analytics, and technology management and combines academic theory with hands-on projects, emphasising leadership in AI-enabled decision-making. UBI Business School, Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain The English-taught B.Sc. in Business with Specialisation in Management of AI in E-Commerce and Retail Marketing focuses on using AI to reshape retail and e-commerce and explores customer analytics, predictive modelling, and business automation. SMK College of Applied Sciences, Lithuania The Bachelor in Future Business and Artificial Intelligence emphasises the technical, social, and creative dimensions of AI in business. Students study innovation management, AI ethics, and data-based decision-making, preparing for leadership roles in both startups and multinational firms. ESADE Business School, Spain The five-year Double Degree in Business Administration and Business and Artificial Intelligence develops "hybrid profiles" skilled in business strategy, data analytics, and AI-driven management. Students engage in real-world projects and internships that bridge technology, entrepreneurship, and global business leadership. USC Marshall School of



Business The B.S. in Artificial Intelligence for Business is a collaboration between USC Marshall and the Viterbi School of Engineering and blends business fundamentals with AI engineering. Students learn machine learning, human-computer interaction, and smart contract technologies alongside marketing and finance.

The B.S. in Artificial Intelligence in Business focuses on deploying AI for real-world business value; from predictive analytics to operational optimisation and emphasises innovation and practical learning. Students are trained to lead AI transformation projects in global organisations. Nazareth University The interdisciplinary B.S. in Business, Artificial Intelligence, and Innovation nurtures project leaders who understand both technology and its human impact. Courses in AI ethics, innovation management, and machine learning help students develop the mindset of ethical innovators. University of Texas at Dallas The B.S. in Business Analytics and Artificial Intelligence emphasises advanced analytics, predictive modelling, and the use of AI for business decision-making. Students gain the quantitative and technical skills to design AI-based solutions for corporate challenges. As industries embrace digital transformation, the leaders of tomorrow have to be fluent in both spreadsheets and algorithms.

A festival woven in flowers

As the winter approaches, the women of Telangana pay floral tributes to Mother Nature in a unique way.

Bathukamma is a celebration of the intrinsic bond between earth, water, and humankind. Observed according to the Satavahana calendar, the nine-day festival begins on Bhadracharya Purnima (also known as Mahalaya Amavasya or Pitru Amavasya) and concludes on Durgashtami, typically falling in September or October.

Each day of Bathukamma carries a distinct name and significance — marking stages of devotion, harvest, and togetherness. More than a festival, Bathukamma stands as a vibrant emblem of Telangana's cultural identity and feminine spirit. Women from all walks of life come together to handcraft stunning floral stacks — intricate arrangements symbolising gratitude and reverence for nature. The air fills with music, rhythmic clapping, and traditional songs, creating a mosaic of joy, unity, and spiritual energy. This year, Telangana witnessed a record-breaking celebration: a 63-foot-tall Bathukamma, crafted with 13 tonnes of flowers, entered the Guinness World Records, becoming a proud symbol of the State's collective devotion and creativity. Women, transcending boundaries of caste, creed, religion, or nationality, gathered in large numbers to mark the occasion with unmatched zeal and enthusiasm.

What are the new PF withdrawal guidelines? | Explained

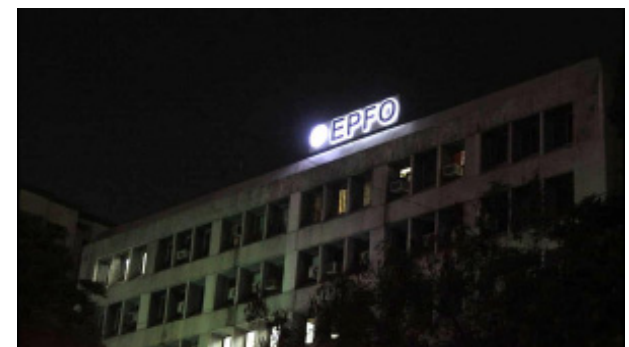
The story so far: A meeting of the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) of the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) held in Delhi on October 13 announced a number of measures for partial withdrawal of PF funds, which the government claimed was to enhance the "ease of living" of an EPFO subscriber.

What are the new provisions?

The CBT approved the merger of "13 complex provisions" for withdrawal into a single, streamlined rule under three categories — essential needs (illness, education, marriage), housing needs and special circumstances. Till now, a member could withdraw only the employee contribution to the PF and its interest ranging from 50-100%. Now, the member can withdraw from the employer contribution as well. The decision faced flak from Opposition parties, trade unions and even employers' organisations. Though employees can withdraw up to 100% of the eligible balance in the PF including employee and employer share during their service, a new provision has been made that 25% of the contributions in an account should be maintained as minimum balance at all times. The CBT also decided to change the conditions for availing premature final settlement. If a person is leaving the job, he/she cannot withdraw the full PF amount within two months as is the norm now. Now the person can withdraw the amount only after 12 months. The final pension can be withdrawn only after 36 months, from the present two months. "75% of the amount can be withdrawn immediately after leaving the job, and the full amount can be withdrawn after being unemployed for one year," the government said.

What is the government's argument?

The government said that frequent withdrawals earlier caused breaks in service, leading to rejection of many pension cases. It argues that at the time of final settlement, employees were left with very little money. "The above provisions will ensure continuity of the employee's service, a better final PF settlement amount, and financial security for the family," the government said. The government also claimed that it will help the member to enjoy the higher rate of interest offered by the EPFO along with compounding benefits to accumulate a high value retirement corpus. Earlier, withdrawal for marriage or house purchase was allowed only after 5-7 years and the government said now it can be done after just one year. "Withdrawal limits for education or illness have also been made more flexible. Additionally, in any special circumstances or emergencies, the full eligible



amount can be withdrawn up to twice a year without any questions asked," it said.

What is the Opposition saying? Opposition MPs Manickam Tagore and Saket Gokhale said in separate statements that the Centre is being cruel to pensioners and EPFO subscribers. "Pensioners and job-lovers are being punished for needing their own savings..." Mr. Tagore said on social media. Both MPs held that the new rules are not for the benefit of workers as the worker will have to wait to get access to his or her hard-earned savings. Mr. Gokhale called the new rule "draconian" and said persons who lose their jobs will not be able to meet their expenses for a full year when their PF withdrawal is blocked.

What is the position of trade unions?

The All-India Trade Union Congress General Secretary, Amarjeet Kaur, demanded scrapping of the rules. "Financial prudence in the face of privatisation is a rude joke played on the unemployed," she said. She said 87% of the EPFO members have less than ₹1 lakh and 50% of them hold only less than ₹20,000, as per EPFO's own data. "The low levels of financial stability are directly attributed to the low wages of majority members. This being the case, holding back 25% of the savings as minimum balance is nothing but preying on the weak," she alleged. K.E. Raghunathan, former member of the CBT representing employers, said the new rules are deeply concerning and regressive. According to him, PF savings are not meant to be treated as recurring deposits for short-term liquidity. "They are structured to provide dignity and financial protection at the end of a worker's career. By allowing repeated full withdrawals, we risk leaving millions with negligible retirement savings and no fallback when income ceases,"

Is age catching up with India's dams?



"At Independence, the new Government of India ... made the building of big dams a central part of its strategy for transforming India, a commitment to which it adhered for decades," historian Daniel Klingensmith wrote in his 2007 book 'One Valley and a Thousand'. The Damodar Valley Corporation, the Bhakra Nangal, and the Hirakud in the 1940s were followed by dams on the Rihand, Koyna, Tungbhadra, Chambal, and Krishna rivers in the decade after. In fact, in the two decades from 1951, India had started work on 418 large dams and by 2000 had completed around 4,000. In Klingensmith's telling, building dams had become "a way by which the modernity and worth of the nation could be enhanced, tested, and displayed."

Today, however, India faces the challenge of large parts of its hydrological infrastructure ageing en masse. According to the National Register of Large (Specified) Dams, some 1,065 were 50-100 years old and 224 were more than a century old in 2023. Many major dams of the post-1950 period are now in the last stages of their originally intended lifespan, raising safety and performance concerns that transcend problems of engineering alone. In practice, India's dam projects have typically assumed a useful life on the order of a few decades. The Bhakra Dam completed in 1963 was expected to serve for at least 100 years as a reservoir but its builders underestimated sedimentation rates, so much so that the reservoir's capacity had dropped by nearly 25% in the first 35 years of its use. Likewise, the Lower Bhavani Dam in Tamil Nadu had lost 28% of its capacity between 1956 and 2005 and the Nizam Sagar Dam had lost roughly half its capacity just in the first three decades of use since 1931.

These examples illustrate one fact clearly: the initial design life of many dams isn't equal to the actual life. The cost of running a dam at its original performance levels can shoot up as it ages — and this is before the additional 'climate load' is factored in. Dams more than 50 years old today have outdated spillway capacities and structural safety factors and require urgent attention to ensure they can continue to function safely. This photograph shows buildings near the Arbaat Dam, 40 km north of Port Sudan, after it collapsed following heavy rains and torrential floods on August 25, 2024. This photograph shows buildings near the Arbaat Dam, 40 km north of Port Sudan, after it collapsed following heavy rains and torrential floods on August 25, 2024. Dams' multiple failure modes can be split into three types: structural, hydraulic, and geotechnical. These modes are hard to pry apart in practice but it's useful to treat them separately if only to identify specific ways to surmount them.

A structural failure is when a dam ruptures or collapses due to weaknesses implicit to its structure. Common causes include poor design and/or construction, material degradation, and structural components being forced to withstand forces they weren't equipped to. For example, progressive concrete deterioration can weaken a concrete dam over time. One way this happens is when silica in rocky aggregates in the structure reacts with alkali compounds in the cement to form a water-absorbing substance. As the substance expands, the concrete starts to crack from within. This category also includes structural cracks, slope instability in earth embankments, and gate and sluice failures.

Worldwide, about 42% of concrete dam failures have been attributed to foundational and structural issues. Structural failures in Indian dams have been traced to seepage, corroded piping, and/or weak foundations. A hydraulic failure occurs when the dam can no longer safely store water. The best known cause of this mode, especially in the era of climate change, is overtopping: when flood waters pass over the dam's pinnacle, potentially breaching the structure en route. When inflow exceeds the dam's capacity, insufficient spillway capacity or blocked spillways can also lead to overtopping. Similarly, when a dam's outflow is very fast, it can erode the structure's downstream face, also resulting in hydraulic failure. In earth and rock-filled dam failures worldwide, overtopping has been the single most common cause (about a third of the time). India's first recorded dam failure, of the Tigris Dam in 1917, was also due to overtopping, and overall this cause has been the main one in most of the 36 recorded dam failures in the country. Finally, a geotechnical failure occurs when the dam's foundations, abutments or the materials within the dam are unstable. Internal erosion in the foundation has accounted for about 29% of masonry dam failures worldwide. Earth-fill dams are particularly susceptible to flawed piping in the dam's body, where water can seep through the dam or its foundation and eventually cause a breach. Earthquakes and landslides can also trigger structural as well as geotechnical failures. Dams in seismically active zones are particularly vulnerable to quake-induced cracking or slope failures. When the magnitude-6.6 Koyanagar earthquake in Maharashtra shook the Koyna Dam in 1967, the structure developed cracks and began to accumulate hydrostatic pressure, raising fears of a breach. Real-world failures are a combination of these modes. An initial structural deficiency could lead to excessive leaks (geotechnical failure) that weaken the dam. Thus when the part of the river upstream of the dam receives heavy rainfall or when there's a glacial lake outburst flood (like the one that roiled Sikkim in 2023), the waters overtop the dam and results in a catastrophic breach.

The world's history of dams indicates more than 70% of failures occur in the first decade of operations as this is when flaws in the design or construction are most likely to become evident. But as dams age, delayed maintenance, material ageing, and unanticipated flooding or seismic events can dramatically increase failure risk. After all, as climate change intensifies, it increases the risk of natural disasters of unprecedented magnitude — and to not have precedent means to lose history as a guide.

Caring for older dams India's Central and State governments have developed an evolving framework of policies, laws, and projects to ensure dam safety, led by the safety regime established by the Dam Safety Act 2021. The instrument provides a framework to surveil, inspect, operate, and maintain all specified large dams, and requires institutional mechanisms at both the Central and the State levels to uphold it. At the Act's heart is the National Committee on Dam Safety, the apex body with the responsibility of evolving dam safety policies and reviewing the work of State-level agencies. The Committee is joined by the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA), a regulatory body under the Union Jal Shakti Ministry tasked with enforcing policy and resolving interstate disputes. In this scenario, every State with large dams is required to establish a State Dam Safety Organisation (SDSO) headed by qualified engineers to over-

see dams in its jurisdiction. (If a dam is located in one State but operated by another, the NDSA supplants the relevant SDSO.)

The 2021 Act also specifies regular inspection schedules. Dam owners — often a State's irrigation department or power utility — are required to conduct pre-monsoon and post-monsoon checks every year, among others. The law also requires each dam to have an emergency action plan and an alarm system, and provides for remedial actions that SDSOs can order if a dam is found to be falling short. Before the Act, the Central Water Commission (CWC) had set guidelines for dam owners on regular maintenance and safety reviews. To this end, many States have had Dam Safety Review Panels: expert groups typically populated by experienced dam engineers, hydrologists, and geologists and which audit ageing dams and recommend rehabilitation measures. The Dam Safety Organisation within the CWC also maintains a database of dam incidents and assists States in investigative studies. After any major natural disaster, a dam is also subjected to special inspections.

In 2012, the Indian government mooted the flagship Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) to upgrade ageing dams. DRIP places particular emphasis on capacity building, including training State dam engineers in contemporary safety practices and developing an emergency action plan. Upgraded dams as a result have piezometers, inclinometers, and seismic monitors on site watching for signs of distress. These in turn also require dam health monitoring software to be integrated with dams' operations and for each dam to maintain a log, like its report card. From 2012 to 2021, DRIP I rehabilitated 198 dams in Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand. Work included grouting cracks, strengthening spillway piers, improving drainage and filtration systems in earth dams, replacing gates and valves, installing modern sensors and instruments, and improving operational processes. The government approved DRIP phases II and III in 2020 to cover 736 dams in 19 States, with financial assistance from the World Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank for physical rehabilitation and to undertake comprehensive safety evaluations. As of early 2024, reviews for more than 400 dams had reportedly been completed. Dovetailing on DRIP are guidelines to deal with the consequences of natural events rendered more intense and/or frequent by climate change. This includes rechecking the probable maximum flood for spillway designs, improving spillway capacity, and adding auxiliary channels. Older masonry and concrete dams are also evaluated against current earthquake codes and strengthened if required by anchoring, buttressing or adding reinforced concrete overlays. The National Hydrology Project and flood forecasting initiatives have also been working to improve flood management upstream. On the flip side, DRIP doesn't make room for dams to be decommissioned; instead it focuses on extending the lifespan of dams at all costs. India in fact lacks an official dam decommissioning policy. The Dam Safety Act empowers authorities to declare a dam unsafe and potentially stop its operation, but there's no procedure to decommission it altogether. Experts have recommended India develop a risk-based framework, i.e. when a dam's failure risk exceeds acceptable limits and it's no longer feasible to strengthen it. Calls by experts to decommission specific dams, such as the Mullaperiyar, have thus far only been dealt with in courts.

Economics of ageing As a dam ages, the cost of its upkeep rises. Older dams often require structural strengthening, e.g. by retrofitting their spillways or reinforcing concrete; upgrading gates and mechanical equipment; and continuously dredging and managing sediment. Second, the loss of reservoir capacity thanks to siltation diminishes water supply, irrigation potential, and hydroelectric power generation capacity. Addressing sedimentation by dredging and restoring catchment areas, among other measures, is also expensive. At one point, the Government of India had deemed the Bhakra reservoir's large-scale dredging to be "cost-prohibitive".

To evaluate the potential cost of a complete failure, analysts use risk assessment models that consider the probability of failure together with its consequences. In practice, a dam's hazard classification (low, significant or high) is based on the worst consequences should it fail. Consequence analysis frameworks, such as the one the US's Department of Homeland Security uses to assess dam safety, enumerate the consequences in three categories: human (populations at risk, potential loss of life), economic (property damage, infrastructure loss, cost of replacement and remediation), and critical services (loss of water supply, power, irrigation). Thus, a comprehensive failure scenario analysis might estimate the asset replacement cost of the dam and its associated structures, the remediation cost for downstream cleanup, and the lost power generation or water supply as part of business losses. Depending on the relevant rules, the analysis may also include intangible costs like environmental damage and long-term economic setback to the region. India currently makes limited formal demands of economic analyses of dam failures. Before the government approves a dam, the project proponent is required to submit an environmental impact assessment (EIA) that includes a dam failure analysis. Since 2021, the Dam Safety Act has required certain dams to have emergency action plans and inundation maps on file. But the government has also been progressively weakening EIA governance, including approving projects sans EIAs and allowing defaulters to pay a fine and continue offending ones.

Perhaps the worst failure in India's history was the collapse of the Machchu-II Dam in Morbi in Gujarat in 1979. This earthen dam was built in the 1970s and was breached after extreme rainfall. Water spilled from the dam in a flash flood that killed more than 2,000 people (although some estimates go up to 20,000). The failure also demolished most of Morbi town. More recently, the Tiware Dam in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra failed in 2019, wiping out entire villages and killing 19 people. Following tropical cyclone Daniel, the Derna and the Abu Mansour Dams in Libya collapsed in September 2023 and killed more than 3,800. The incident prompted countries worldwide to double-check their own dams — and thus the Himachal Pradesh government found 21 dams in the State had violated their safety norms, including possessing inadequate spillways. The discovery drew calls for older dams to have their safety margins reviewed by independent experts. Dam failures also impose long-term costs as local governments have to restore damaged transport links, compensate and rehabilitate the affected families, and reverse losses in agricultural productivity. Even near-miss events can exact high costs. While the 2018 floods strained but didn't breach several dams in Kerala, the State's economy was hit by the emergency reservoir drawdowns and controlled downstream spilling it had to effect. This said, economic evaluations of dam safety are now moving towards risk-based decision-making, which means vouchsafing investments for dams that pose the highest risk, which in turn is a function of the likelihood of failure and the magnitude of downstream consequences. Such an approach helps ensure limited funds are directed to averting the most severe potential disasters, even if the limitedness is arguably artificial and not inevitable.

Inconsistent enforcement, suppressed speech, unchecked hate mar Tamil content moderation



"These platforms were not made for us." Many content creators and digital rights advocates expressed this sentiment as we interviewed them for a recent study evaluating how Tamil speakers experienced content moderation on social media. Content moderation is a complex process of enforcing a platform's content policies, complying with local laws, and keeping users safe online, while also engendering trust in the platform. If this sounds nearly impossible, it is. All the more true for content moderation in languages other than English which goes under-examined or under-considered when developing and deploying content moderation systems, leading to inequitable outcomes.

In the study exploring how social media companies conduct content moderation in Tamil, a majority of the over 100 Tamil-speaking users surveyed reported inconsistent moderation. They pointed to chronic over-moderation. Users spoke of perceptions of suppressed speech or unexplained takedowns of political speech, while high amounts of harassment and hate speech remain on the platform. For many, this inconsistent moderation caused frustration and distrust.

For some users, erroneous moderation was not just the norm, but the price they paid for being online. Women, LGBTQ+ users, and those belonging to caste-oppressed groups told us that that very often, content moderation doubly penalised them. They felt as if the frequency and prevalence of harassment and slur-ridden targeted attacks required them to develop a thick skin to go online every day. Some users noted that these attacks were compounded in the case of intersecting identities. For instance, one user said: "You know the treatment of any Indian woman is very different. The treatment of an English-speaking Dalit woman is going to be very different from a Tamil-speaking Dalit woman." Researchers have pointed to these incidents in the past and showed how online platforms and their design often give rise to coordinated gender-based and caste-based attacks. Though counter-intuitive, these users' efforts to shine a light on targeted harassment fell short, with their own posts being taken down while the offending content remains online. This double standard resulted in confusion and frustration, and ultimately distrust. Some of these users sought psychological support such as therapy or took breaks from going online. They spoke of poor content moderation as a plain fact, and not as an anomaly. Digital rights advocates, the media, and even former platform representatives say part of this is by design. Our report highlighted three shortcomings in how companies pursue content moderation in non-English languages generally, but Tamil specifically, and offered recommendations on how that can be addressed.

Social media companies say they struggle with non-English language moderation because of the unavailability of digitised data to train automated moderation systems. There is simply far more English-language data on the Web to train automated systems. Among Indic languages, Dravidian languages such as Tamil are especially under-resourced. As a result, the automated tools companies build to moderate content often are trained on far more English-language data than in Tamil or any other languages. AI experts say even the available data in Tamil does not adequately represent how users speak the language online. Tamil users, we found, often spoke in Tamilish — mixing Tamil and English or transliterating Tamil using Roman script — or spoke in coded language or by mixing classical and spoken Tamil interchangeably. As a result, moderation fell short simply because companies had not invested in robust tooling to moderate Tamil speech online. Second, companies do not prioritise hiring subject matter, linguistic, or regional expertise even when they invest in a South Asia or Asia-Pacific presence. One former company representative told us that companies pursue a "coverage model" when seeking to deploy resources for content moderation, often ensuring there is at least one person tasked with the region and then deploying additional resources in the event of a crisis or government scrutiny that warrants more attention in a region or language. Long-time Tamil computing experts assert that this is a departure from previous eras of company engagement. Finally, companies do not always disclose to users when or why their posts were taken down, engendering distrust and suspicion among users, particularly set against a backdrop of media reports and researchers pointing to instances where the Government of India has been responsible for ordering removal of posts.

Companies can take multiple steps to improve moderation in Tamil and for the region. First, companies should be focused on making tools that help users control their own information environment. Already, companies that have long used centralised moderation claim to want to make moderation more dynamic and nimble, including shifting towards a community notes approach to fact-checking rather than a top-down approach where platforms or professional fact-checkers decide on content's veracity and take action on that basis. Yet, these approaches fall short particularly when they are not designed in tandem with local users and local nuances. Investments in moderation should be accompanied by robust engagement with local language experts and researchers, especially when those groups and expertise are in abundance. These organisations include those building high-quality datasets such as Karya or Tattle, which also builds user-controlled filters to block gender-based and caste-based harassment. Or efforts such as Vaani NLP or the Center for Tamil Natural Language Processing Research (CTNLPR), which contributes research and natural language processing tools in Tamil. Woeful underinvestment in language capabilities and improving moderation across Indic languages remains a chronic issue plaguing companies' operations in India and other parts of the South Asia region. Users have ultimately paid the price, feeling an indelible double standard when they experience content moderation. Aliya Bhatia is Senior Policy Analyst and Dhanaraj Thakur is Research Director at the Center for Democracy & Technology, a non-profit non-partisan policy and research organisation based in Washington DC and Brussels; views expressed are personal

Pakistan-Saudi Arabia defence pact leads India to study national security implications: MEA



Hours after Pakistan signed a mutual defence agreement with Saudi Arabia, India has said that it was aware of the development and reiterated its commitment to "comprehensive national security". The Indian response came after Saudi Arabia and Pakistan issued a joint statement during the visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Riyadh that said, "any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both".

"The Government was aware that this development, which formalizes a long-standing arrangement between the two countries, had been under consideration. We will study the implications of this development for our national security as well as for regional and global stability. The Government remains committed to protecting India's national interests and ensuring comprehensive national security in all domains," said the Ministry of External Affairs in response to the Saudi-Pakistan mutual defence agreement.

Following talks between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the two sides issued a joint statement on September 17 in which they highlighted bilateral relation over the past nearly eight decades and said, "This agreement which reflects the shared

commitment of both nations to enhance their security and to achieving security and peace in the region and the world, aims to develop aspects of defense cooperation between the two countries and strengthen joint deterrence against any aggression. The agreement states that any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both." Earlier on September 15, the Pakistani Prime Minister had participated in the extraordinary Arab-Islamic summit that was held by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Doha where Israel's September 9 bombing of Qatar was condemned.

Saudi Arabia has close ties with India and had sent Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubair to New Delhi, hours after India targeted locations inside Pakistan under Operation Sindoore in the early morning of May 7. The Saudi minister also visited Pakistan after his unannounced visit of New Delhi before India and Pakistan called for ceasefire on May 10. Saudi Arabia, one of the top energy suppliers to India is also a major employer of Indian blue and white collar expat workers in the Gulf and in recent years had gradually built military relation with India. The inaugural Saudi-India military exercise SADA-TANSEEQ was held from January 29 to February 10 2024 in Rajasthan where a Saudi contingent had participated in the exercise with the Indian Army. However, in comparison, the Saudi relation with Pakistan has been marked prominently by the generous support that Riyadh extended to Pakistan especially after the humiliating defeat in the 1971 India-Pakistan war. Saudi Arabia first came to Pakistan's rescue with a \$300 million assistance that King Faisal extended after meeting Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's foreign minister Aziz Ahmed in Riyadh in 1974. Over the years, Pakistan has intensified defence cooperation with Saudi Arabia and as a recognition of that Saudi Arabia conferred then Pakistani Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa with the prestigious King Abdulaziz Medal of Excellent Class in 2022.

Samsung launches Galaxy A06 5G at Rs 9,899 with festive offer

Hyderabad: Samsung on Tuesday announced a special festive-season price for the Galaxy A06 5G, making it available at Rs 9,899 under a limited-period offer. The deal also includes a Samsung 25W travel adapter worth Rs 1,399 for just Rs 299. For added affordability, buyers can own the device for as low as Rs 909 per month through EMI options.

The Galaxy A06 5G is Samsung's most affordable 5G smartphone in the Galaxy A series, aimed at users upgrading from feature

phones or 4G devices. Supporting 12 5G bands with carrier aggregation, it ensures seamless connectivity across all telecom networks. Powered by a MediaTek D6300 processor with RAM Plus support of up to 12GB, the smartphone is designed for smooth multitasking, gaming, and streaming.

Key Features
Display: 6.7-inch HD+ screen for an immersive viewing experience
Cameras: 50MP main + 2MP depth rear cameras; 8MP front camera
Battery:

5000mAh with 25W fast charging
Durability: IP54 rating for dust and splash resistance

Software & Security: 4 generations of OS upgrades, 4 years of security updates, Samsung Knox Vault protection
India-specific innovation: Voice Focus for clearer calls in noisy environments
Samsung said the Galaxy A06 5G reflects its commitment to bridging the digital divide by offering reliability, performance, and security at an affordable price point.



Samsung has launched the Galaxy A06 5G at a festive price of Rs 9,899, with EMI options starting at 909. The phone features a 50MP camera, 5000mAh battery, MediaTek D6300 processor, IP54 durability

US Fed finally cuts interest rates, but first sign of Trump influence emerges



Washington, US federal reserve, US Federal Reserve interest rate, US Federal Reserve interest rate cut, Federal Reserve interest rate cut, interest rate cut, Indian express news, current affairs This rate cut was already priced in by investors, according to data compiled by LSEG. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was already in positive territory, where it remained after the Fed's move. After nine months of staying pat on interest rates, the US Federal Reserve on Wednesday delivered a 25-basis-point (bps) reduction in interest rates, taking the federal funds rate target range to 4-4.25 per cent. While this was along expected lines, the decision and the central bank's future path is mired in some uncertainty.

Take, for instance, what the Fed members think about the rest of the year. As per their latest projections, nine of the 19 Fed members – voting as well as non-voting ones – are of the opinion that interest rates may be reduced by another 50 bps in what remains of 2025 to 3.5-4 per cent. However, as many as six think the US central bank is done cutting rates for the year. "It's challenging to know what to do," Fed Chair Jerome Powell told reporters on Wednesday. "There are no risk-free paths now." Indeed, monetary policy decisions for the world's most important central bank are littered with risks wherever one looks. Take the labour market, for instance. In its statement, the Fed's Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) – the 12 members of the Fed who vote on the interest rate decision – said "job gains have slowed" and that "downside risks to employment have risen". This was quite the understatement considering what has happened over the last few months. Monthly non-farm employment additions have averaged less than 27,000 in the four months starting May. The Trump administration's problem with the monthly employment numbers is well

known, with the American President firing the person responsible for putting them out, the commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Erika McEntarfer, on August 1 after he called them "rigged". Almost on cue, McEntarfer said on Tuesday that statisticians getting sacked for unfavourable data has "serious economic consequences" and risked putting the US in the same category as Argentina, Greece, and Turkey – "resulting loss of trust in economic statistics led these countries to worsening economic crises, higher inflation and higher borrowing costs. If we follow a similar path, all Americans will suffer the consequences." Powell on Wednesday described the Fed's 25 bps reduction in interest rates as a "risk management rate cut." While the labour market has visibly weakened, the impact of Trump's tariff war on domestic prices is yet to play out fully. "The Fed is now facing a two-sided risk, i.e., a risk to the full employment goal and the risk of excessive inflation," Bernd Weidensteiner, Senior Economist at Commerzbank, said in a note.

Like the BLS, the Fed is another American institution in the midst of a battle for its independence. And Wednesday's interest rate decision showed the reach of Trump's influence, although it was unsuccessful on this occasion. Of the 12 Fed members, 11 voted in favour of reducing the interest rate by 25 bps. The one member who did not agree with this decision was Stephen Miran. Miran, who was sworn in as one of the seven members of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System just this week after Trump appointed him, wanted the interest rate to be reduced by 50 bps, not 25 bps. To be sure, economists were surprised Powell managed a "near-consensus vote" considering two other governors of the Federal Reserve System – Christopher Waller and Michelle Bowman – had favoured a rate cut in July, but went with the majority this week. Trump has been aggressively calling for larger rate cuts for some time now and has chosen to use his ability to make appointments to the Fed to achieve this goal. While Miran is only filling what's left of former Fed Governor Adriana Kugler's term that is set to end in January, he could stay on if a successor is not in place. Miran, it should be noted, remains a White House staff member and is currently on unpaid leave. This is the first time in the Fed's history that one of its Governors is also the President's employee – hardly a ringing endorsement for the central bank's independence. Powell's term as Fed Chair ends in May next year.

Sebi reviewing proposal to allow FPIs in non-cash, non-agri commodity derivatives

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey on Wednesday said a proposal to permit foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to trade in non-cash settled, non-agricultural commodity derivative contracts is currently being reviewed. With an aim to strengthen the domestic commodity markets, he said that Sebi has already constituted a committee to recommend measures for deepening the agricultural commodities segment. A working group for developing the non-agricultural commodity space, including metals, will be constituted, the chairman said. "A proposal to allow FPIs to trade in non-cash settled non-agricultural commodity derivative contracts is currently under examination," Pandey said at an event organised by MCX. He released a report on 'Industrial Strength: Financial Depth – Base Metals Derivatives Serving a ₹20 Trillion Market' by MCX.

At present, FPIs can participate in commodity derivatives markets through non-deliverable and cash-settled contracts. In the commodities derivatives market, non-deliverable and cash – settled contracts are derivatives which, on expiry, do not result in a physical delivery of a commodity. The non-agricultural commodity derivatives include precious, industrial and base metals. Once finalised, the move is likely to attract more FPIs into the domestic commodity derivatives market. The announcement comes days after the Sebi board approved a proposal to introduce a single automatic window for foreign investors. FPIs have been on a selling spree in the domestic market, offloading Rs 61,184 crore of equities since July this year. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), FPIs' daily trading volume in the commodities derivatives market currently is around Rs 15,000 crore. Following the Sebi Chairman's announcement, MCX share price jumped over 5 per cent during intraday trades. The commodity derivatives exchange's share closed at Rs 7,923 apiece, up 3.63 per cent, on the NSE. Commenting on the development, said Anand Rathi group's director (commodity, currency and Gift City, IFSC), Naveen Mathur, said, "Although a framework has to be developed for FPIs to participate in the non-agricultural, non-cash settled derivatives market, the proposal by Sebi is a welcome step in broadening of commodity derivatives market, which is the need of



an hour." The strategic push to develop the Indian commodity derivatives market would surely help India to be price-setter and not a price-taker, he said.

The Sebi Chairman further highlighted the regulator's multi-pronged strategy to deepen and widen participation in commodities market. He said that domestic markets are for large corporations, traders, importers, and SMEs. They are also available for institutional investors like mutual funds and (alternative investment funds (AIFs), who are increasingly recognizing metals as an asset class that improves risk-adjusted returns for investors. "Enhanced institutional participation will bring in higher liquidity, making the market more attractive for hedging. We will keep working towards a regulatory framework to enable prudent institutional access to these markets," he said. The chairman also said that Sebi will engage with the government to consider banks, insurance companies, and pension funds to trade in the commodities market. He said in order to foster market development and innovation, Sebi will encourage exchanges to constantly evolve. "By December 2025 end, we will include commodity-specific brokers in the Samuhik Prativedan Manch, a common reporting mechanism for compliance reports. This will ease their compliance requirements," he said. The regulator will continue to engage with the government to resolve goods and services tax (GST) related challenges for participants who wish to receive or deliver commodities through the exchange platform, Pandey stated.

to CNBC after the listing, Tom Farley, the chief of venture capitalist Peter Thiel-backed Bullish said, "... The institutional wave has begun... It's here, and it's a question of how big it will be." Tether, the issuer of USDT, the largest US dollar backed stablecoin, said it plans to create another stablecoin – fiat currency-backed crypto token – called USAT. The new stablecoin will be regulated by the GENIUS Act, which means it is likely to be backed by US Treasury Bills. "USAT is our commitment to ensuring that the dollar not only remains dominant in the digital age, but thrives," said Tether CEO Paolo Ardoino on Friday. USAT will be led by Bo Hines, a former White House official who said Tether's "expansion will be exorbitant over the course of the next 12 to 24 months."

Tether's current market capitalisation stands at \$169 billion, Reuters reported, citing crypto data platform CoinGecko. The USAT stablecoin will be issued by Anchorage Digital Bank while VC firm Cantor Fitzgerald will operate as its custodian and primary dealer, according to Ardoino. Analysts at JPMorgan in a note in April said stablecoins are expected to become the third largest investors in US Treasuries. Tether is the seventh largest investor in US government debt, having invested over \$33.1 billion in US Treasuries last year, it said in an official statement. To be sure, Tether has been the subject of government probes into alleged blurring of boundaries between investor and corporate funds at its sister company Bitfinex,

Bollywood's favourite designer Manish Malhotra shares what a guy should wear on a first date: 'So if he wants to be this...'



When it comes to fashion in India, few names carry the weight that Manish Malhotra's does. The designer who has dressed Bollywood royalty believes that the best style comes from within. In a candid and playful chat with Brut India, Malhotra offered up what might be the most practical and honest style advice for men heading out on a first date. The question, asked half-jokingly by the interviewer – "What should a guy wear on a first date?" – sparked a thoughtful and personalised response.

"What should a guy wear on his first date – it should be something that he wants to project himself as," said Malhotra. "So if he wants to be this guy who is very casual, confident, with all this messy hair look, and this watch should go the way he's dressed. But if somebody wants to set this thing like, 'I know what I'm doing, I'm this young guy but I'm a little more mature,' he should wear a nice crisp shirt, nice crisp trouser – or a better pair of cool jeans that fit him really well." So, not a one-size-fits-all formula – thankfully. In-

stead, the designer urges men to think about how they want to feel and come across. Want to look mature and sharp? Crisp shirts and tailored trousers or well-fitting jeans are the way to go. Want to keep it casual and confident? Own that vibe, golden globes it's that mix of personal expression and polish that Malhotra believes hits the right tone – especially on a first date (Source: Instagram/@manishmalhotra). And when the interviewer poked fun at his own outfit, joking, "I called my mum, I video-called her, and she said this outfit is a crime. A hate crime, in her words!" – Malhotra didn't miss a beat. "No, this is you, right?" he smiled. "You're casual. You've just thrown something over."

When the interviewer insisted, "No, I'm trying!" – Malhotra grinned knowingly. "You're trying, but you're not trying. You get it, sir. You get it." It's that mix of personal expression and polish that Malhotra believes hits the right tone – especially on a first date, when impressions are being formed and confidence is key. But the interview wasn't all about clothes. When asked what keeps him going after three decades in the fashion industry, Malhotra's answer was immediate and heartfelt. "I think love. Love for what I do. When you love what you do, it never tires you," he said. "I've been in this industry for 30 years, and I still get excited when I see a swatch of fabric, or a young actor trying on something for the first time. That excitement – it keeps you young." That same passion drives his advice for younger creatives just starting out. "Be honest with your work. Don't do it for fame. Don't do it because it's glamorous. That will fade. Do it because you want to wake up every morning and create something beautiful."

Sports eye safety: protecting your vision on the field

As eye doctors, we always remind our patients: prevention is better than cure. Sports and exercise are an important part of a healthy life, but none of us appreciate how exposed our eyes are when we play. One ball, shuttle, or wayward elbow can result in anything from minor scratch to irreparable blindness. When it comes to sports eye safety, let us consider a few of the most popular games here in India, the potential risk to your eyes – and, importantly, how you can stay safe. Cricket, the sport closest to the heart of the nation, is also one of the most dangerous for the eyes. The cricket ball is heavy, hard and moves at high velocity. When it hits the face, it can lead to black eyes, facial fractures around the socket, corneal and/or scleral tears, bleeding inside the eye (vitreous haemorrhage), or even retinal detachment. Helmets with polycarbonate face guards are necessary for batsmen, wicketkeepers and close-in fielders, while protective eye gear is highly recommended even in friendly matches. Badminton, seemingly innocuous, is one of the most common causes of sports eye injuries. The shuttlecock, particularly in a smash, will fly towards the eye at speeds bordering on the fantastic, and can cause blunt trauma, corneal abrasion, tears in the eyeball, lens dislocation, vitreous haemorrhage or even retinal detachment. Little courts and whipping racquets make it even worse. Sports goggles resistant to impact (polycarbonate glasses) are strongly advised, especially for children and people already wearing glasses. Regular glasses break upon impact and may aggravate the injury. Football is another sport with a high incidence of accidental eye injuries. Elbows during headers, mistimed kicks and even the ball itself can cause corneal abrasions, swelling, bleeding within the eye or retinal damage. Players with vision in only one functional eye are at much greater risk due to challenges in depth perception. Wearing protective goggles can decrease the likelihood of severe damage, and children with existing eye problems must be seen by a doctor prior to participation in contact sports.

Hockey, where ball and stick move so quickly, is a potentially dangerous sport. In hockey, an eye injury can be brutal in its variety, from orbital fractures to torn-out eyeballs, occasionally even resulting in partial or total blindness. Polycarbonate face shields and visors are the ultimate protection, and should become mandatory for both goalkeeper and field players. Sadly, protective gear is often neglected in most schools and clubs, and so, awareness is crucial for



this. Basketball causes injuries differently – by unintentional poking of the eye in defence or rebound. These seemingly innocuous mishaps can end up causing corneal abrasions, hyphema (bleeding in the anterior chamber of the eye), or even retinal tears. Regular glasses should never be worn on the court, because they shatter on impact. Sports goggles, made to absorb impact, are the best option for players with or without prescriptive requirements.

Swimming, even though it is a non-contact sport, is not without risks to eye health. Chlorine in pool water removes the eye's natural protective coating, irritating, redness and drying the eyes, and making them more susceptible to conjunctivitis and infection. Children and allergy sufferers will experience heightened discomfort. Proper-fitting swimming goggles make for straightforward and effective protection. Contact lenses should be avoided in swimming pools because they harbour bacteria and considerably enhance infection risk. In all sports, there are some golden rules that should be followed. Eye protectors must be of polycarbonate, which is impact-resistant and shatter-proof. Equipment needs to be replaced when scratched or ill-fitting since impaired protection is useless. Any eye injury, no matter how minor, must be considered as an emergency. Redness, distortion of vision, pain or light flashes after trauma are warning signs demanding immediate assessment by a doctor. For children, early habit formation around safety gear can prevent lifelong consequences. In India, there is a tendency to invest in good bats, racquets and shoes but not in protective eyewear. Yet one injury can undo a lifetime of healthy vision. Sports should strengthen the body and spirit, not compromise eyesight.

The cracks are emerging in political hegemony

For more than a decade, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has not merely dominated Indian politics. It has shaped it. The party governs 15 States and Union Territories, shares power with allies in six more, and wields the machinery of the Union government even in regions beyond its direct control. Its ascent rested on a potent mix of cultural assertiveness, institutional dominance and muscular nationalism, projecting an aura of invincibility that elevated its rule beyond ordinary electoral success into the realm of political hegemony. But that is beginning to change. The BJP remains electorally formidable and is still the dominant party. Yet, its ability to dominate common sense, dictate the terms of public debate and mute opposition is beginning to show cracks. Recent developments suggest that the once-unassailable dominance of the BJP is facing its most serious challenge in a decade. It has squandered the dominance – even the hegemony – it once enjoyed, a decline now intertwined with the political challenge it confronts as it approaches the Bihar Assembly election later this year.

An eroding narrative supremacy's political project built around Hindutva, national pride and majoritarian identity long helped mask economic underperformance, deepening inequality and extreme concentration of wealth in the hands of a few who now exert outsized influence over public policy. The emotional returns of Hindutva were allowed to stand in for material improvements. That trade-off is losing its grip. Youth unemployment remains high, wage growth is stagnant and the informal sector continues to reel from the aftershocks of demonetisation, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Goods and Services Tax (GST). For growing sections of the population, the promise of jobs and upward mobility is beginning to outweigh symbolic victories. And in that widening gap between rhetoric and reality, the party's narrative supremacy is beginning to slip. The appeal to the urban middle class rested not only on Hindu nationalism but also on the promise of international recognition – an India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as a globally respected

power. Diplomatic visibility, high-profile summits and a carefully curated image of global stature were projected as markers of national progress. But that narrative has lost momentum, particularly after tensions with the United States over President Donald Trump's claim of brokering a ceasefire following the India-Pakistan conflict sparked by the Pahalgam terror attack in April 2025. The tariff war with Washington, which has triggered job losses across several sectors, alongside the collapse of trade talks and tighter visa regimes, has further punctured the illusion of a seamless global ascent. For India's middle class and media, once buoyed by the rhetoric of global rise and the self-proclaimed role of Vishwa Guru, the hard edges of realpolitik have begun to temper enthusiasm and puncture the earlier sense of triumphalism. One area where the party continues to hold strong appeal, particularly among rural voters and the urban poor, is its system of Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT). Schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi or PM-KISAN, Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana, Mukhya Mantri Ladli Behna Yojana, and other targeted programmes deliver tangible material benefits. In a context of economic insecurity and widespread deprivation, this helps blunt public discontent. It also helps explain the paradox of the BJP's sustained electoral competitiveness, even as its hegemonic architecture shows signs of strain. Yet, welfare delivery alone cannot sustain political dominance. This is why the regime persistently curbs dissent, silences opposition, and incarcerates critics, activists and intellectuals – not merely to neutralise political rivals, but to suppress independent voices that question its legitimacy. Perhaps the most intangible, yet revealing, sign of change is this: people, especially Opposition leaders, are no longer afraid. Fear once defined the ecosystem of control – fear of arrest, harassment, or marginalisation. That atmosphere has begun to thin. The Opposition is now not only more coordinated but also more assertive, carving out space and placing the government under sustained scrutiny.

Tale of 2 crypto IPOs and a stablecoin: Crypto-related stock valuations soar amid Trump's push for industry expansion

The Donald Trump administration's backing for ease of issuance and trading of cryptocurrencies has spurred a frenzy of IPOs in the virtual digital assets space. Sample the listing of Gemini, a crypto exchange founded by the Winklevoss twins of Meta-owned Facebook fame, on Friday at \$4.4 billion – a premium of 32.2 per cent over its IPO valuation. In another listing, blockchain lender Figure Technology Solutions garnered \$787.5 million in its IPO, and listing on the tech-heavy Nasdaq stock exchange in the US at \$36 apiece, up from its IPO price of \$25 apiece on Thursday. Gemini and Figure join an array of crypto-related companies whose public listing indicated bullish sentiment for virtual digital assets under an enabling administration in the US. How crypto-related stocks have performed so far

In June, stablecoin issuer Circle Internet Group raised its valuation to \$7 billion in the run-up to its IPO. The company's stock listed at \$69 apiece, nearly doubling in valuation on debut. Circle's stock was valued at \$125.30 per share, down 6.28 per cent at 10:15 AM IST on Monday. The USDC stablecoin issuer's CEO credited engagement with policymakers for the company's success. "Because if you want this to work for mainstream, it's got to work in mainstream society and you need to have those rules of the road," he told CNBC. Bullish, the parent of crypto exchange CoinDesk raised its IPO size to \$1.11 billion, above its IPO price of \$37 apiece. Bullish's stock listed at \$90 apiece in August. The company's stock was valued at \$51.84 apiece, down 3.94 per cent on Monday at 11:15 AM IST. Speaking

‘She once missed a board exam to play a T20 cricket match’: Richa Ghosh’s father reflects on her journey from Siliguri to World Cup glory



GNS News Agency, March 10

When Richa Ghosh walked out to represent India at the World Cup, her father, Manabendra Ghosh, watched with his heart swelling with pride. “No sacrifice is too big for what she has achieved,” he exclaims. Richa is part of the Indian women’s cricket team that reached the finals of the World Cup. She is both wicketkeeper and batter, hailing from Siliguri district in West Bengal. He remembers the beginning. A little girl, barely five, followed her father to the field, picking up a bat and ball almost as big as her. “She used to come along with me when I played. She’d start knocking around; so active, so full of life,” he smiles. “At that time, I never thought she’d become a cricketer. I just put her into a club for fitness. But her determination, her sincerity shone through from a very early age.”

Opportunities were scarce in Siliguri back then. Richa’s spirit refused to dim. The family’s move to Kolkata opened doors, thanks to the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB), which organised women’s camps and created space for young girls to dream big. “Some of her knocks caught the selectors’ attention,” he recalls. “From one age group to another, she kept moving up. At just 13, she represented

Bengal’s senior team.” Then came the game-changer — her selection for the Indian team. “I was on my way to buy her a new phone when I got a call saying she had made it. I thought they meant the India U-18 team, but the person said, ‘No, she’s been picked for the Indian T20 World Cup team!’ Tears rolled down my cheeks. I was spellbound. I can’t describe that feeling.” From that day, every milestone has been a story of pride and disbelief. “When she got selected for the 2025 World Cup, I wasn’t surprised. I was sure she’d make it,” he says. “Seeing India beat Australia and Richa playing her part in that victory, that’s a feeling beyond words.” Raising a daughter in sport wasn’t easy. “We never treated her differently because she’s a girl,” he says, firmly. “But yes, it came with challenges. I had to make sure she was safe when she travelled alone for matches or camps. The first time she went to Goa for an NCA camp, we were anxious. Later, we realised the BCCI was taking care of everything, but that first time... it was hard to let go.”

For Manabendra, her education was never forgotten, but her dream always came first. “World Cups don’t come every year... She can always give her board exams later. That’s how we made our peace with it.” Through it all, Richa has remained grounded — the same cheerful girl from Margaret School who always smiled and mixed with everyone. “She’s still that same child at heart,” he said. “Always calm, always cool. And yes,” he added, “she still loves her mother’s home-cooked fried rice.” When asked what he’s most proud of, he doesn’t talk about the records. “Her calmness... her composure. That’s what surprises me most,” he says. “I once thought I made sacrifices for her — my career, my time. But now, when I see her play for India, I realise those sacrifices were nothing. What I gained through her achievements is far greater than anything I could’ve ever given up. I didn’t sacrifice my career — this is part of my career. So, maybe, the career I lost was nothing compared to what I gained.”

Jesus was with me, said Jemimah and other tales of faith moving mountains Sandeep Dwivedi

GNS News Agency, March 10

Jemimah Rodrigues is trying her best to push the lump down her throat and failing miserably. She has just played the inning that would change her life forever. Thrust under the spotlight after her match-winning 127 in the World Cup semi-final, she has a microphone in her hand. The world wants to hear her speak. “I thank Jesus, I couldn’t have done this on my own... he carried me through this” — that’s how she starts her thanks-giving. The atheist might smirk but Jemimah is one among the many athletes who bank on some higher power — religion, spiritual or philosophical — to deal with the complexities of professional sports. All alone on the field, burdened by unrealistic expectations and with repercussions of failure dire, the pros need company when dealing with crisis. The troubles of the sporting superstars are too layered for the mortals to understand.

Religion and sports is a fascinating conflation, it’s an alliance that inspires humans to push limits and achieve incredible feats. Faith can move mountains but it can also score runs and take wickets. Sachin Tendulkar’s Gods travelled with him in his kit bag, Suryakumar Yadav chants Hanuman Chalisa while batting. Usain Bolt’s starting blocks routine is about drawing the sign of the cross and throwing a gaze to the skies. It’s a request to the Gods to make him fly across track.

When the Ireland-born England captain Eoin Morgan won the closest-ever 50-overs World Cup final in 2019, he was asked if it was the famous “luck of the Irish” that took his team past the finish line. Morgan smiled and recalled what his teammate, the leggie Adil Rashid, had told him after the match. “Rashid told me Allah was with us,” he said. On those rare occasions when the players open up on their ways to deal with the pressures, the rationale of their religiosity comes out. Some time back, Jemimah, a church regular, had appeared on a podcast with fellow believers, the two former South African batsmen JP Duminy and AB de Villiers. The senior SA pros have shared a dressing room, had long Holy conversations and shared a magical moment of enlightenment. On the podcast, Duminy would ask AB about the role faith had played in his career. AB would talk about his early anxious days in international cricket when he firmly believed that everything was in his hand and “it was all about him”. But with time that would change. “It is about me, I didn’t want my family to be down... I was fighting for my dear life to stay in the Proteas set up,” he would say. This was AB giving a peep into the mind of a champion driven to succeed but over-estimating the capacity of the human mind to take pressure and find solutions. It was on a 2013 Sri Lanka tour, AB, during a session with Duminy and teammates, saw the light. That was time, the original Mr 360 says he understood the virtues of letting things go and let the Almighty take charge. “That’s when you realise, it is not about you... one needs to make it about Him. Make a conscious decision to say I am here just to entertain people for you... it is about Him,” he says. “I certainly try to remind myself constantly that it’s not about me.” Jemimah too says that faith doesn’t ensure success all the time but it surely frees your mind, it doesn’t let you feel lonely. “Sometimes things don’t go the way you want... it boils down to trust in his hand. That changes your perspective completely when you go out there on the field... you just want to play for Him and please Him and, try and win people for Him.” Faith provides an assurance that the best will happen to you and it also helps you be in a bubble and be true to the process that you have trained to follow. It’s the blissful space, the zone every athlete aspires to be in. India’s Test star Cheteshwar Pujara believed in spirituality and power of chanting. In the book *The Diary of a Cricketer’s Wife: A Very Unusual Memoir*, Cheteshwar’s wife Puja spelled out the importance of praying to India’s reputed batsman, who retired this year after playing 100-plus Tests. “The endless hours he spent praying and chanting played a large role in shaping his personality and became an inextricable part of every facet of his life. Very soon after our marriage, I discovered that he often chanted chaupais or quatrains from the Hanuman Chalisa while he was at the non-striker’s end...,” she writes. “Prayers were an intrinsic part of Cheteshwar’s coping mechanism. They had helped him handle his mother’s death, his father’s surgeries, his own medical procedures, and every difficulty and loss he had faced in his young life.” So much so that he once tried to deal with his wife’s migraine by holding her hands and chanting. That didn’t seem to work, the book says. Pujara would also recite a mantra given to him by his spiritual guru during his “daily devotional routine, but most especially, when the going got tough”. Pujara leaned on spirituality from an early age but his contemporary, Virat Kohli, took



some time to take that path. Like AB, Kohli, in one of his early interviews, had thrown a rhetorical question to an interviewer when asked about religion. “Do I look the pooja-path kind,” he had said. Years later, now a father of two, Virat would be seen in the company of sadhus and monks. Video from those meetings would have him talking about “inner peace” and other such ancient wisdom. Even the intimidating Aussie opener Mathew Hayden had a spiritual side. He would take “the cross” to the crease. An article in *The Record*, a website that describes itself as the “the best in Catholic news from across the Archdiocese of Perth”, says Hayden’s resilience was because of his Catholicism. The piece quotes Hayden as saying, “When batting, I make this Sign of the Cross on my palm. I actually love doing that because when I make the cross across the middle I have a little saying that says ‘Whatever happens today, it’s for You (God)’. That’s part of what I do. I love that part of the day.” Faith can also turn “a fiery little bugger” into the calmest cricketer with the most serene personality who never swears. That’s how England all-rounder Moeen Ali’s father Munir explained his son’s transformation in this newspaper some time back. Moeen’s outlook to life changed after a long chat about Islam with a West Indian supporter who was acquaintance. “He wasn’t a calm boy, growing up, but as he has gotten older and deeper into religion, he has grown a lot calmer. It has had a great effect on his cricket, and life. By that Ramadan, almost overnight, he was a different man,” Munir would say. That different man would serve England for long, be part of Morgan’s World Cup winning team. But there were hurdles too. The county circuit wasn’t used to a player with a long flowing beard who prayed five times a day. Being a 12th man at Worcestershire, Moeen didn’t have a designated corner for himself and practiced his faith. Help came from the team’s coach and England’s county legend Graeme Hick. “Worcester it was a little difficult, because I was 12th man and I didn’t have a spot in the dressing room. I remember Graeme knew me, and knew this was a problem for me, so he moved his bags so I had room to pray.”

Indian Karate style ‘Senkoukai’ gets official recognition from Japan’s IBKA

HYDERABAD: It is a great moment for the martial arts exponents of India with Senkoukai Karate, founded by the Legend of Indian Karate, Soke Hanshi Shaswat Kumar (10th Dan Black Belt), receiving official international recognition from Japan’s International Bujutsu Karate Association (IBKA), headquartered in Sapporo.

The recognition was issued by Grandmaster Masaki Watanabe (10th Dan), Founder of IBKA Japan, who praised Hanshi Shaswat Kumar as one of his most dedicated and disciplined students, appreciating his lifelong contribution to promoting the true spirit of Karate across the world.

This marks the first time in Indian history that a Karate style developed in India has been formally recognized by Japan. Senkoukai Karate now holds full authority to conduct belt examinations from 1st Dan to 10th Dan, officially approved by IBKA Japan. Senkoukai Karate is a completely independent Karate style. It follows its own rules, syllabus, and grading system, all designed and established by Soke Hanshi Shaswat Kumar. The style does not follow or come under the control of any other Karate organization, association, federation, or world council. No external rules or systems are applicable to Senkoukai Karate or to Hanshi Shaswat Kumar’s authority and identity are fully self-governed and internationally recognized.

‘On what basis is Shubman Gill T20I vice-captain?’: Srikanth slams India team management, says ‘balance gone for a toss’



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Former India chairman of selectors Krishnamachari Srikanth has slammed the team management’s decision to appoint Shubman Gill as the vice-captain of the T20I side, claiming that it has thrown the entire balance of the squad for a toss. Since his return to the T20I fold at the Asia Cup after a year’s gap as vice-captain, Gill has only scored 169 runs in nine innings, averaging 24.14. Srikanth has slammed the decision to make him Suryakumar Yadav’s deputy, which has virtually sealed his spot for the upcoming T20 World Cup.

“They won’t drop Gill for the next three games. They

are not worried about anything else. He is the vice-captain for the T20 World Cup, that’s fixed now. It’s also fixed that he’s the future T20I captain. So they have to play with him and build the balance for the rest of the side. He’s a certainty or else on what basis has he been appointed the vice-captain?” said Srikanth on his YouTube channel. The former India captain also said that Gill’s fixed spot has meant that India have not been able to accommodate the likes of Yashasvi Jaiswal into the T20I set-up despite his better record as an opener. He also said that batters of the likes of Sanju Samson and Tilak Varma are unstable in terms of their slots.

Not sure why Jaiswal isn’t playing “Yashasvi Jaiswal is waiting in the wings. He’s not there in the team. With Gill’s inclusion, the overall balance has gone for a toss so they aren’t sure of what to do. Sanju Samson and Tilak Varma don’t have a fixed position and Arshdeep Singh is missing out on the 11. The only good thing is the T20 World Cup is in India so they’ll escape.” “India has a lot of players like Abhishek. If players like Yashasvi Jaiswal are given an opportunity, they’ll utilise it. But now he has no window to come into the side. Only Hardik Pandya can come into the 11 and nobody else. Jaiswal also came through the IPL and has an outstanding record in all formats and the IPL. I am not sure why he isn’t playing with a brilliant IPL and T20I record. Give him the same opportunities, he’ll destroy bowlers at the top,” added Srikanth.

‘Jasprit Bumrah is slightly wayward when desperate’: Former India World Cup winner’s bold claim after MCG T20I

GNS News Agency, March 10

Even the mighty Jasprit Bumrah is bound for a failer or two and the India speedster could not deliver his magic to help the team put up a fight after scoring only 125 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in the second T20I on Friday. Even as he picked up two wickets and conceded only 26 runs in four overs, Bumrah’s wayward lengths came under some scrutiny from former India batter Robin Uthappa, who felt the ace speedster was bound to be erratic when desperate. “When we were bowling after scoring 125, the start was very important. If we had picked up two or three wickets in the first three or four overs, the game could have been closer because we have quality spinners in the middle overs. I felt we were probably trying too hard to pick up wickets. So we got a little wayward,” Uthappa said on Star Sports. Erratic when desperate “I have observed that whenever Bumrah gets desperate to pick up wickets, he becomes slightly wayward, and when he is disciplined and hits a good line and length, he mostly picks up wickets. Australia took full advantage of that waywardness at the start, the way we started with the ball in the second innings,” Uthappa added. The 2007 World Cup winner also lamented the abject batting display from India, save for the half-century from Abhishek Sharma and a cameo from Harshit Rana. “Slightly disappointing, be-



cause you had obviously lost the toss, but the batters could have given themselves a little time. They chose the aggressive batting option and they lost too many wickets in the first six overs because of that,” he said. “Abhishek had to manage the innings after six overs. He had a good partnership with Harshit, but apart from that partnership, no batter stood with him, so that India could have scored at least 150. This team will get a lot of learning from this. This young team will have to understand that there is a slight extra bounce here and they will have to adjust their game plans accordingly,” Uthappa observed.

Jemimah Rodrigues: ‘The child who was so quiet... now she’s able to face anyone’



GNS News Agency, March 10

Defiant fightbacks and leaving it all out there for the team is something Jemimah Rodrigues has regularly done for her school, St Joseph’s Convent in Bandra West, and for Mumbai cricket. And in her backyard in Navi Mumbai, on the biggest stage, she got the better of the mighty Aussies Thursday and helped India take a monumental leap into the World Cup final. Jemimah’s first coach and father, Ivan, who was there on the sidelines of the emotionally charged game with his wife, came up with a biblical David vs Goliath reference to describe the tense battle between the tall Aussie bowlers and his daughter.

“I always believed in her capabilities,” the proud father Ivan tells *The Indian Express*. “That David vs Goliath story is so apt — the little David, Jemimah, proved herself under pressure against the mighty Goliath, the Aussies. A lot of hard work has gone into her preparation right from her childhood. It was God’s favor and kindness that this victory came at the right time and against the strongest team,” he says, urging that she needs to battle once more for India on Sunday. Growing up in an all-girls school, Rodrigues was introduced to spirituality early in life and, as she matured from a quiet young girl to a confident woman, her faith in the Almighty only deepened. Rodrigues Jemimah Rodrigues with her school principal Sister Blanche. (Special arrangement)

“In class, she was a very quiet student and she knew the purpose of her life,” says her former principal Sister Blanche. “She was good in studies, so that’s why she could manage both that and her games practice. She would adjust her exam time, her study time, and she was very much like God-fearing, and her whole mind was trusting in the Lord that God is with me, and he will bless me and that’s why she was able to manage. It was a hectic time, but she was able to cope with all that in school.” Like every active Bandraite, Jemimah dabbled at cricket, football and basketball, but eventually, it was with a broad wooden bat that she brought the best out of her personality, on the field. “She played cricket and football, in which she was very good, along with hockey, basketball, as well as throwball and volleyball. She had a passion for all different games. But then she made the choice for cricket,” her former school principal says. Sport also turned a very introverted girl into a happy, outgoing personality. “As I said in the beginning, she was very quiet, but afterwards, when she started getting into the game and going for different matches slowly, slowly her personality also developed. At the end, in the 10th Standard, she was ap-

pointed the school games captain,” says Sister Blanche. Jemimah with her former principal Sister Blanche. (Special Arrangement) Jemimah with her former principal Sister Blanche. (Special Arrangement) “Slowly, she became so bold and so victorious. The child who was so quiet and hid herself, you know, now she’s able to face anyone,” Sister Blanche says, adding Jemimah recently revisited her alma mater and left a tremendous impression on students, as she grew in confidence with the India crest. “Quite a big difference between what she (Jemimah) was in her school and what she is today,” says Sister Blanche. Cricket wasn’t smooth sailing, but the Bandra sporting spirit wouldn’t let Jemimah give up. Suffering a setback when she was dropped from the Indian team for the match against England at Indore had left her dejected. But a call with her coach Prashant Shetty the following day was the best thing that could have happened to her. The duo thought up a three-stage plan. “She was really upset at being out of the team. But we set three small goals. The first was to prepare to the best of her ability. Because she could still get a look-in. And we were not out of the tournament anyway, so that was our biggest motivating factor. The second thing was, whenever you get a chance, the walk — you have to start well. And then, the first eight to ten balls, you have to play compactly. That is what we decided. We had three simple goals, which she needed to achieve. And that is how we started,” Shetty says. Jemimah’s father has urged her to remember that the final is still to be won. “As a coach I have always waited for such a day. I am happy to see Jemi’s progress but I feel the job is still to be done and finished. One more hurdle to cross for the world Cup,” he says.

FIDE World Cup 2025 named after Indian legend Viswanathan Anand

Hyderabad: A vibrant celebration of India and Goa’s rich culture — highlighted by a dazzling light and music show portraying the Spirit and Story of Chess — set the stage for the grand opening of the FIDE World Cup 2025 at the Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Stadium on Friday.

The ceremony also witnessed the World Cup trophy renamed as the Viswanathan Anand Cup — a masterpiece forged in brass and gold-plated to last a lifetime. The trophy stands as a testament to passion, precision, and perseverance, values synonymous with India’s first world chess champion and his enduring legacy. It will serve as a rolling trophy, passed on to future champions of the FIDE World Cup. The tournament, commencing Saturday, November 1, will feature 206 players from 82 countries vying for the coveted title and three Candidates 2026 spots. The FIDE World Cup 2025 was officially declared open by Hon’ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi through a letter read out by AICF President Nitin Narang, in which the Prime Minister conveyed his best wishes and said, “... ”

This Indian actor shaved her head for Star Trek role, almost became Bond girl, made history as first Indian to present at Oscars before her untimely death



Before actors like Irrfan Khan and Priyanka Chopra made a name for themselves in Hollywood, Persis Khambatta — a middle-class girl from Mumbai — had already achieved what many could only dream of. She became one of the earliest and most well-known Indian success stories in Hollywood, breaking stereotypes and paving the way for future generations of actors. Persis is still remembered for her iconic portrayal of Lieutenant Ilia in Star Trek: The Motion Picture. But to truly understand her impact, one must begin with her childhood. Persis Khambatta was born into a middle-class Parsi family in Mumbai. Her early life was marked by struggle, as her father left the family when she was just two years old. She attended St. Joseph's Convent High School and later enrolled at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. However, she dropped out during her first year to pursue modelling full-time. This turning point came in 1968, when, at just 13, she was discovered by a photographer while dining with her family at a restaurant. He took her test shots, which ended up being used in an advertising campaign for Rexona soap. The success of that campaign marked the beginning of her modelling career. Beginning of her modeling career

Persis Khambatta went on to win the Miss India title in 1965, impressing everyone despite wearing off-the-rack clothes she had bought herself. She became the second winner of the Femina Miss India pageant and the third Indian woman ever to participate in Miss Universe. After her win, her modelling career flourished, and she worked with major brands such as Air India, Revlon, and Garden of Eatin'. It wasn't long before Bollywood came calling. Khambatta made her acting debut with Pinjre Ke Panchhi, starring alongside Meena Kumari and Mehmoode. She went on to appear in films like Bambai Raat Ki Bahun Mein and Kamasutra — Vollendung der Liebe. However, her ambitions soon outgrew the confines of the Hindi film industry. Persis goes international. Persis Khambatta had bigger dreams and famously called herself "a big fish in a small pond." Speaking to the Hollywood Foreign Press, she said, "I was very fortun-

nate. I had done so much modelling in India, but I was like a big fish in a small pond and I wanted to try somewhere else, to be known internationally, to feel inside me that I was good and I would make it abroad, so I decided to go to London." Her first role in an international film came with Ralph Nelson's British adventure thriller The Wilby Conspiracy (1975), starring Michael Caine, Sidney Poitier, and Nicol Williamson, in which she played a small role as a dentist. She followed this with another small role in Conduct Unbecoming (1975), alongside Michael York and Richard Attenborough. Shaved her head for Star Trek role. According to the Golden Globes website, Persis Khambatta faced a major setback when her portfolio was stolen by two Indian actors during a flight back from India. "I knew that that would stop my career and I would have to start all over again. But if this didn't happen, I would have never really taken acting seriously." Determined to rebuild her career, she moved to Los Angeles — a decision that changed her life forever. In 1979, Persis landed the groundbreaking role of Lieutenant Ilia in Star Trek: The Motion Picture. The role defined her career, and she made history by doing something almost unheard of at the time — she shaved her head for the part. She was chosen for the role from a pool of 600 hopefuls. "I was brought to Hollywood by Gene Roddenberry and Michael Eisner, chosen from 600 hopefuls to star in the original Star Trek motion picture. The success of the film, coupled with the allure that I had shaved my head for the role, put a spotlight on me," she told Los Angeles Times. Almost became a Bond girl and became the first Indian to present at the Oscars. The success of Star Trek put Persis Khambatta firmly in the Hollywood spotlight, but it didn't immediately translate into major lead roles. At a time when actors from diverse backgrounds were still struggling to make a mark, Persis too faced the challenge of breaking through Hollywood's glass ceiling. "Everyone told me to stay in Hollywood. This was the place, they said, and I could have a big career. What they failed to mention was that no one would quite know what to do with me," she said in an interview. Despite these challenges, Persis became the first Indian citizen to present an Academy Award in 1980 — a historic moment in itself. Actor Kabir Bedi once told The Print, "Star Trek was a success. She was recognised, admired. But she didn't manage to land any substantial roles after that. And I was sad about that. Because that's the reality of trying to act in a different country." After Star Trek, Persis appeared in smaller roles in films such as Nighthawks, Megaforce, Warrior of the Lost World, and on popular TV shows like MacGyver. She was even considered for the role of a Bond girl in Octopussy (1983), but ultimately lost the part to Maud Adams. Persis Khambatta's later years were marked by health struggles. A chain smoker, she was diagnosed with a heart condition at the age of 34 and was given just three months to live — but she defied the odds and lived another 15 years. Tragically, while visiting India in 1998, Persis suffered a massive heart attack and passed away.

Most controversial Malayalam film of 2025 grossed over Rs 50 crore against Rs 13 crore budget; earned more than Rs 11 crore from Kerala alone



Despite making good money from theatres, the film opened to significant criticism from sections of the audience, with many slamming it for its problematic portrayal of sexual assaults.

Despite making good money from theatres, the film opened to significant criticism from sections of the audience, with many slamming it for its problematic portrayal of sexual assaults. Kunchacko Boban's action thriller made good money at the box office, but was criticised for its problematic aspects. (Screenshot: YouTube/saregamalayalam)

Although Malayalam cinema so far this year hasn't been able to match the quality of films it produced in 2024, three out of the top five highest-grossing Malayalam films of all time — Lokah Chapter 1: Chandra, L2: Empuraan, and Thudarum — interestingly hit the screens in 2025, highlighting the industry's growing box office pull. Nonetheless, while 2024 saw several good movies achieving box office success and entering the Rs 100 crore and Rs 50 crore clubs, that hasn't been the case so far this year, with several films ending up as average grossers at the box office. For instance, Hridayapoorvam, which currently ranks as the fourth-highest-grossing Malayalam film of 2025, reportedly lags far behind the third-highest grosser, Thudarum (Rs 234.5 crore), in terms of worldwide gross, at Rs 76.25 crore, highlighting how the industry hasn't managed to emulate last year's success.

Among the biggest hits of 2025 is director Jithu Ashraf's Officer on Duty, starring Kunchacko Boban,

Vishak Nair, and Priyamani in the lead roles and penned by Shahi Kabir. According to a statement issued by the Kerala Film Producers' Association (KFPA) in March — revealing the budget of Malayalam movies released in February and the share of revenue each generated from theatres in the state — Officer on Duty was reported to have been mounted on a budget of Rs 13 crore. Its theatre share from Kerala alone stood at a whopping Rs 11 crore, and the film was still continuing its successful run at the box office when the report was released in mid-March, suggesting that its final figure would have been higher than that. According to industry tracker Sacnilk, the movie ended its theatrical run with a worldwide gross of Rs 53.01 crore, while registering an India nett collection of Rs 30.74 crore. However, actor Kunchacko Boban later claimed that the figures mentioned in the KFPA report were inaccurate. "The production cost of the film is not Rs 13 crore, it's significantly higher. The producers did not recover just Rs 11 crore; they have earned at least double or more. The Rs 11 crore mentioned by the association representatives likely refers to the share the producer received from Kerala theatres alone. Even then, the actual figure is higher than 11 crore. Their figures are neither accurate nor transparent. If numbers are being presented, they should be precise," he said in conversation with Onmanorama. When asked if the film has entered the Rs 50 crore club, he said, "The concept of a 'crore club' is based on a film's total revenue, which includes the theatre share, taxes paid to the government, and other earnings. In Kerala alone, our film has collected around Rs 30 crore so far. It has also performed well outside Kerala. Considering those earnings, the film has undoubtedly surpassed Rs 50 crore. One thing I can say for sure: during the film's production itself, nearly three-fourths of the investment was recovered. By the third day after release, the film had entered the profit zone." However, despite making good money from theatres, Officer on Duty turned out to be one of the most controversial films of the year and opened to significant criticism from sections of the audience, with many slamming it for its problematic portrayal of sexual assaults and the glorification of a protagonist — a police officer, for that matter — who clearly did not deserve any sympathy. Besides the film's extremely graphic depiction of violent crimes, it also faced backlash for its unfiltered use of revenge rape and revenge porn as mere plot devices, without considering real-life survivors who may find it triggering to watch and relive those moments. In SCREEN's review of the film, we also criticised the movie for its blatant use of the "women in refrigerators" trope, while not even attempting to be subtle about it. Renowned psychiatrist Dr CJ John also tore into Officer on Duty for its excessive violence. In a social media post, he reportedly stated that the movie should not be made accessible to minors, even on OTT platforms.

Aishwarya Rai had no makeup in 'Kajra Re', recalls Mickey Contractor, says Aditya Chopra wanted a 'raw' look: 'Aish is not the kind who asks too many questions'



Aishwarya Rai Bachchan's iconic song "Kajra Re" from Bunty Aur Babli (2005) became a massive hit, not just for its captivating lyrics and catchy tune, but also for the actor's striking look. Interestingly, Aishwarya appeared without makeup in the song. This surprising behind-the-scenes detail was revealed by celebrity makeup artist Mickey Contractor during an old interview. During a conversation with Lehren Retro, Mickey revealed that Aishwarya had earlier expressed her desire to sport a no-makeup look. "It was not a no makeup look, it was actually no makeup. That's the whole thing behind this Kajra Re look. Aish and I had been talking about it for a long time that we wanted to do a film where she would actually

wear no makeup. We were waiting for a right moment to do something like that, because not every film you can do where girls are completely bare without makeup," he recalled.

"Kajra Re" was offered to Aishwarya Rai at the right time by the right person, as even Bunty Aur Babli producer Aditya Chopra wanted her to sport a more raw and natural look. "This song came up. She had to look glamorous, but at the same time, Adi wanted her to look very raw. Between Shaad, Adi, Aish and myself, we decided that it should just be completely bare — there should be no foundation on her. The whole song's lyrics were about Kajra Re, Tere Kaale Kaale Naina, and we didn't want to give her lenses, so we just used a black kajal and mascara, that's all she was wearing with a lip gloss," he said. When the host asked if Aishwarya Rai had any reservations about being without any makeup on screen, Mickey Contractor said, "Aish is not the kind who asks too many questions. She has confidence in certain people and she goes by what we usually have to say to her. She knows we are her friends. We will always wish well for her. And, she is very confident of her own beauty, of her own self, and of her talent. I think there's no question of being apprehensive. She knows she looks beautiful." On the professional front, Aishwarya Rai was last seen in Mani Ratnam's Ponniyin Selvan II. The film also featured Vikram, Ravi Mohan, Karthi, Trisha Krishnan, Jayaram, Prabhu, R. Sarathkumar, Sobhita Dhulipala, Aishwarya Lekshmi, Vikram Prabhu, Prakash Raj, Rahman, and R. Parthiban in important roles. It was a blockbuster hit. The actor hasn't announced her next project yet.

Shah Rukh meets Squid Game stars Lee Jung-jae and Lee Byung-hun at Saudi event; fans call it 'crossover of the century'



Bollywood superstars Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan, and Salman Khan recently attended Joy Forum 2025 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. At the event, Shah Rukh and Aamir also crossed paths with several Korean stars. Emmy-winning Squid Game actor Lee Jung-jae shared a selfie with Shah Rukh on Instagram. In the photo, SRK exudes effortless style in an all-black ensemble, while Lee keeps it casual in a hoodie. Sharing the moment, Lee wrote, "Honoured to be with the legendary Mr. @iamsrk." Lee Jung-jae and Shah Rukh Khan's photo set social media abuzz, with fans from India and South Korea flooding the comments of the post in excitement, with many hailing it as "the crossover of

the century." One fan wrote, "SRK and Lee Jung-jae in one frame? My multiverse is complete!" Another commented, "Imagine these two in an action thriller — global domination!" A third added, "Two cinematic legends, one iconic selfie."

Shah Rukh Khan and Aamir Khan also met Squid Game actor Lee Byung-hun. Byung-hun shared a set of photos with the caption, "Pleasure to be with all these talented people." The photos also featured Shaquille O'Neal, MrBeast, and IShowSpeed, among others. See Shah Rukh and Aamir Khan's photo with Lee Byung-hun and others: Saudi Arabian government official and sports promoter Turki Al-Sheikh also shared photos of Salman Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, and Aamir Khan. He captioned the post, "With my three world famous brothers, Salman Khan, Shahrukh Khan, and Aamir Khan, we are working on a big surprise that will come out soon insha Allah." Kirti works as a Copy Editor for the Entertainment section of Indian Express Online (Indianexpress.com). She is great at web stories, galleries, and Express Archive's photo stories. She is good at spotting stories from social media posts. She makes the copies well-loaded with content, photos, tweets, and other related social media posts to make it interesting for the readers. An alumnus of Asian College of Journalism, Chennai (Specialization in New Media), Kirti has been a part of the organisation since November 2015. She took a transfer from Delhi to Bengaluru in April 2017. .

Salman Khan says he is blamed for things he never did, recalls what Salim Khan told him: 'If our respect and dignity is in your hands, then its gone'



Bigg Boss 19 Weekend Ka Vaar: Over the past few weekends, viewers have seen host Salman Khan addressing several allegations made against him. The latest Weekend Ka Vaar episode followed a similar pattern, as Salman opened up about being judged by the public, along with Sanjay Dutt. While reprimanding contestant Amaal Mallik, Salman recalled being blamed for something he hadn't even done. The conversation began when Salman shared his thoughts on Amaal's behavior inside the house. Last week, during the captaincy task, contestants were given the choice to destroy a letter from another housemate's family in exchange for becoming captain. While many chose to forgo the opportunity and respect their fellow contestants' emotions, Farrhana Bhatt opted for captaincy and tore Neelam Giri's letter, leaving Neelam emotional and others furious. Upset by Farrhana's actions, Amaal Mallik snatched her plate while she was eating and hurled several derogatory remarks at her. During the Weekend Ka Vaar episode, Salman addressed the issue and reprimanded Amaal for his behavior. He questioned Amaal, "Even if Farrhana was wrong, who has given you the right to play God and decide who can eat food when and when not, Amaal?" Amaal responded, "I got very upset and charged up. I tried a lot to give her a clean slate, but she has a lot of darkness in her. She has no soul. I am not God, but I was hurt. There was no

shame in her eyes for what she did." Salman further said, "Obviously, you're not God, you are not even being a human, you are failing at that too. Who gave you the right to snatch her plate? Food was falling. God has given food to everyone, and then you disrespect it. Amaal, when you call someone's mother a B-grade, are you justified? Just because someone did something wrong, according to you. What is this problem?" Amaal defended himself and said, "I cannot handle this girl. I am holding a lot of things she has told me, like do kaudi ka musician, are your parents even together? So, I ended up saying things that I didn't mean, but it came out. I got heavily triggered." Salman further added, "Have you guys come on Bigg Boss or your parents have? You guys fight and drag their names in it. When you keep talking about parents, it's best if they only sort it out." Salman later invited Amaal's father, Daboo Mallik, on stage. Amaal Mallik's father, Daboo Mallik, gives his son feedback on his behavior. He said, "Hi Amaal, I love you. As a father, I have come here to tell you that the entire country is watching every moment and step you make. As a father, I can be proud of you for your music, the way you have taken the legacy forward. The show you are on is huge, but an even bigger show is the world outside, where you have friends and families who are watching you. I accept your aggression and fights, but as a father, I will say, don't play under the belt. Don't say a wrong word to any lady. It was a pact between you, me, and your grandfather that we will never use a word against women's power. It will take me 30 seconds to start crying. You are the kid who, at 16, held my hand and said, 'I will earn Rs 10,000 for you.' Do what you like, but control your tongue. You have to win, but don't write off your misbehavior on my head. I am proud of you, Amaal, but I had to say this. I am not upset with you, just don't talk like that. Fight with dignity, grace, and respect... play with dignity." Following Daboo's feedback, Salman Khan questioned Daboo over saying he is proud of Amaal. The Bigg Boss 19 host said, "I keep guiding him every week, but he has no control over his mind and his tongue. He says anything he wants. You're not a kid now, Amaal. Even though you repent later and apologize, this is one thing you need to control. People will remember and judge your reaction, and it will go on for a lifetime. I know this because things from 30-40 years ago were imaginary. I am paying for those even today. Do you think you can handle it? It's a very vicious world, Amaal."