

INDIAN CHRONICLE

19 March, 2026 | Thursday | Volume No:11 | Issue No:34 | Pages: 12+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

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Bus Accident On Rajiv Rahadari Leaves Students Hurt In Telangana

SIDDIPET: Several students of a private school sustained minor injuries after a tanker ramed into their bus on Rajiv Rahadari at Ibrahimnagar in Chinnakodur mandal on Wednesday morning.

The bus was en route to Siddipet, where the school is located, after picking up students from various villages in the mandal. The injured students were initially given first aid at a local hospital and later shifted to the Government Hospital in Siddipet for further treatment.

Police probe cattle smuggling angle after Hayathnagar accident

HYDERABAD: A suspected case of illegal cattle transportation came to light after a van carrying livestock overturned in Hayathnagar on the city outskirts late Tuesday night.

According to police, the accident occurred near the Hayathnagar police station U-turn when the speeding vehicle lost control and overturned by the roadside. Locals who rushed to the spot found several animals trapped inside the van and alerted the authorities. The vehicle was reportedly transporting 12 animals, including eight bulls and four cows. In the mishap, two bulls and one cow were injured.

Modi speaks to Kuwait Crown Prince on W Asia tensions, Hormuz security

New Delhi, March 18

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday spoke with Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, exchanging views on the rapidly evolving situation in West Asia and underscoring the need for sustained diplomatic engagement to ensure regional stability.

During the conversation, Modi conveyed greetings on the upcoming Eid and expressed concern over recent developments in the region.

He reiterated India's strong condemnation of attacks on Kuwait's sovereignty and territorial integrity, while stressing that ensuring safe and uninterrupted navigation through the Strait of Hormuz remains a key priority.

Both leaders agreed that dialogue and diplomacy were essential to de-escalate tensions and restore peace. The Prime Minister also thanked the Kuwaiti leadership for its continued support towards the safety and welfare of the Indian community in Kuwait.

This is the second interaction between the two lead-

ers this month. On March 3, Modi had conveyed India's solidarity with Kuwait and emphasised the importance of diplomatic channels in addressing the crisis.

Meanwhile, in New Delhi, US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor met National Security Adviser Ajit Doval to discuss key security and geopolitical challenges.

The US envoy described the meeting as "extremely fruitful", noting that both sides reviewed critical issues and reaffirmed the steady advancement of strategic cooperation between India and the US amid a volatile regional environment.



Dont levy selection charges on 60% seats: Govt to airlines

New Delhi, March 18

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has directed the airlines to allocate at least 60 per cent of seats on every flight free of charge and ensure that passengers travelling on the same PNR are seated together, a move seen as a significant passenger-centric reform.

The directions, issued through the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), seek to bring greater transparency and uniformity in airline practices while addressing long-standing passenger grievances over paid seat selection and scattered allotments.

Under the new norms, the airlines will be required to assign adjacent seats, as far as possible, to passengers booked under a single PNR, ensuring that families are not split across rows -- a common complaint in recent years.

The ministry said the measures were part of a broader push to strengthen passenger facilitation in India's fast-growing aviation sector, which now handles over five lakh passengers daily and ranks as the world's third-largest domestic market.

The DGCA has also asked the airlines to adopt transparent and passenger-friendly policies for carriage of sports equipment, musical instruments and pets, within safety and operational guidelines.

Reinforcing passenger rights, the regulator has



mandated strict adherence to norms in cases of delays, cancellations and denied boarding. The airlines will also have to prominently display passenger rights on their websites, mobile applications, booking platforms and airport counters, and communicate entitlements in regional languages.

The ministry said the steps built on ongoing initiatives such as affordable airport eateries under UDAN Yatri Cafés, free Wi-Fi and access to books through "Flybrary", aimed at improving overall travel experience while reducing grievances.

Railways attracted \$942 million FDI in 11 years: Vaishnav

New Delhi, March 18

The Indian Railways has attracted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) equity inflows of \$942 million over the past 11 years, including under the automatic route, reflecting strong investor confidence in the country's railway infrastructure sector. Besides, the Railways' exports have reached Rs 26,000 crore over the last nine years, underlining its growing contribution to India's economy and expanding global footprint, the Lok Sabha was informed. In a written reply, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav highlighted that India had developed a robust and diversified railway manufacturing ecosystem over the past decade, comprising the Indian Railways' production units and the domestic industry base.

"Currently, the industry manufactures almost the entire range of railway rolling stock, including locomotives, passenger coaches, wagons and critical components such as traction motors, gear boxes, motorized bogies, traction transformers, metro cars, propulsion systems, traction and auxiliary converters, cable harnesses, electronic cards, and magnetics," Vaishnav said.

These products are exported to developed and developing countries, including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Germany, Mozambique, Mexico, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Romania,



Spain, Italy, and others.

The Railway Ministry has also strengthened its international collaboration by signing Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with Switzerland, Germany, Russia, and Spain. These MoUs cover technical cooperation in freight and passenger operations (including multimodal transport), high-speed rail development, IT solutions for railway operations, administrative purposes, and predictive maintenance of assets, the Minister added.

ECI cancels rehabilitation of 15 IPS officers in West Bengal, sends them out of state

Kolkata, March 18

In a late-night development on Wednesday, the Election Commission of India (ECI) cancelled the rehabilitation of several Indian Police Service (IPS) officers in West Bengal who had been given alternative postings by the state government after being removed by the Commission from their earlier posts and barred from election-related duties in the state, which is heading for crucial two-phase Assembly polls next month.

On Wednesday night, the ECI issued a fresh notification cancelling the alternative postings of 15 such IPS officers and decided to shift them out of the state by deputing them as police observers to other poll-bound states.

The list of IPS officers whose postings have been cancelled and who have been sent on deputation includes Akash Magharia, Alok Rajoria, Amandeep, Abhijit Banerjee, Bhaskar Mukherjee, C. Sudhakar, Dhritimaan Sarkar, Indira Mukherjee, Murlidhar, Mukesh, Praveen Kumar Tripathi, Priyabrata Roy, Sandeep Karra, Rashid Munir Khan, and Syed Waqar Raja.

Among them, Murlidhar was the Police Commissioner of Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate, and Syed Waqar Raja was the Police Commissioner of Siliguri Metropolitan Police. There had been a sustained demand from Opposition parties in West Bengal, especially the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), that bureaucrats and police officers barred by the Commission from election-related duties should also be shifted out of the state till the polling process is over, so that they are not in a position to influence the electoral process from within the state. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had been critical of the removal of bureaucrats and police officers from their posts without consulting the state government, and had written to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar raising objections in the matter.

The two-phase polls in West Bengal will be held on April 23 and April 29. In the first phase, polling will be held for 152 Assembly constituencies, and in the second phase, for 142 constituencies.



Modi mentions Kharge, Pawar & Deve Gowda in RS farewell address; term of 59 members ends

New Delhi, March 18

Vice-President CP Radhakrishnan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Union Ministers Kiren Rijju, Nirmala Sitharaman and others, with retiring and recently retired Members of Rajya Sabha in New Delhi. PTI

In a tribute to 59 MPs retiring from the Rajya Sabha between April and July, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday called Parliament "an open university" and made a special mention of former Prime Minister Deve Gowda, Leader of the Opposition in the Upper House Mallikarjun Kharge and Nationalist Congress Party (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, calling them leaders who have devoted their lives to parliamentary work.

Modi noted that such occasions allow the House to rise above party lines and share a common sentiment. "In politics, there are no full stops; your experience and contribution will forever remain a part of the nation's life," he said.

The Prime Minister also praised Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh for his soft-spoken conduct and his ability to maintain the House's trust while handling complex crises. "There is much to learn from these senior leaders about staying committed to the responsibilities given by society," he stated.

Reflecting on the changing traditions of the House, Modi remarked that while the 24x7 media environment had made everyone more conscious, the legacy of humour and wit remains an essential part of parliamentary life. He mentioned Union Minister Ramdas Athawale, and stated that he would continue to serve abundant 'humour and satire'.

"The departure of a group every two years allows for a continuous exchange of knowledge, ensuring that the House's rich legacy is preserved by the incoming members. This institutional continuity is a significant advan-

tage that strengthens the democratic process," said the PM.

Modi asserted that the parliamentary system gains immense strength from the concept of a "second opinion"; and the transition of decisions between the two Houses added a critical dimension to the legislative process, ensuring more refined outcomes for the country.

Meanwhile, Kharge urged the government to extend the duration of parliamentary sessions to enable more substantive debates on important legislation and public issues. He also called for greater cooperation between treasury and Opposition benches, and a review of procedural rules while addressing the House during a farewell to retiring members.

Expressing concern over the expunction of remarks, the Congress chief flagged the frequent removal of important portions of Opposition members' statements from official records, saying it distorts the meaning of debates and undermines accountability.

Kharge said discussions should prioritise the concerns of farmers, labourers and weaker sections, adding that criticism from the Opposition benches should not be misconstrued as hostility.

Acknowledging the contributions of retiring members, the Leader of the Opposition referred to leaders such as Gowda, Pawar, Digvijaya Singh, Abhishek Manu Singhvi and KTS Tulsii for enriching debates.

Congress leader Digvijaya Singh recited lines from a poem by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and mentioned former Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, and spoke about his political career. Notably, he also apologized if his speech offended anyone.

Vijay rules out NDA alliance, says TVK is people's team

Chennai: March 18

Avoiding directly naming the NDA, TVK chief Vijay on Wednesday dismissed as a "false campaign" claims of "alliance talks" for the April 23 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls.

Cadres may have been confused due to claims that TVK may go in for an alliance, Vijay said, addressing an Iftar event held at Mamallapuram near here.

Giving clear indications that TVK will not align with the NDA for the 2026 TN Assembly polls, he declared: "We are firm on the stand that the government will be led by us (following a big win in the polls); there will be no compromise on secular and social justice principles." TVK belongs to the 'people's team,' he asserted, and dismissed allegations that his party functioned as a "B-team." However, Vijay did not elaborate on who accused TVK of being a B-team. For the past five to six days, claims have been doing the rounds that TVK would align with the NDA. It was claimed that the 'successful Jana Sena-TDP model of Andhra Pradesh' was being attempted in Tamil Nadu and that Vijay would be the Deputy CM like Pawan Kalyan. While TVK leaders, including CTR Nirmal Kumar, have already ruled out the possibility of an alliance with the NDA, this is the first time Vijay himself has given clear indications that there would not be any alliance with the AIADMK-BJP combine. TVK leader Aadhav Arjuna has claimed that his party was "offered the chief ministership for 2.5 years and 90 Assembly seats," out of 234 segments in the state. Arjuna had said that his party would not 'bow before Delhi,' seen as a pointer to the BJP. It is speculated that the '2.5 years CM offer was only from the BJP,' a key constituent of the NDA, as the AIADMK had repeatedly denied holding talks with Vijay's party to forge an alliance.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to the general public at large that, Myanamwar Sunanda W/o Ramu R/o H.No. 1-149, Village Muthnoor, Mdl: Inderavelly, Dist. Adilabad is the owner of Plot No. 75, measuring 30' x 60'=1800 Sq.Ft, in Sy.No. 56/1, 56/2, 56/3 & 56/4, situated at Mavala, Adilabad, and she is availing a loan of Rs. 32,00,000/- from State Bank of India, Br. Shivaji Chowk, Adilabad.

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Indian Chronicle

English Daily

NavIC needs urgent reset to meet India's navigation goals

Billed as India's answer to the American GPS network, the indigenous satellite navigation system — Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) — is plagued by technical failures and ageing infrastructure. It needs an urgent reset if the ambitious goals set by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) are to be met. Experts have commented that NavIC represents a classic case of overpromising and underdelivering. It is ironic that just two years ago, the Ministry of Science and Technology had described it as "a magnificent gem in the crown of India's technological prowess" and "a beacon of self-reliance, shining brightly in the world of satellite navigation". Despite ISRO's commendable technological achievements, persistent issues such as satellite failures, delays, and limited integration in consumer devices have restricted NavIC's effectiveness. The system's primary weakness has been the failure of onboard rubidium atomic clocks — many of which were imported. Without these precise clocks, satellites cannot provide accurate positioning data, leading to a cascade of service capability losses. The clocks have continued to malfunction, and as many as five satellites have been rendered unusable. A functional satellite navigation system requires at least four satellites to be visible simultaneously for reliable positioning. With reports indicating that the constellation has fallen below this threshold, the system's reliability for critical applications like defence, disaster management, and transportation is severely compromised. The navigation system was envisioned as a step towards self-reliance in satellite-based navigation, yet its relatively low usage in smartphones and commercial applications reflects gaps in policy execution and industry collaboration. Immediate corrective steps can help NavIC realise its true potential. The idea of NavIC was born out of a strategic need for indigenous navigation and timing services, particularly after India was denied access to foreign GPS data during the Kargil War. The NavIC was designed to provide precise position, velocity, and timing information over India and surrounding areas. It was meant to be particularly useful in high-altitude areas where signals from global systems are sometimes unavailable. The hybrid operation of NavIC, along with GPS and other systems, could contribute to higher accuracy and seamless operation in certain geographic areas. However, the commercial and public utilisation of NavIC has remained very low. India's mobile phone market currently has some 20 major brands and 700 phone models.

Uppal Media Club's New Committee Felicitated by Aakaarapu Arun Patel Praises the media team for moving forward in unity Assures continuous support for service activities

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 18 (Indian Chronicle): The newly formed committee of the Uppal Press Club (Print & Electronic Media), which stands as a symbol of media unity in the Uppal area, was grandly felicitated on Wednesday. Uppal Youth Congress President Aakaarapu Arun Patel warmly welcomed the committee members, honored them with shawls, and ex-



tended his congratulations. Speaking on the occasion, he stated that it is a positive development for media representatives to come together on a single platform under the leadership of senior journalist Vaddepalli Kishore. He emphasized that media unity plays a crucial role in delivering accurate information to society. He advised the members of the media club to move forward with mutual cooperation while upholding professional values. He also assured his full support for all service-oriented activities undertaken with public interest in mind. Media representatives and club members participated in the program.

Comprehensive action plan for the implementation of digital health cards in the district: District Collector Pravinya....!

Complete arrangements from primary health centers to GGH



Sangareddy, Indian chronicle correspondent (Sunil) March 18: District Collector P. Pravinya has ordered to prepare a comprehensive action plan to speed up the process of registering digital health cards in the district to effectively implement the ambitious digital health card registration program to be organized by the government. On a review meeting was held with Additional Collector of Local Bodies Pandu and District Medical Officers at the Collector Camp Office on how to effectively implement the digital health card process. Speaking on the occasion, District Collector P. Pravinya said... Digital health cards play a key role in providing fast and transparent health services to the people. He suggested that the officials should work to ensure that every eligible person is registered with a health ID. Awareness on the implementation of the digital health project, necessary staff, equipment and a preliminary report should be prepared. He directed the medical officers to make all necessary arrangements at the primary health centers, community health centers and government general hospital in the district headquarters. He advised them to focus on issues such as appointing adequate staff to ensure the smooth running of the registration process, taking preventive measures to prevent technical glitches and preparing OP centers. He advised all departments to work in coordination to effectively organize this program. DMHO Dr. M Vasantha Rao, medical officers Dr. Shashank, Dr. Naga Nirmla and concerned officials participated in the program.

Grand Ugadi Celebrations Mark the Beginning of Sri Parabhava Nama Samvatsaram at Kakatiya School



P. S. ASHOKAN "KARIMNAGAR BUREAU." The auspicious festival of Ugadi, marking the commencement of the Telugu New Year Sri Parabhava Nama Samvatsaram, was celebrated with great enthusiasm, traditional fervor, and cultural elegance at Kakatiya School under the leadership of Principal Pradeep Reddy. The celebrations were organized in a grand and dignified manner on Wednesday within the school premises, reflecting the rich heritage and cultural ethos of Telugu traditions. On this joyous occasion, Principal Pradeep Reddy extended his warm Ugadi greetings to all students, teachers, and staff members. As part of the festivities, the traditional Ugadi Pachadi and a variety of festive delicacies were distributed among the participants, symbolizing the different flavors of life associated with the festival. The entire campus was adorned in a manner that beautifully showcased the essence of Telugu culture and tradition, leaving a lasting impression on everyone present. Addressing the gathering, Principal Pradeep Reddy highlighted the cultural and historical significance of Ugadi and stressed the importance of preserving tradi-

tional knowledge among the younger generation. He urged students to develop a deeper understanding of the Telugu calendar system and its relevance in cultural life. He further remarked that Ugadi is one of the most revered festivals celebrated to mark the beginning of a new era and a new year in the Telugu calendar. In the present age of rapid technological advancement, he observed that awareness about traditional Telugu years is gradually diminishing. Therefore, he encouraged students to learn about and appreciate the historical importance and cultural grandeur of the Telugu calendar. The celebrations were further enriched by vibrant cultural performances presented by the students, which enthralled the audience and added charm to the festive atmosphere. The event was attended by the school directors Ravi Kiran Reddy, Shravan Reddy, Sravanti Reddy, and Pavani Reddy, along with teachers and students, who actively participated and contributed to the success of the celebration. If you want, I can also make an even stronger headline and a media-ready press note (like a newspaper report) which usually looks more impressive.

Midnight Showers Destroy Harvest-Ready Fields Across District

Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 18, Unseasonal Rains Ravage Jowar Crops, Farmers in Distress Widespread Crop Damage Due to Unseasonal Rains K.B Asifabad: Unseasonal rains across the district have caused severe losses to farmers, leaving them in distress. In several areas, crops that were ready for harvest have been flattened, shattering the hopes of cultivators. The situation is particularly grim in the outskirts of Janakapur in Asifabad mandal. A local farmer, Baburao, along with another farmer, had cultivated jowar on a total of four acres. Just as the crop had reached the harvesting stage, unexpected midnight rains destroyed their efforts. The intensity of the rainfall caused the entire jowar crop to collapse, resulting in heavy losses. Farmers, who had already fallen into debt due to expenses on seeds, fertilizers, and labor, say this damage has worsened their financial burden. Reports indicate that similar conditions prevail across the district, with many farmers suffering significant losses. Farmers are increasingly worried as unseasonal rains have become frequent



in recent times due to changing weather patterns. These rains are especially damaging to crops at the harvesting stage. Affected farmers have urged agricultural department officials to immediately assess the crop damage and requested the government to provide prompt compensation.

Congress Party Uppal Constituency In-charge Parameshwar Reddy Participates in Iftar Dinner

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 18 (Indian Chronicle): Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy participated in an Iftar dinner organized for minority brothers at Masjid Munawwara in Beerappagadda Division and

Raghavendra Nagar. The event was conducted under the leadership of senior Congress leader Vijayalatha Ashwaddhama Reddy. On this occasion, he extended Ramzan greetings to the Muslim community and appreciated Vijayalatha Ashwaddhama Reddy for organizing the Iftar dinner for those observing fasting, stating that it is a noble service activity. He emphasized that communal harmony and unity are the strength of society. Senior Congress leaders and members who attended the program included Krishna Reddy, H.R. Mohan, Prakash Reddy, Mahesh Yadav, Ram Reddy, Nuthalakanti Raju, Sunil Reddy, Azeem, Ramesh Goud, Bollam Naresh, Mamidala Raji Reddy, Chilaka Naresh, Qudus, Venkat Reddy, Chandu, Rajashekar, Venkat Goud, Yusuf, Praveen, Surya Prakash, along with Beerappagadda Division Masjid Committee President Aziz Saab, Rasheed, Maqbool, Munawwar, Syed Faheem, Irshad, Mohsin, Ibrahim, Muttu, Afroz, Wazir, Mohammed, Yaseen, Jahed, Shabbir, Mehboob, Ikram Khan, Imran Khan, and several other Congress leaders including Akiti Aagam Reddy, M. Rajesh Kumar, N. Mahinder, Sonu Goud, K. Jagadeesh, Radha Krishna, T. Jangaiah, Vamsi, Babu, Kiran, Kashi, along with Muslim brothers and local residents who participated in the Iftar dinner.



Second day of 10th class exams peaceful: District Education Officer

Sangareddy Indian Chronicle Correspondent (Sunil) March 18: The second day of the 10th class exams in Sangareddy district ended peacefully. Students wrote the 10th class second language exam on Wednesday. In this context, 24557 students appeared for the exams across the district, while 38 students were absent. DEO Venkateshwarlu said in a statement. DEO Venkateshwarlu inspected two examination centers in the context of the exams.

BRS agitation on maize farmers' problems

Sangareddy Indian chronicle correspondent Sunil march 18: BRS party MLAs and MLCs staged a protest at Gun Park demanding support for maize farmers, announcing a bonus of Rs. 500 in addition to the support price and immediately opening purchase centers. Sangareddy MLA Chinta Prabhakar participated



in this protest and protested in support of the farmers holding "maize ears in his hands." BRS MLA Chinta Prabhakar demanded that the Congress government immediately set up purchase centers and pay the farmers the correct support price. Later, a rally was held from Gun Park to the Assembly. Tension prevailed there as the police prevented them from taking maize ears into the Legislative Assembly premises as they were not allowed to do so. BRS leaders expressed their anger at the police, saying that they were ignoring the problems of the farmers.

Adilabad Kala Ashraam geared up for the annual Ugadi mitr Milan

S. Harpal Singh, Adilabad, March 18: The Kala Ashram in Adilabad town is all geared up for its annual mitr milan programme to be held in connection with Ugadi festival. Its a nearly two decade old tradition that all those who are connected with the Kala Ashram, wherever they are in India, gather on this day. The programme extends for three days wherein people from different fields exchange ideas and talk about recent developments in their respective fields. The Ashram was established by the late Gurujji Ravinder Sharma, a trained sculptor and a philosopher. Gurujji studied rural economy and the cohe-



sion between various segments of society especially the artisans in the rural backdrop. His understanding of rural India attracted many from different walks of life and from across India. Gurujji passed away in 2018 but



his legacy is being carried on by his family, mainly his wife Rajshri Sharma and son Apurv Sharma. A homam is held on the morning of Ugadi festival. This is followed by other programmes, this year being a painting exhibition of Gond painter Ramu from Tosham in Gudihatnoor mandal.

Special Prayers Offered to Kaal Bhairava by Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy



*****KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 18 (Indian Chronicle):*****On the occasion of Amavasya, Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy participated in special prayers held on Wednesday at the Sri Kaal Bhairava Swamy Temple in Uppal Bhagayat. Speaking on the occasion, he expressed his wish that the blessings of the

deity be upon everyone and that all people live in happiness and prosperity. He stated that worshipping Lord Kaal Bhairava brings good fortune to all devotees. Former Corporator Kotta Rama Rao, TRS leaders Anya Balakrishna, Pilli Nagaraju, Jetta Kishore, along with party leaders and activists, also took part in the program.

Special Pujas and Annadanam at Sri Shiva Shankara Maha Mayi Temple in Uppal

*****KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 18 (Indian Chronicle):*****On the occasion of Phalgunam Masam Amavasya, special prayers were conducted on Wednesday at the Sri Shiva Shankara Maha Mayi Temple in Uppal. Along with the special rituals to the Goddess, padi puja and annaprashadam (food distribution) were also organized. Temple members and devotees who participated in the program include Uppeji Balavanth Chari, Bikshapathi, Rajagopala Chari, Pawan, Cholleti Srinivas, Sridhar, Mandumula Anji Reddy, Shameerpet Hanumanth Reddy, Bazaar Jagannath Goud, Krishna Reddy, Gondi Prashanth Reddy, Goutham, Jagan, Narasimha Reddy, Shekhar, Ravi, Srinivas, Gundala Anil Reddy, Praveen Reddy, Narasimha Rao, Nursing Rao, Turayi Das, Mahesh, Jagan, Bikshapathi, Ram Prakash, Gopi Chari, Pasupu Neti Ramesh, Venkatayya, Kumar, Bhaskar, Chari, Naveen Goud, Raju, Sandeep, Mahesh Kumar, Prashanth Kumar, Pawan Kumar, Bhavani Shankar, Lakshman, Santosh Kumar, Banti, Srinu, Srinivas Goud, Ganesh Goud, Yadi Goud, Venkatesh, and several other devotees.



Bankers should provide full support in the implementation of Scheduled Caste development schemes

Additional Collector Pandu



Corporation ED Ramachari, NABARD AGM Krishna Teja, Union Bank of India Regional Manager and representatives of various banks participated in this meeting. Speaking on the occasion, Additional Collector Pandu suggested that banks should sanction loans on time to various units allocated to the district under the self-employment schemes implemented by the government for the economic development of the Scheduled Castes. He asked banks to provide full cooperation as the government is implementing these schemes with subsidy. He said that the beneficiaries will apply online and then the selection of eligible candidates will be done transparently through the screening cum selection committee. He suggested that banks should give consent to the selected beneficiaries and sanction loans quickly. Similarly, he suggested that bankers should work in coordination with the concerned authorities without any delay in the implementation of the schemes. He said that these schemes will contribute a lot to the economic development of the Scheduled Castes in the district and everyone should work in coordination to make the schemes successful. He asked banks to cooperate so that the beneficiaries can become self-employed and develop economically with the subsidy and loan facilities provided by the government.

*****Sangareddy indian chronicle correspondent sunil March 18:-*****Additional Collector Pandu suggested that banks should quickly sanction loans to the units allocated to the district under the Scheduled Caste self-employment schemes being implemented by the government and cooperate with the beneficiaries. Additional Collector Pandu held a meeting with bankers at the Collectorate Conference Hall on Wednesday on the sanction of loans to the self-employment units sanctioned to Sangareddy district under the Scheduled Caste Action Plan 2025-26 being implemented by the Telangana government. Lead District Manager (LDM) Narsing, SC

Mohammed Rafiq, Ramantapur Division Congress President Felicitated by Masjid-e-Usman Committee Representatives



*****KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 18 (Indian Chronicle):*****In Gandhi Nagar, Ramantapur, members of the Masjid-e-Usman committee requested Ramantapur Division Congress President Mohammed Rafiq to extend support in ensuring the implementation of all welfare schemes introduced by the Congress government. On this occasion, the mosque committee members felicitated Rafiq with a shawl as a mark of respect. Speaking at the event, Rafiq assured that he would take the matter to the attention of Faheem Qureshi and Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, and would strive to ensure that all welfare schemes introduced by the Congress government reach every, especially



minorities. Masjid committee representatives participated in the program.

Congress BC Cell Leader Gotikar Kishan Ji Visits Injured Journalist.

*****P. S. ASHOKAN "KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. "Manthani:*****Gotikar Kishan, District General Secretary of the BC Cell of the Indian National Congress, visited and consoled Medaraboyina Kishan, the Manthani correspondent of Disha Daily, who was injured in a road accident. According to reports, Medaraboyina Kishan, a resident of Kakarla Palli village, met with a road accident on the outskirts of Sabitham village while travelling on a two-wheeler from Peddapalli to Manthani on personal work. He sustained a fracture to his arm along with other injuries and is currently undergoing treatment and taking rest at his residence. On Wednesday, Gotikar Kishan Ji, accompanied by local leader Bazar Mallesham, visited the injured journalist at his residence in Kakarla Palli village. They enquired about his health condition and wished him a speedy and complete recovery.



BJP Leaders Submit Petition Demanding Implementation of Six Guarantees; Allege Congress Government Failure

Under the leadership of Division BJP President Vangala Santosh Gupta



*****KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 18 (Indian Chronicle):*****Following a call from the BJP state leadership, BJP leaders of Ramanthapur Division submitted a memorandum on Wednesday at the Uppal Deputy Commissioner and Mandal Revenue Office, alleging that the Congress government has failed to implement the six guarantees promised to the public. Under the leadership of Ramanthapur Division President Vangala Santosh Gupta, the leaders stated that the state government has not fulfilled its assurances. They alleged that key promises such as issuance of new ration cards, pensions for the elderly, an increase of ₹4,000 for women, ₹2,500 unemployment allowance, and retirement benefits and pensions for government employees have not been

implemented. As part of the state party's call, BJP leaders of Ramanthapur Division jointly submitted the representation to the GHMC Uppal Commissioner and the Uppal Tahsildar. Senior leaders including Thalla Balakrishna Goud, Vallabhu Jagan Yadav, Vemula Tirupathaiah, Upender Yadav, Pentam Shailender, Tambali Ravi, Suresh Sharma, Baigandla Bharat, Suresh Kumar, along with women leaders Ambati Bhagyalakshmi, Thalla Mangagoud, Suvarna Shinde, Sangeetha, Prasanna, and others participated in the program.

Khammam Press Club to be Developed as a Leading Model in the State

Antoti Srinivas, Press Club President

Portraits of India's First Editors and Journalists Unveiled

*****Arvapalli Nagesh Khammam Staff Reporter March 18, (Indian Chronicle):*****A grand event was held at the Khammam Press Club to unveil portraits of India's first editors and journalists. The program was organized under the leadership of TWJF (H 2843) Press Club Presi-

dent Antoti Srinivas. Congress Party City President Nagandla Deepak Chowdary attended as the chief guest and unveiled the portraits. The Press Club premises stood as a symbol of respect for journalists on this occasion. Speaking after the unveiling, Nagandla Deepak Chowdary said that journalists play a crucial role in society and are key to safeguarding democracy. He praised early-generation journalists as selfless individuals who worked for the welfare of society without expecting personal benefits. He assured that he is committed to addressing the welfare demands of journalists, calling them their rightful entitlements. District General Secretary Nanabala Ramakrishna, speaking on the occasion, said that under the leadership of Antoti Srinivas, the Press Club is progressing toward development. He appreciated the efforts to coordinate various unions and enhance the club's reputation. He also noted that activities such as environmental protection initiatives, annual celebrations, and Women's Day events have brought special recognition to the Press Club. Press Club President Antoti Srinivas stated that his goal is to develop the Khammam Press Club into an ideal model club in the state. He said that since assuming office, they have successfully conducted the 24th annual celebrations, commemorated senior journalist Motukuri Venkateswarlu, organized tree plantation drives, honored women journalists, and enhanced the club's prestige by installing portraits of renowned journalists. The event was attended by District Treasurer Arvapalli



Nagesh, TBJA District President Vandhanu Samrat Gupta, Kumbham Ravikumar, District Joint Secretary and City President VRM Venkat, Kappala Madhu, Mogili Nageswara Rao, Nalla Rakesh, Veligonda Venkat, Oruganti Kiran, Shaik Meera, Erra Rajendra Prasad, Challagonda Satish, Kandaraboyina Nagakrishna, Paga Yona, Vemulakonda Ramesh, Mamidala Veerababu, Yelishetti Ramakrishna, Garipelli Mahesh, Poilaboyina Srinu, Vanga Pawan Goud, Lingala Rammurthy Goud, Maddela Chennappa, Chinnamsetti Rambabu, and many other journalists and union members.

Training is the way to improve the quality of police station performance, said

Wanaparthy District DCRB DSP Balaji Nayak,



*****Wanaparthy correspondent (Indian Chronicle)*****Training under the leadership of DSP Balaji Nayak on the orders of Wanaparthy District SP, clear guidelines on record management and registration of cases Training to improve the quality of the performance of police station writers. On Wednesday, at the District Police Office Conference Building, District SP Sunitha Reddy IPS, Wanaparthy DCRB DSP Balaji Nayak gave clear directions on the performance of station writers in a one-day training program organized under the leadership of Balaji Nayak. Writers at the police station were made aware of key issues such as record management and registration of cases in police stations through training. Speaking on the occasion, DCRB DSP Balaji Nayak said at the police station clarified that the station writer system is the main basis. He said that every case registration and every record management should be legal and accurate. He said that strict action should be taken if there is any negligence or laxity. He said that the role of station writers is very crucial in the process of getting justice to the people and even a small mistake

can lead to big problems. Therefore, if every writer wants to perform his duties responsibly, transparently and with commitment and maintain the trust of the people in the police department, he clarified that quality and regular training is mandatory at every stage and the things learned through training should be implemented strictly. DCRB SI Tirupati Reddy, IT Core SI Naresh, writers at the police station, police personnel and others participated in this training program.

SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED
Tender Notice (Paper Notification - 22/25-26)
E. PROC TENDERS, of CE/MP Zone 1st Extn. of 1) Sp No. 22-A/25-26 33KV Source to Kothapet SS, 2) Sp.No.32/25-26 Bifurcation of 33KV Prashanthnagar feeder from EHT Autanagar SS & 2nd Extn of 1) Sp No. 28/25-26 33KV Source to Ravindra Society SS, 2) Sp.No.29/25-26 33KV feeder to Clocktower SS, 3) Sp.No.31/25-26 33KV Source to Khilwath SS bid upload end Dt. 28.3.26 at 16:00 Hrs. hard copy sub. Dt: 28.3.26 by 12:00 Hrs. Note: Any further information in this regard can be obtained on website. <https://gsotherpower.org/generaltenders>.
Sd/- Chief Engineer, Master Plan Zone TGSPDCL, Gr. Hyderabad.
R.O.No.:17256-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt.18-03-2026

Committee Against War Condemns Escalation of Violence; Announces Rally on March 29

“Hyderabad, March 18, 2026:”The Committee Against War, comprising representatives from various political parties and civil society groups, convened a meeting today at Maqdoom Bhavan to deliberate on the serious and escalating global situation arising out of on-going conflicts. “The meeting was chaired by Shri M. Kodandaram, Prof. Vishwanath, Shri Narayana, former MP Aziz Pasha, and Syed Nizamuddin, Lubna Sarovarh, along with religious heads, and leaders from CPI, CPI(ML), trade unions, and other organizations. “The Committee strongly condemned the loss of innocent lives, including the killing of school children, and expressed deep concern over actions that violate humanitarian principles and established norms of international law. “The Committee emphasized that war neither benefits nations nor serves the interests of the people. Instead, it results in the loss of precious human lives, severe economic setbacks, environmental damage, and long-term social distress. “In this regard, the Committee announced a protest rally on March 29, 2026, to voice its opposition to war and to call for an immediate halt to violence, urging all parties involved to pursue dialogue and peaceful resolution. “As part of the mobilization efforts, the Committee will conduct outreach meetings across various sections of society, including youth, women, university students, civil society organizations, trade unions, professional bodies, and other groups to build public awareness and opinion in favor of peace. “A seminar will also be organized with intellectuals and representatives of civil society and other pressure groups to deliberate on the implications of war and the need for adherence to international norms. “The Committee has decided to finalize and distribute pamphlets as part of a widespread public awareness



campaign. “Further, a delegation will meet the Leader of the House and floor leaders of various political parties to urge the introduction and passage of a resolution against war in the Assembly, so as to send a strong message advocating peace across the nation. “The Committee appealed to all sections of society to stand united in support of peace, justice, and humanity. “Issued by: “Committee Against War”Hyderabad

Grand Celebration of 49th Annual Day at Lalaguda Railway Degree College

South Central Railway Chief Personnel Officer Siddharth Kati attended as Chief Guest — Annual Report presented by Principal Dr. Sushil Tukaram Ambedkar

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Hyderabad, March 18 (Indian Chronicle):”The 49th Annual Day celebrations of Railway Degree College, Lalaguda were held with great grandeur on Wednesday in the college premises. The event showcased the academic excellence and artistic talents of the students and witnessed the participation of South Central Railway officials, faculty members, and a large number of students. “The began traditionally with the lighting of the lamp and prayer. The college campus was beautifully decorated with lights and flowers, creating a festive atmosphere. On this occasion, College Principal Dr. Sushil Tukaram Ambedkar presented the annual report, highlighting the remarkable achievements of students during the past academic year. He emphasized that the institution is committed to the holistic development of students. The Principal Chief Personnel Officer of South Central Railway and Chairman of the college, Siddharth Kati, attended the event as the Chief Guest. He appreciated the progress of the students



and the discipline maintained by the institution. Deputy Chief Personnel Officer (IR) Jai Shankar Chavan and Deputy Chief Officer (Schools) Malathi attended as Guests of Honour and encouraged the students. During the event, the college annual magazine “Udayani 2025–26” was officially released by the dignitaries. Students who excelled in academics, sports, cultural, and other activities were awarded medals and certificates by the Chief Guest. Cultural performances including dances, speeches, and artistic presentations by students entertained the audience and reflected their creativity and teamwork. The program concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by L. Govind, Chemistry Lecturer and Academic Coordinator of the college.

Strict action must be taken against contractors who fail to execute works: Former Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj

Start the sanctioned works immediately: Former Corporator Bannala Geetha



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 18 (Indian Chronicle):”Former Corporator of Chilkana Division and GHMC Standing Committee Member Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj met Water Works GM Santosh at his office and urged him to ensure that all sanctioned works are started immediately through the contractors. She also demanded action against contractors who failed to carry out restoration works in streets where new pipelines were laid in Shivareji. “She further requested that tenders be called immediately for the approved works and that necessary steps be taken to complete them at the earliest. She also appealed to improve the low-pressure water supply in the area from Beerappa Gadda Temple to the Library and to ensure that the drinking water currently supplied at 2 PM is instead provided in the morning. “Responding positively, GM Santosh Kumar assured that strict action would be taken against non-performing contractors and that tenders for the sanctioned works would be called without delay to ensure timely completion. The program was attended by D.E. Supriya, A.E. Kishitaya, BRS party state leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, senior leaders Yedulla Kondal Reddy, Kokonda Jagan, Pandla Kishan Goud, Muddam Srinivas Yadav, Balakrishna Goud, Shyam, Gadda Balu, Banti Goud, Tirupati Yadav, and others.



Kabaddi competitions kick off with enthusiasm on the occasion of Ugadi

Former MLA from Kollapur Beeram Harshavardhan Reddy

“Wanaparthi correspondent (Indian Chronicle):”Former MLA Beeram Harshavardhan Reddy (BRS Party) inaugurated the taluka-level kabaddi competitions held at Chinnambavi mandal center on Wednesday as the chief guest. On this occasion, Beeram Harshavardhan Reddy, who arrived at the mandal center, was given a grand welcome by BRS party leaders, former MPP Someswaramma, and former ZPTC Venkataramma Chinnareddy. He participated in the rally organized along with villagers and party leaders and garlanded the statue of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar at Ambedkar Chaurasta. Later, former MLA Beeram Harshavardhan Reddy, who reached the kabaddi ground, threw the toss and started the competition. He shook hands with the players from different villages and introduced them. He himself played kabaddi and instilled enthusiasm and joy in the players. Speaking on the occasion, he said that organizing such games in rural areas will increase unity among the people and strengthen mutuality. He said that in the context of the disappearance of traditional games in modern times, it is commendable to promote games like kabaddi. He said that sports are equally necessary for the youth along with education and called on them to participate in district and state level competitions and bring a good name to the Kollapur constituency. These competitions will be held from March 18th to 20th. will happen. First to the winners The prize is Rs. 30,000 in cash and Shield, second prize of Rs. 15,000 Cash and shield will be awarded. The organizers said. In this program Former MPP Someswaramma, former ZPTC Venkataramamma and BRS party Leaders Narender



Reddy, Pushpalatha, Raman Goud, Gajje Edanna Yadav, Govind Sridhar Reddy, Keshi Reddy Chinna Reddy, Pasupula Ranjith Kumar, Ugra Narasimha, Parimala Prakash, Dega Shekhar, RMP Krishna, Brahmam, Gundepu Shiva Reddy, Chinnamarur Sarpanch Shankar, Thagaram Kurmaiya, Vaddeman Ramakrishna, Velagonda Sarpanch Sarath Reddy, Anand yadav, Venkatarama Reddy, Dhadi Sivaram Reddy, Ketha Paga Madhu, Ketha Paga Sudhakar and others participated.

MLA Ramdas Naik Extends Support to Ailing Person



“Arvapalli Nagesh Khammam Staff Reporter March 18 (Indian Chronicle):”Maloth Ramdas Naik responded promptly after learning that Elugoti Narendra Reddy, a resident of Arikayalpadu village in Enkooor mandal, was suffering from illness. Acting on information provided by Congress leader Vasireddy Nageswara Rao, the MLA came to know that Narendra Reddy was being shifted to a hospital in Hyderabad. He immediately spoke with the doctors concerned and instructed them to ensure that there were no obstacles in providing proper treatment. With the MLA’s intervention, Narendra Reddy is reportedly receiving necessary medical care at the hospital. Family members of Narendra Reddy expressed their heartfelt gratitude to MLA Ramdas Naik for his timely support. Local residents also appreciated the MLA’s quick response, stating that he continues to stand by the people in times of need.

BRS Youth Leader Extends Birthday Wishes to T. Devender Goud - Regalla Satish Reddy

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 18, (Indian chronicle):”BRS youth leader Regalla Satish Reddy conveyed birthday greetings to former Home Minister T. Devender Goud at his residence in Tukuguda. T. Devender Goud, a three-time MLA from Medchal constituency—once the largest constituency in united Andhra Pradesh—served for nine years in key ministerial portfolios including BC Welfare, Prohibition, Cinematography, Revenue, and Home. He rose to the number two position in the Telugu Desam Party and later served as a Rajya Sabha member. He is known for his efforts towards the welfare and development of poor and backward sections of society. On the occasion of his birthday, Regalla Satish Reddy visited his residence and extended greetings. Leaders Poluri Nagarjuna, Raghuma Reddy, Eresh, and others were also present.



Khammam Municipal Corporation Budget Set at Rs 196 Crore: District Collector Anudeep Durishetty

“District Collector Anudeep Durishetty announced that the Khammam Municipal Corporation has proposed a budget of Rs 196 crore for the financial year 2026–27

“The Collector participated in the budget and general council meeting held at the Khammam Municipal Corporation office on Wednesday, chaired by Mayor P. Neeraja

“Arvapalli Nagesh Khammam Staff Reporter March 18, (Indian Chronicle):”Speaking on the occasion, the Collector stated that Khammam is one of the most important municipal corporations after Hyderabad. He expressed hope that the ₹196 crore budget would help deliver better services to city residents. “He appreciated the coordination between public representatives and officials in resolving several ground-level issues. He emphasized that municipal functions such as garbage collection, drain cleaning, streetlight maintenance, and water supply require continuous monitoring. “A centralized monitoring system for streetlights has been set up. Regarding Indiramma housing, the Collector instructed officials to reallocate houses to eligible beneficiaries if originally allotted beneficiaries fail to begin construction. He also directed timely bill payments based on construction progress and stated that 10,000 houses in the district are expected to be completed by the first week of April. “The Collector suggested revising property taxes after reassessing property values across the city, similar to the exercise conducted in the 43rd division. He stressed increasing the corporation’s own revenue sources and ensuring proper street lighting in all dark areas. “He also recommended installing QR codes at public toilets to collect citizen feedback and taking prompt action based on the responses. Officials were instructed to restore roads properly after any digging work for utilities. “Highlighting road safety, the Collector noted the rise in wrong-side driving and called for the use of technology to identify and penalize violators. “He directed that major development works—including underground drainage, drinking water supply under the AMRUT scheme, sewage treatment plants (STPs), and a proposed ropeway to Khammam Fort—be completed quickly, with full support from the revenue department for land acquisition. “Mayor Neeraja stated that efforts are being made to provide



improved services and urged corporators to ensure speedy completion of development works. “Municipal Administrative Officer C.H. Srinivas presented the budget estimates. “Revenue: ₹104.84 crore (including ₹50.43 crore from taxes, ₹96.94 crore from non-tax sources, and ₹7.90 crore from deposits and advances) “Expenditure: Includes ₹63.44 crore for charged expenses, ₹18.03 crore for maintenance, ₹16.01 crore for merged villages and ward budgets, ₹7.90 crore for deposits/loans, and ₹91.02 crore for capital projects. “The council reviewed 22 agenda items worth ₹74.09 crore, including salaries for 984 outsourcing workers, disaster response personnel, technical staff, and compensation for a deceased worker’s family. “Corporators raised various local issues, including rehabilitation for displaced shop owners, improved sanitation, better streetlight management, tax collection efficiency, public toilet maintenance, road safety, and the need for paid parking facilities. “The meeting was attended by Municipal Commissioner Abhishek Agastya, Additional Collector Dr. P. Sreeja, Deputy Mayor Fathima Johara, corporators, and municipal officials.

How a young Bengaluru photographer captured 35 bird species in city



GNS News Agency, March 18

For all that Bengaluru is known as a Garden City, not everyone looks closely into what lives in the greenery. But for Bengaluru-based photographer and writer Anvita Trivedi, the avian life of the city is everywhere if you know where to look. At the age of 20, Trivedi has already been taking photographs around the city for well over half her life; a practice that served her well with the first book, *Chuk-chukiya*. The coffee-table style book is devoted to 35 of the different species of birds one might expect to see around the city.

Chuk-chukiya has been four years in the making for Trivedi, who is passionate about writing as well. A limited initial edition of the book was launched in 2024, with some copies of the current edition also available at Blossoms on

Church Street. Centred around photographs of birds taken by Trivedi, the book contains descriptions of the birds and their calls, anecdotes, and even local folklore.

Recalling where her interest in nature comes from, she said, "I live in a household that prioritises environmentalism and sustainability...we don't use chemical fertilisers and pesticides (in gardening), and keep bird baths around. That influenced my perspective on what the world around me looks like." Her interest in photography began early, too, when she picked up her father's camera at the age of eight. Around the time the pandemic started, she became an avid birder.

One might imagine that a birder would have to run up and down the city to see birds inhabiting different patches of greenery – but it seems that has not impeded Trivedi. She says, "The thing is, you don't really have to step outside and do something special to see the wildlife around us...you can just look outside and see what is around you. Almost 90 per cent of the pictures I have taken for my book are from the area in and around my house in Whitefield." She has even photographed an Indian paradise flycatcher in the city – a sighting that a birder might travel far to see. Incidentally, as Trivedi was speaking to *The Indian Express* at a street in Koramangala this weekend, she noted that five different species of birds could be heard there alone. At this point, she estimates that she can identify around 200 species by sight, and roughly half of those by call alone.

Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde to face trial in 2016 school teacher assault case



GNS News Agency, March 18

A sessions court has refused to discharge Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde in a 2016 case of alleged assault on school teachers, paving the way for trial against her to commence just a month after she was elected mayor. Tawde faces several charges, including the use of criminal force to deter public servants from doing their duty.

"The two teachers/victims have categorically named the above applicant to be the person who beat them by hands inside the school. Even other witnesses took the name of the applicant being assaulter on the date of incident. This is more than sufficient to frame charge against the applicant,"

Additional Sessions Judge Y P Manathkar said in an order on March 12. The case dates back to an alleged incident on July 29, 2016. There was a dispute between some teachers of a public school and the school management over the transfer of a teacher, suffering from cancer. The teacher, one Shahin Khan, was unhappy at being transferred from a school in Shastri Nagar to the BKC school where the alleged incident took place. During the scuffle, two male teachers were allegedly assaulted by Tawde and others.

In her discharge plea, Tawde told the court that her presence at the spot was coincidental and unrelated to the incident and claimed that her status as a BJP corporator was being misused to "gain undue publicity". The prosecution opposed her plea, stating that there were seven witnesses to the assault, and two of the teachers who faced the alleged assault had identified Tawde, confirming her role in the incident. The prosecutor told the court that a school is a place of learning and an incident of assault between two groups of teachers should be viewed seriously.

The court said that it was considering the statements of the witnesses and other material in the case. It also relied on previous judgments, noting that it is not expected to conduct a 'mini trial' at the time of deciding a discharge plea or weigh evidence as if it were for a final conviction. It noted that if the materials disclose "grave suspicion" against the accused, the court is justified in framing a charge.

920 cases in 15 days: Pune RPF's massive crackdown reveals most common rules passengers are breaking

GNS News Agency, March 18

RPF personnel with individuals detained during the special enforcement drive at Pune railway station (Photo Credit: Special Arrangement) RPF personnel with individuals detained during the special enforcement drive at Pune railway station

The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Pune Division, Central Railway, registered 920 cases under various sections of the Railway Act during a special enforcement drive conducted between February 26 and March 12. The drive, spanning 15 days, covered railway stations, platforms, circulating areas, and trains across the Pune Division. RPF personnel took action against passengers, and others were found violating railway rules at these locations.

Of the total 920 cases, trespassing on railway property, under Section 147, accounted for the highest number at 320. Unauthorised hawking, vending, and begging in railway carriages or premises under Section 144 saw 282 cases, while 199 cases were registered under Section 162 for other unlawful acts affecting railway operations. Section 155, pertaining to unauthorised entry into reserved compartments or occupying reserved berths without authority, saw 87 cases. The lowest count was under Section 145, which deals with nuisance caused under the influence of



alcohol – 32 cases. In addition to enforcement, RPF personnel also conducted awareness sessions at stations, informing passengers about provisions of the Railway Act and expected conduct within railway premises. Hemant Kumar Behera, Divisional Commercial Manager and PRO of Pune Rail Division, said enforcement and awareness were both priorities during the drive. "The registration of 920 cases sends a clear message that violations will not be tolerated. At the same time, we are equally focused on educating passengers about responsible behaviour and compliance with railway rules," he said.

Last hearing in December 2021: Mamata's election petition against Suwendu Adhikari over Nandigram defeat remains pending

GNS News Agency, March 18

Almost five years have passed since West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee moved the Calcutta High Court challenging Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari's win from the Nandigram constituency in the Assembly polls, defeating her. With another Assembly election round the corner, here is a look at how the case has played out in the court.

The 2021 Nandigram defeat has been the biggest question mark on Banerjee's political career. Adhikari received 110,768 votes to Banerjee's 108,808, but the Trinamool Congress supreme did not accept her defeat.

On May 21, 2021, Banerjee filed the high court petition accusing Adhikari, who was the BJP candidate, of committing corrupt practises as envisaged under section 123 of the Representation of the People Act 1951. She alleged that the corrupt practices included "bribery, undue influence, spreading enmity". She claimed there were discrepancies in the counting process as well. The first hearing took place on June 18, 2021, before the bench of Justice Kaushik Chanda, where Banerjee's counsel prayed for more time, and the matter was listed for June 24, 2021.

On June 24, Banerjee appeared in the court online. But her counsel, including senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, sought the recusal of Justice Chanda, as they apprehended bias. On July 7, Justice Chanda recused himself from the case but fined Banerjee Rs 5 lakh, alleging a deliberate attempt to influence his decision even before the recusal application was placed before him.

Justice Chanda's order read, "Some other State leaders of the said party came up before the media and demanded recusal of this Bench from the case. A nationwide controversy ensued. The petitioner in the application has annexed a number of tweets to suggest that it is the public perception that the petitioner may not get justice if the case is tried by this Bench. During his submission, Mr Singhvi, however, submitted that there could also be several tweets suggesting that I should not recuse the case, but I should decide the case untrammelled by public perception. I agree with him. Whatever may be the public perception, a case should be decided on the judicially evolved parameters." The aforesaid chronology of the events that took place on June 18, 2021, clearly suggests that a deliberate and conscious attempt was made to influence my decision before the recusal application was placed before me for judicial consideration on June 24, 2021. The need to be firmly repulsed, and a cost of Rupees five lakh is imposed upon the petitioner."

The court ordered Banerjee to deposit the Rs 5 lakh cost with the Bar Council of West Bengal within two weeks and said the Bar Council would set aside the amount for the families of advocates who had died of Covid. "I have no personal inclination to hear out the case of the petitioner. I had no hesitation in taking up the case, either. It is my constitutional obligation and duty to hear out a case assigned to me by the Hon'ble Chief Justice neutrally and dispassionately. I have, however, decided to recuse myself from this case for a different reason. The imbroglia stemmed from the in-



In the 2021 Assembly election, the BJP's Suwendu Adhikari received 110,768 votes to Banerjee's 108,808, but the Trinamool Congress supreme did not accept her defeat.

ception of the litigation was due to the assignment of this case before this Bench," the order said.

"Since the two persons involved in this case belong to the highest echelon of the State politics, in the name of saving the judiciary, some opportunists have already emerged. These trouble-mongers will try to keep the controversy alive and create newer controversies. The trial of the case before this Bench will be a tool to aggrandise themselves. It would be contrary to the interest of justice if such unwarranted squabble continues along with the trial of the case, and such attempts should be thwarted at the threshold," it added. The matter was then placed before the bench of Justice Shampa Sarkar, where the first hearing took place on July 14, 2021. The court directed that all documents, devices, and video recordings connected with the election be preserved. It fixed the next hearing on August 12, 2021. In November 2021, Adhikari filed a written statement in the court. In December 2021, when the matter was adjourned till January 7, 2022, for further direction. But the matter has been pending since then. Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Adhikari's counsel Billwadal Bhattacharya said, "She had filed an election petition against my client. She had raised certain questions regarding a judge, whose impartiality is always above board. For that, a cost of Rs 5 lakh was imposed on her. She accepted the fault and paid the fine. The matter was assigned to another bench. We have completed our pleadings. We raised the question of maintainability. As far as I remember, there was nothing substantial in the petition, nothing supported by records. If the case had been heard, it would have been dismissed. They possibly chose not to mention the matter, so it is lying like that. The petitioner did not want the matter to be heard."

The ultimate protest: Why a Bengaluru family tried to 'parcel' their father to Mangaluru

GNS News Agency, March 18

With the festive spirit of Ugadi and Ramzan in the air, travel prices in Bengaluru are hitting the roof. But while most people are grumbling about bus fares, one family in Vyalikaval decided to take their protest to a literally new, and very fleshy, level. On Tuesday evening, a family of six came to a courier agency near Vinayaka Circle with an oversized, lumpy gunny bag and asked it to be couriered to Mangaluru. When asked to declare the contents of the package, they opened the gunny bag, and out popped an elderly man, breathing and fully alive.

The courier staff were shocked and refused the family's request, explaining that a human being could not be treated like a parcel. However, the group remained adamant. They allegedly insisted that the agency fulfil their demand, questioning the purpose of the business if it could not accommodate their request. They even demanded compensation for the time and effort they claimed they had wasted, according to the courier staff. As onlookers gathered to blame the family, they left the scene. The Vyalikaval police were notified about the incident as the family said they would go to another courier agency.

"Reel" reason The police arrived at the scene and reviewed the CCTV footage from the courier office and nearby shops. They eventually located the group, who were all members of the same family. A young woman from the



group came forward and admitted that the incident had been staged and filmed as a social media reel. In a video, she explained her frustration with the skyrocketing bus ticket prices just before the Ugadi and Ramzan festivities. Her father had been unable to travel to Mangaluru due to the unaffordable fares, so the family decided to pull a prank to voice their grievance, she said. A police officer said no complaint has been registered and no charges have been filed against the family. "We made them understand that it was wrong to send a human being in a parcel. They apologised for their mistake and were let off with a warning not to repeat it," the officer said.

Mangaluru police inspector suspended over allegations of misconduct with women

GNS News Agency, March 18

A police inspector in Mangaluru, Sandesh P G, was suspended on Tuesday following an inquiry into allegations that he engaged in inappropriate behaviour with women. The action was taken based on a report submitted by an assistant commissioner of police (ACP), who examined public complaints and leaked audio-visual material.

The investigation reviewed allegations made by two women—Sumathi Naik and Avitha Minages—who had spoken to the media. In Naik's case, the inquiry found that she and her sister are involved in multiple ongoing disputes, with cases registered against them, some of which involve the inspector. Most of these cases are currently stayed by the Karnataka High Court, while one remains under investigation. Minages had accused the inspector of harassment and bribery. The inquiry found no supporting evidence. CCTV footage, along with statements from media personnel and a lawyer present during the alleged incident, contradicted her claims. The report also noted that Minages and her husband face separate criminal charges, including alleged misappropriation of funds collected for medical treatment.

However, the inquiry took serious note of leaked audio and video clips that allegedly show the inspector engaging in inappropriate conversations with a woman. While the women seen or heard in these recordings have not filed formal complaints, the ACP concluded that the officer's

conduct was questionable and unprofessional. Based on these findings, the department suspended Sandesh pending a detailed departmental inquiry. The suspension comes amid broader allegations that surfaced after a Kannada news channel aired a report accusing the inspector of sexual harassment and abuse of power. A woman complainant submitted over 250 audio and video files as evidence to authorities, including the Karnataka chief secretary, director general of police, and the state home minister.

In her complaint, she alleged that the inspector demanded sexual favours and Rs 25 lakh, and threatened to falsely implicate her husband by adding him to the "rowdy-sheeter" list if she refused. She also claimed her husband had previously been wrongfully detained. Additional allegations emerged from other women, with at least three reportedly sharing their experiences with the media. They accused the officer of harassment, intimidation inside the police station, and threats of false cases. The Karnataka State Commission for Women has taken cognisance of the matter and sought a detailed report from the Mangaluru City Police. The Commission stated that, if proven, the allegations would constitute serious misconduct and misuse of authority. In a separate complaint, another woman alleged that her family was harassed by the officer after her husband worked as a driver for him. She said she had earlier approached the ACP, who later apologised and assured her that no further issues would arise.

Maharashtra Kesari Wrestling Championship: Traffic restrictions in place for 4 days on Pune Ahilyanagar Highway

GNS News Agency, March 18

The Pune City police have notified traffic changes for heavy vehicles for Pune Ahilyanagar Highway starting Wednesday, March 18, till March 22 in the Wagholi area of Pune, which will host the prestigious Maharashtra Kesari Wrestling Championship over four days. The prestigious Maharashtra Kesari Wrestling Tournament is being held in Wagholi from March 18 to 22, marking the 68th edition of the state's premier wrestling championship. The event is expected to see participation from over 800 wrestlers across Maharashtra, making it one of the biggest editions hosted in Pune.

Himmat Jadhav, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Traffic Branch, Pune City, issued a notification for temporary traffic changes for four days on Pune Ahilyanagar Road, excluding vehicles engaged in essential services such as fire brigade, police vehicles, ambulances, etc.

During peak morning hours and from 2 pm to 11 pm, movement and parking of all types of heavy vehicles, goods transport vehicles, dumpers, RMC mixers, bulk cement vehicles, JCBs, road rollers, tractors, and similar heavy vehicles will be prohibited on Pune Ahilyanagar Road, from Lonikand to Kharadi Bypass and on internal roads connecting to this main road. The order is applicable to vehicles engaged in essential services such as fire brigade, police



vehicles, ambulances, PMPML, and State Transport buses.

Meanwhile, for the event marking the death anniversary of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj at Vadhu Budruk vilage, Pune District Collector Jitendra Dudi has issued orders to divert traffic in the area through alternate routes on Wednesday. Heavy vehicles travelling from Koregaon Bhima towards Chakan-Pabal will be diverted via Koregaon Bhima-Sanaswadi-Shikrapur-Gas Phata-Wajewadi Chaufula route. Similarly, heavy vehicles coming from Chakan-Pabal towards Pune will be diverted via Wajewadi Chowfula-Gas Phata-Shikrapur-Sanaswadi-Koregaon Bhima route. Vehicles of devotees coming from the Koregaon Bhima side will not be allowed to proceed beyond the designated stoppage point near the institution.

Crude oil carrier Jag Laadki, which survived missile attack scare, arrives at Gujarat's Mundra Port



GNS News Agency, March 18

A third Indian-flagged fuel carrier ship made its way from crisis-hit West Asia to India in as many days, with the Jag Laadki reaching Mundra Port in Gujarat Wednesday. This followed the successful docking of the LPG carriers Shivalki on March 16 and Nanda Devi on March 17. While the previous two ships navigated the high-risk Strait of Hormuz to deliver cooking gas, the Jag Laadki, a crude oil tanker, avoided the narrow chokepoint by loading at the Fujairah terminal, located just outside the strait in the Gulf of Oman. The Jag Laadki, which reached Mundra Port in

Kutch at 6 am, carries 80,886 metric tonnes (MT) of Murban crude oil. The ship experienced a scare while loading its cargo at Fujairah Port in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on March 14, when Iran allegedly attacked the oil terminal. Fortunately, there were no reports of damage to the vessel or injuries to the crew during the incident.

The Jag Laadki set sail from the UAE on March 14 and was supposed to reach Gujarat on March 17, but was delayed by a day. It unloaded the crude at one of the two single-point mooring (SPM) facilities at Mundra Port. The cargo was destined for the HPCL-Mittal Energy Limited (H MEL) refinery in Bathinda, Punjab, said sources at the port. The SPM is an offshore anchored buoy located 5 to 7 km from shore. It is used to offload crude oil from carriers and transport it to oil tank farms, from where it is sent to the destination refinery. Mundra Port has the capacity for two single-point moorings to evacuate imported crude oil and can handle very large crude carriers (VLCCs) as well as ultra large crude carriers (ULCCs). A statement from Adani Ports, which operates Mundra Port, said, "Measuring 274.19 meters in length overall and 50.04 meters in beam, the Jag Laadki tanker boasts a deadweight tonnage of approximately 164,716 tonnes and a gross tonnage of about 84,735 tonnes. Its arrival at Mundra, Adani Ports, underscores the facility's critical role in handling substantial crude imports."

Maharashtra to Set Up District-Level CET Assistance Centres for Students

GNS News Agency, March 18

The initiative, conceived by Higher and Technical Education Minister Chandrakant Patil, seeks to address long-standing concerns about accessibility. The initiative, conceived by Higher and Technical Education Minister Chandrakant Patil, seeks to address long-standing concerns about accessibility. In a relief for lakhs of students appearing for entrance exams to professional courses in Maharashtra, the state's Common Entrance Test (CET) Cell will soon establish assistance centres in every district, bringing support services closer to candidates' homes.

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, each district will have at least one centre staffed with trained personnel to help students resolve queries and grievances locally—eliminating the need to travel to the CET Cell headquarters in Mumbai for assistance. Larger districts such as Mumbai and Pune, which see a higher volume of CET applicants, will have two centres each to ensure better accessibility. In Mumbai, for instance, centres will be set up in both the city and suburban regions.

The initiative, conceived by Higher and Technical Education Minister Chandrakant Patil, seeks to address long-standing concerns about accessibility. "Although the admission process is entirely online and centrally managed, candidates often require help at multiple stages—from registration to final admission," a senior official from the department said. "Until now, even minor issues meant visiting the Mumbai office or waiting for telephonic support. District-level centres will significantly reduce this burden." According to the CET Cell, at least 40 such assistance centres will be set up across the state's 36 districts, with additional centres in high-demand regions. CET Cell Commissioner Dilip Sardesai said the move would be especially beneficial during peak admission periods. "Students are often under stress during CETs and the centralised admission process. Having access to local assistance centres will not only ease that stress but also speed up grievance redressal," he said.



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Orange alert in Punjab and Haryana: Fresh western disturbance to bring hail and gusty winds from tomorrow

GNS News Agency, March 18

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an orange alert for several parts of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh, while a yellow alert remains in force for the remaining areas, warning of thunderstorms, lightning, gusty winds and possible hailstorm activity beginning Thursday. According to the Meteorological Centre in Chandigarh, a fresh western disturbance is expected to affect the Himalayan region from March 19, leading to a significant change in weather conditions across North India.

Over the past 24 hours, light to moderate rainfall has been recorded at several places in Punjab and isolated parts of Haryana, accompanied by thunderstorms and gusty winds, while temperatures remained near normal. With the alert in place, residents and farmers across Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh have been advised to stay updated with official weather advisories and take necessary precautions in the coming days.

Authorities have urged people to remain cautious during thunderstorm activity. Residents are advised to avoid stepping outdoors during storms, stay away from trees, electric poles and water bodies, and take shelter in safe and sturdy buildings. Livestock and children should be kept indoors. As per the latest observations, minimum temperatures have shown a slight rise across both states. In Haryana, the average minimum temperature increased by around 2°C, remaining near normal. The lowest minimum temperature in the state was recorded at 12.9°C at Canal Rest House, Saraghal, Sonipat. In Punjab, the average minimum temperature rose by around 2.8°C and also remained near normal. The lowest temperature in the state was recorded at 12.5°C in Fariidkot.

Major cities recorded minimum temperatures such as 13.5°C in Chandigarh, 15.6°C in Ludhiana, and 14.7°C in Patiala, indicating stable night conditions ahead of the ap-



proaching weather system. Maximum temperatures likely to dip. The weather system is expected to bring a drop of 4-5°C in maximum temperatures over the next few days, providing temporary relief from rising heat. A gradual rise of 3-4°C is expected thereafter. Light to moderate rainfall is expected at isolated places in Punjab, with intensity and spread likely to increase on Thursday and Friday. Similar conditions are expected over Haryana and Chandigarh starting Wednesday, with peak activity on Thursday and Friday. Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds (30-50 kmph) are likely at many places, while hailstorms may occur at isolated locations. Experts say that the expected moderate rainfall could benefit standing crops, particularly wheat, which is in its final stage of maturity. However, they cautioned that strong winds, hailstorms and heavy rainfall during this crucial ripening phase could damage crops such as wheat and mustard by causing lodging and grain loss. Farmers have been advised to avoid irrigation and pesticide spraying during this period, ensure proper drainage in fields and safely store harvested produce to prevent losses. Temporary disruptions in electricity and water supply due to strong winds and lightning are also likely.

In brief respite from heat, Bengaluru receives first spell of pre-monsoon showers

GNS News Agency, March 18

Following sultry conditions over the past few days, several parts of Bengaluru received the first spell of pre-monsoon showers on Tuesday, with parts of Bommanahalli and Rajarajeshwari Nagar receiving moderate showers. Forecasts indicate that the isolated spell of rainfall is likely across the state for the next three to four days.

At the RR Nagar zone, 22.5 mm of rainfall was recorded as of 7.30 pm Tuesday, according to Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) data. While parts of the Bommanahalli zone received 22 mm of rainfall, 14.5 mm of rainfall was recorded at the Yelahanka zone following overcast conditions during the day.

According to a forecast issued by the India Meteorological Department, several districts across the state were expected to receive light to moderate thundershowers during the day. Gusty winds with wind speeds reaching 30-40 kph were also forecast in isolated parts of the said



districts. Parts of coastal and north interior Karnataka have also received rainfall over the past few days. The spell continued on Tuesday too, with parts of Dharwad district in north Karnataka receiving 97.5 mm of rainfall between 8.30 am and 4.30 pm Tuesday, as per KSNDMC.

Despite challenges, no cut in budget for education, health sectors: Sukhu



GNS News Agency, March 18

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said on Tuesday that despite financial challenges, the budget for the education and health sectors would not be curtailed. "Education is the top priority for the state government, and focused efforts are being made to provide quality education to students, even in far-flung areas." Presiding over a one-day Principal's Conference on Reforms in Higher Education here, Sukhu said, "Boosting the self-confidence of students is of paramount importance so that they can effectively take on future challenges. In this direction, the role of teachers and education is vital."

The chief minister stressed the opening up of new specialised colleges for science, commerce and fine arts. "A science college is being set up at Hamirpur on 50 bighas. The state government has released Rs 20 crore for this." Sukhu said efforts were being made to bridge existing gaps and introduce meaningful reforms in higher education. He led the introduction of new-age courses and additional language programmes in colleges to enhance students' employability. "Ensuring quality education, a college ranking system has been introduced on the lines of school rankings," he added.

The chief minister also launched the Internal Ranking of Government Colleges. In the overall rankings, Government College, Hamirpur, ranked first, followed by Government College, Sanjauli, and Rajkiya Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Shimla. In the Tier-I category, Government College, Hamirpur, ranked first, Sanjauli College second, and Rajkiya Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Shimla, third. In Tier-II, Government College, Bhoranj, ranked first, followed by Government College, Saraswatinagar, Shimla, and Government College, Sunni. In Tier-III, Government College, Kaffota secured the top position, Degree College, Darlaghat, stood second and Government College, Chaikot, ranked third. The chief minister honoured all the top-ranked colleges and presented cheques for Rs one lakh each.

Haryana financially much stronger than Punjab: Saini

GNS News Agency, March 18

Rejecting the Opposition's "looming debt crisis" claim, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said on Tuesday that a comparison with Punjab clearly shows Haryana's financial position is "significantly stronger and more balanced", and that a false narrative is being deliberately spread to mislead people. During the discussion on the Haryana Budget in the Assembly, the chief minister said in 2004-05, when the Congress had governments in both Haryana and Punjab, Haryana's total budget stood at Rs 15,526 crore. "In contrast, Punjab's budget was Rs 25,627 crore; meaning, at that time, Punjab's budget was significantly larger than Haryana's," he said.

Turning to the government debt figures for the same period under the Congress's regimes, Saini said, "Haryana's total debt amounted to Rs 17,347 crore, which represented approximately 112 per cent of its budget. Conversely, Punjab's total debt stood at Rs 37,796 crore, amounting to roughly 147 per cent of its budget. This implies that even then, Punjab's financial position was under greater strain compared to that of Haryana."

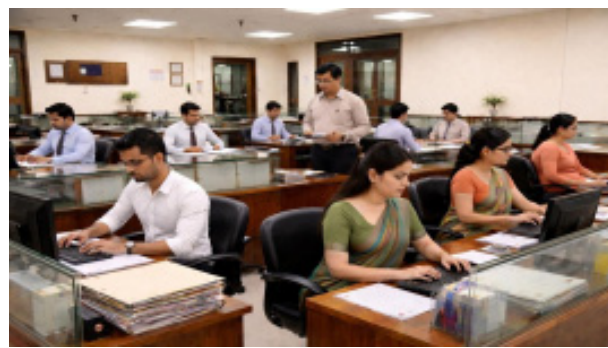
The chief minister said that in the current situation, this disparity becomes even more evident. "In the budget for 2026-27, Haryana's total budget stands at Rs 2,23,658 crore, with its total debt amounting to approximately 175 per cent of the budget. On the other hand, Punjab's total budget is merely Rs 1,80,437 crore, yet its total debt stands at approximately 248 per cent of its budget." The chief minister said some Haryana Congress MLAs have claimed that the state is heavily in debt, whereas the reality is different. "During the tenure of the previous Congress government in 2014-15, the state had a debt of Rs 96,875 crore, which was 22.16 per cent of the then GDP of Rs 4,37,145 crore. At that time, the Finance Commission had fixed the maximum borrowing limit at 22.9 per cent, and the then Congress government had exceeded this limit."

Saini said the state government made a provision of Rs 100 crore for the construction of the Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) Canal in the Budget 2026-27 proposals, and there-



fore, the Opposition's allegation that there is no mention of the SYL canal in the budget is completely baseless. Saini said, "During the discussion on the budget, Congress members said they had been reading the budget speech for three days and found no mention of the SYL canal. They also claimed that in nearly 60 years of Haryana's formation, there had never been a budget without a reference to the SYL canal." "In the 2026-27 Budget documents, Volume III, which presents detailed estimates of capital expenditure, a provision of Rs 100 crore has been clearly made under the sub-head for the construction of the SYL canal on page number 204," the chief minister said. He further said that as per the records of budget speeches during the Congress tenure from 2005-14, the SYL canal was mentioned only in 2005-06 and 2006-07. "In the remaining eight budget speeches, the term 'SYL' was not mentioned at all. Moreover, out of those ten years, only in 2013-14 and 2014-15, there was a provision of merely Rs 10 lakh made for the construction of the SYL canal. In the rest of the eight years, not even a single rupee was allocated under this sub-head." Saini said the present government, on the other hand, has been consistently making a provision of Rs 100 crore every year from 2016-17 to 2025-26. Saini said in paragraph 36 of the Governor's address delivered on February 20, it has also been stated: "My government is fully committed to protecting Haryana's rights over its waters. We are fully committed to the construction of the Sutlej-Yamuna Link canal."

Himachal Govt discourages casual clothing for staff, bans social media comments on policies, politics and religion



GNS News Agency, March 18

The Himachal Pradesh Government issued a comprehensive advisory on Wednesday, reiterating guidelines related to clothing and the responsible use of social media for its employees, emphasising professionalism, decorum, and adherence to conduct rules. The advisory, referring to certain provisions of the Central Civil Services (CCS) Conduct Rules 1964, cautioned government employees not to share any official information through the media on their personal social media handles without authorisation. In a communication issued by the Department of Personnel, the officiating chief secretary, Sanjay Gupta, directed all administrative secretaries, heads of departments, divisional commissioners, and heads of boards and corporations to ensure strict compliance with existing instructions. The advisory refers to earlier guidelines issued in August 2017, which mandate government employees to maintain a neat, modest, and professional appearance at the workplace.

As per the directions, male employees have been advised to wear formal attire such as shirts and trousers paired with appropriate footwear. Casual clothing, including jeans and sandals, has been discouraged, particularly during official duties and court appearances. Female employees have been instructed to wear sarees, suits, or other formal attire that reflects professionalism and modesty. The Government has underlined that a dignified dress code contributes to maintaining discipline and projecting a positive image of public service.

The advisory also raises concern over non-compliance with these norms and reiterates the need for improved personal grooming and hygiene among employees. The Government has also cautioned employees regarding their conduct on social media platforms. Citing provisions under the 1964 rules, it has directed employees to refrain from

expressing opinions on government policies or schemes on personal accounts. The communication said, "Rule-3 (1) (iii) of the CCS (Conduct) Rules lays down that Government servants shall not do anything which is unbecoming of a Government servant. Unbecoming of a government servant refers to conduct that is considered inappropriate or unworthy of a public employee and may lead to disciplinary action." The communication further reads, "Accordingly, it's imperative that the Government employees under your control may be advised not to express opinion on government policies/schemes etc through personal social media accounts or to make political or religious statements in any public forum, vlogs and other social media platforms etc. No official information shall be disseminated to the public through media on personal social media handles without having authorization. Further, employees shall also ensure discipline in use of social media." "Sharing official information, participating in public debates, or posting content that could be construed as criticism of government decisions has been strictly prohibited. Employees have been further warned against making statements that could harm the integrity or impartiality of the service. The Government stressed that any violation of these instructions would invite disciplinary action depending on the severity of the misconduct."

Egg prices crash, chicken rates soar in Telangana amid West Asia crisis

Hyderabad: The Telangana poultry industry is reeling under the twin blows of US-Israel-Iran war and the State's dry weather conditions. While the Middle-East crisis has choked exports and crashed egg rates, the local seasonal changes of the Deccan plateau have sent the chicken prices soaring. At present, the prices of eggs have plummeted to a loss-making Rs 4.20, while the rates of chicken have skyrocketed to Rs 335 per kilogram.

On February 18, 2026, 100 eggs in Hyderabad were sold at Rs 520, with each egg priced at Rs 5.20. However, since then, the cost has nosedived Rs 420, with each egg costing Rs 4.20, on March 18.

Larijani's killing won't destabilise Iran, says Foreign Minister Araghchi; IRGC vows 'revenge'



GNS News Agency, March 18

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said the assassination of Ali Larijani, Secretary of Supreme National Security Council, by Israel will not destabilise Iran's political system, even as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) vowed "definite revenge". "I do not know why the Americans and the Israelis still have not understood this point: The Islamic Republic of Iran has a strong political structure with established political, economic, and social institutions," Mr. Araghchi told Al Jazeera, after Tehran on Tuesday (March 17, 2026) confirmed that Larijani was killed.

Mr. Araghchi was the chief negotiator with the U.S. before America and Israel launched the war on February 28. Larijani's son Mortaza and his deputy Alireza Bayat were also killed in the strike. In a separate attack, Gholamreza Soleimani, commander of the Basij paramilitary forces, was

also killed. Larijani had emerged as a key figure in Iran's political structure and war-time leader after the U.S. and Israel killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and several other top leaders in the February 28 strike.

"The presence or absence of a single individual does not affect this structure," said Mr. Araghchi. "Of course, individuals are influential, and each person plays their role — some better, some worse, some less — but what matters is that the political system in Iran is a very solid structure." He added that the assassination of Ali Khamenei had little impact on the system. "We have not had anyone more important than the leader himself, and even the leader was martyred, yet the system continued its work and immediately provided a replacement," he said. "If anyone else is martyred, it will be the same." The IRGC, in a statement expressing condolences, said "the blood of the esteemed martyr would serve as a source of strength and national alertness in the face of the global arrogance and international Zionism." "The Corps will definitely not omit to avenge the esteemed martyr and the other martyrs of Iran's Sacred Defence" against the adversaries," it added. Iran also launched a new wave of missile and drone attacks at Israel and Persian Gulf kingdoms after Larijani's killing was announced. The IRGC "has struck more than 100 targets in the city of Tel Aviv in retaliation for the martyrdom of Dr. Ali Larijani," the Guards said in a statement. "In addition to Tel Aviv, it has targeted sensitive and strategic enemy objects in the holy occupied city of al-Quds, the occupied port of Haifa, Be'er Sheva, which serves as the regime's technological epicenter, and the Negev Desert," it added.

Trump upset as U.S. partners reject call for Hormuz warship escorts



GNS News Agency, March 18

Several U.S. allies rebuffed Donald Trump's call on Monday to send warships to escort tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, drawing criticism from the U.S. President, who accused Western partners of ingratitude after decades of support. The U.S.-Israeli war on Iran is in its third week with no end in sight. The critical Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas flow, remains largely closed off, raising energy prices and fears of inflation.

The conflict has already imposed economic costs on U.S. allies, who were not consulted before the airstrikes on Iran and who have endured months of harsh criticism and bellicose threats from Mr. Trump since he returned to office. Iran-Israel war updates on March 16, 2026A number of U.S. partners, including Germany, Spain and Italy, said they had no immediate plans to send ships to help reopen the strategic waterway, which Iran has effectively shut with drones and naval mines. "We lack the mandate from the United Nations, the European Union or NATO required under the Basic Law," German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said in Berlin, adding that Washington and Israel had not consulted Germany before launching the war. Mr. Trump, speaking at a White House event in Washington, said many countries had told him they were prepared to help, but voiced frustration with some long-standing allies. "Some are very enthusiastic about it, and some aren't," he said, without offering specifics. "Some are countries that we've helped for many, many years. We've protected them from horrible outside sources, and they weren't that enthusiastic. And the level of enthusiasm matters to me."

Israel said on Monday (March 16, 2026) it had drawn up detailed plans for at least three more weeks of war as it pounded sites across Iran overnight, while Iranian drone attacks temporarily shut Dubai airport and hit a key oil facility in the United Arab Emirates. Israel troops pushed into new parts of southern Lebanon, part of an expanding operation after Hezbollah fired rockets at Israel in retaliation for the killing of Iran's supreme leader. In a joint statement, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Britain warned that any "significant Israeli ground offensive would have devastating humanitarian consequences and could lead to a protracted conflict," and that such an operation "must be averted." Israel has said it wants to weaken Iran's capacity to threaten it, striking ballistic missile infrastructure, nuclear facilities and the security apparatus, and that it still has thou-

sands of targets to hit.

"We want to make sure that they are as weak as possible, this regime, and that we degrade all their capabilities, all parts and all wings of their security establishment," Israeli military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani said. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said it would target U.S. industrial facilities in the Middle East and urged people living near U.S.-owned plants to leave. Iran also responded to Trump's threat that he might attack oil facilities on Kharg Island, the country's main oil hub, if Tehran does not reopen the Strait of Hormuz. U.S. forces destroyed military targets on Kharg on Friday. A spokesperson for the armed forces, Abolfazl Shekarchi, said Iran would target oil and gas facilities in any country from which U.S. attacks were launched on Kharg Island. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran had not asked for a ceasefire or exchanged messages with the U.S., according to Iran's semi-official Student News Network. In a post on X, Araghchi also said some "neighbouring states" that host U.S. forces and permit attacks on Iran were actively encouraging the killing of Iranians.

He said 200 children were among the hundreds of Iranian civilians killed in U.S. or Israeli bombings. Rescue workers in Tehran worked to pull people from the wreckage of a building in what an Iranian Red Crescent aid worker said was an entirely residential alleyway. Israel claims strikes on Iran's Space programme. Israel said its air force had struck sites linked to Iran's space program, including destroying a research facility in Tehran involved in developing a satellite launched in 2024. One Tehran resident told Reuters that there had been no internet overnight and Iranians felt isolated from the world. "People are being killed," Shahnaz, 62, said via WhatsApp. "Just days before Nowruz (Iranian New Year, on March 20), but people are not in the mood to celebrate. When will this end?" Asked if she supported the Islamic Republic, Shahnaz said: "No, I don't. How can I? They killed my granddaughter in [January's] protests. We want this regime to go. We want this misery to end."

In Tel Aviv, air raid sirens sounded late into the night, warning of incoming Iranian missiles and underscoring that, after more than two weeks of war, Tehran still retained the capacity to carry out long-range attacks. The IRGC said earlier that Iran had launched strikes on areas in Tel Aviv, the U.S. Al Dhafra Air Base in Abu Dhabi, the U.S. naval base in Bahrain and Bahrain's Sheikh Isa Air Base. On the UAE's coast along the Gulf of Oman, oil loading operations at the port of Fujairah partially resumed after an Iranian drone strike. Fujairah is a key exit point for the UAE's Murban crude — a volume equivalent to roughly 1% of global demand. Flights at Dubai International Airport, one of the world's busiest, were suspended for several hours after a drone strike on a nearby fuel storage facility sent plumes of black smoke into the sky. Saudi Arabia intercepted 34 drones in its eastern region in one hour, state media said. No injuries were reported in either incident. Despite the turbulence, oil prices, which had been above \$100 a barrel, fell and stocks rallied after U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told CNBC the U.S. was "fine" to let some Iranian fuel vessels through the strait, and believed Indian and Chinese tankers had also passed through.

About 90 ships have crossed Strait of Hormuz so far as Iran exports millions of barrels of oil despite war

GNS News Agency, March 18

About 90 ships including oil tankers have crossed the Strait of Hormuz since the outset of the war with Iran and it is still exporting millions of barrels of oil at a time when the waterway has been effectively closed, according to maritime and trade data platforms. Many of the vessels that passed through the strait were so-called "dark" transits evading Western government sanctions and oversight that likely have ties to Iran, maritime data firm Lloyd's List Intelligence said. More recently, vessels with ties to India and Pakistan have also successfully crossed the strait as governments stepped up negotiations. As crude prices spiked above \$100 a barrel, U.S. President Donald Trump pressured allies and trade partners to send warships and reopen the strait, hoping to bring oil prices lower. Most shipping traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway for global oil and gas transport that supplies roughly one-fifth of the world's crude oil, has been halted since early March, after the war started. About 20 vessels have been attacked in the area. However, Iran has still managed to export well above 16 million barrels of oil since the beginning of March, trade data and analytics platform Kpler estimated. Due to Western sanctions and associated risks, China has been the biggest buyer of Iranian oil.



Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar, told the Financial Times the two vessels "were able to pass following talks with Iran. Iraq was also in talks with Iran to allow Iraqi oil tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, its state-run news agency reported.

Vessels may be transiting "with at least some level of diplomatic intervention," said Richard Meade, editor-in-chief of Lloyd's List. So, Iran may have "effectively created a safe corridor" with some ships passing close to the Iranian coast. Some vessels near or in the strait were found to have declared themselves as China-linked or with all Chinese crew to reduce risks of being attacked, based on an earlier analysis on ship tracking platform MarineTraffic. Analysts believe they were taking advantage of China's closer ties with Iran. Oil prices have jumped more than 40% to above \$100 per barrel since the Iran war began, and Iran has threatened it won't allow "even a single litre of oil" destined for the U.S., and Israel and their allies to pass through.

To try to stabilise oil prices, the U.S. said it was allowing Iranian oil tankers to cross the strait. "The Iranian ships have been getting out already, and we've let that happen to supply the rest of the world," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in an interview with CNBC on Monday. The U.S. bombed military sites on Kharg Island off the Iranian coast, which is key for Iran's oil network and exports, but President Donald Trump said he had left its oil infrastructure alone for now. The latest passages through the Strait of Hormuz show the strait was not simply "closed," Mr. Cao said. "It is better understood as closed selectively against some traffic, while still functioning for Iranian exports and a narrow set of tolerated non-Iranian movements," he said. However, if Iran's plan is to "inflict pain through higher energy prices, the number of tankers it allows through the Strait of Hormuz may be very limited," Dutch bank ING's strategists Warren Patterson and Ewa Manthey wrote in a research note.

There has been "continued resilience" in Iran's oil export volumes, said Kpler trade risk analyst Ana Subasic. Iran has managed to profit from oil sales and also "preserve its own export artery" by using control over the chokepoint, said Kun Cao, client director at consulting firm Reddell. Iran's oil export data estimates are largely aligned with maritime traffic data. At least 89 ships crossed the Strait of Hormuz between March 1 and 15 — including 16 oil tankers, according to Lloyd's List Intelligence, down from roughly 100 to 135 vessel passages per day before the war. More than one-fifth of the 89 vessels were believed to be Iran-affiliated, while Chinese and Greece affiliated ships are among the rest, it said. Other vessels also have been getting through.

The Pakistan-flagged crude oil tanker Karachi, controlled by the Pakistan National Shipping Corp., passed through the strait on Sunday, Lloyd's List Intelligence said. Shariq Amin, a spokesman at the Pakistan Port Trust, refused to confirm or deny which route the MT Karachi had used but he said the ship would soon safely reach Pakistan.

The India-flagged liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) carriers Shivalik and Nanda Devi, both owned by state-owned Shipping Corp. of India, also travelled through the strait around March 13 or 14, according to Lloyd's List Intelligence.

Iran says nuclear doctrine unlikely to change, Hormuz Strait needs new protocol



GNS News Agency, March 18

Iran's stance against the development of nuclear weapons will not significantly change, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told Al Jazeera in remarks relayed by Iranian media on Wednesday (March 18, 2026), cautioning that the new supreme leader is yet to publicly express his view on the matter. Former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed early in the U.S.-Israeli war against Iran, opposed the development of weapons of mass destruction in a fatwa, or religious edict, issued in the early 2000s. Western countries, including the U.S. and Israel, have for years accused Tehran of seeking nuclear weapons, while Iranian authorities have said their nuclear

programme is solely for civilian purposes. Mr. Araghchi said fatwas depend on the Islamic jurist issuing them and added he was not yet in a position to judge the jurisprudential or political views of Mojtaba Khamenei, Iran's new supreme leader. New protocol for the Strait of Hormuz

Iran's Foreign Minister said he believed that after the war comes to an end, countries that border the Gulf should draft a new protocol for the Strait of Hormuz, to ensure that safe passage through the narrow waterway is carried out under certain conditions aligned with Iranian and regional interests. Iran shut the vital energy gateway, through which a fifth of global oil and liquefied gas passes, saying it "won't even allow a litre of oil" to reach the U.S., Israel and their partners.

On Tuesday (March 17, 2026), Iran's parliament speaker tweeted that the Strait of Hormuz situation won't return to its pre-war conditions. The U.S. has sought to build a naval coalition to escort vessels navigating the strait, with most NATO allies saying they don't want to get involved in military operations against Iran. NATO-member France said it would only consider a joint international coalition to secure passage through the strait following a ceasefire and prior negotiations with Tehran. Araghchi said an end to the war was only conceivable if the conflict is permanently over throughout the region and Iran receives compensation for damages incurred. Strikes near urban areas blamed on U.S. relocation

Asked about Iranian strikes in the Gulf not only targeting U.S. military bases but also impacting residential or commercial areas, Iran's foreign minister said this was because U.S. forces relocated to urban areas. "Wherever there were American forces gathering, wherever there were facilities belonging to them, they were targeted. It is possible some of these places were near urban areas," the top Iranian diplomat said. Araghchi acknowledged that regional countries are "upset and their people have been harmed or bothered" by Iranian strikes, but added that the blame lay entirely with the U.S. for starting the war on February 28.

Trump asks China to delay Xi summit as Iran war rages

GNS News Agency, March 18

U.S. President Donald Trump said Monday he had asked China to delay his summit with Xi Jinping by around a month while he deals with the war in the West Asia. Mr. Trump had been due to visit Beijing from March 31 to April 2 to reset ties and extend a U.S.-China trade truce, but the trip has been upended by the Iran conflict.

"Because of the war I want to be here, I have to be here, I feel. And so we've requested that we delay it a month or so," Mr. Trump told reporters at the White House when asked about the China trip. The U.S. leader insisted that he had a "very good relationship" with China and was not trying to play games by postponing the highly anticipated trip to the rival superpower. "There's no tricks to it either, it's not like 'oh gee, I'm waiting.' It's very simple. We got a war going on. I think it's important that I be here," added Mr. Trump. Mr. Trump had first suggested the summit could be delayed in an interview with the Financial Times on Sunday, in which he said a decision could depend on whether China would help reopen the Strait of Hormuz. "We'd like to know before [the summit]," Mr. Trump told the FT. Paris talks 'constructive'

China and the United States had both earlier Monday (March 16, 2026) hailed what they called "constructive" discussions in Paris over the weekend that were widely seen as setting the stage for the summit. U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told journalists the talks with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng "were constructive and they show the stability of the relationship." Also at the talks were U.S. Trade Envoy Jamieson Greer and Chinese trade negotiator Li Chenggang. Chinese state media described the talks from Sunday to Monday as "candid, in-depth and constructive." He said the exchange would inject "greater certainty and stability" into bilateral trade ties and the global economy, according to Xinhua. Beijing said earlier Monday (March 16, 2026) it was in talks with Washington over the visit by Mr. Trump, who has also pressed NATO allies to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

The waterway, critical to oil transportation, has been effectively closed by Iran in retaliation over the U.S. and Israeli war against Tehran. "Head-of-state diplomacy plays



an irreplaceable strategic guiding role in China-US relations," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a press conference. Mr. Lin did not address Mr. Trump's recent pressure on NATO allies and China to assist in Hormuz.

'Board of Trade' Looking ahead, Mr. Greer said Monday that officials have also discussed creating a "U.S.-China Board of Trade." "This would help formalize and identify what the United States should be importing from and exporting to China, he added, to ensure "we can focus on areas of mutual benefit." The Paris talks follow a turbulent year in ties between the world's two largest economies since Mr. Trump returned to power. The United States announced new trade investigations last week on excess industrial capacity and forced labor respectively, targeting 60 economies including China and other key partners. The prospect has fueled the possibility of further tariffs after the Supreme Court struck down Mr. Trump's global duties. Beijing said Monday (March 16, 2026) that it "lodged representations" and urged Washington to "correct its erroneous" trade practices. Mr. Li also reiterated on Monday that China firmly opposed such "unilateral" probes.

Global oil prices have surged by 40 to 50% since the war began, with Hormuz choked off and Iran's attacks on energy and shipping industry targets in its Gulf neighbors. Experts say that China, which maintains large oil reserves, is better equipped than many other nations to deal with the impact of the war. But with an economy largely buoyed by exports, it has reason to be concerned about the consequences of the situation in the West Asia on trade.

Hyderabad hosts grand royal dinner bringing together India's erstwhile royal families

Hyderabad: The historic Imam ul Mulk IV Family Estate in Asif Nagar, Hyderabad witnessed a gathering of India's royal families on Tuesday evening at a grand Royal Dinner Reception hosted by Syed Ahmed Khan Asaf Jahi.

The evening brought together distinguished royals from across the country, and those present included Nawab Kazim Ali Khan of Rampur, Princess Manjari Mishra of Ayodhya, Kanwarani Ambikaraje Ghorpade of Sandur, Rani Archana Kumari of Badnore, Rani Jaykirti Singh of Baria, Kanwarani Kamini Singh of Seohara, Rajkumari Rohini Singh Gupta of Kacchi Baroda, Rajkumari Nandini Singh of Gaura Raj Talukdari Avadh, Digvijay Singh & Nidhi Sah Awaghar Family, Baisa Namrata Singh, Baisa Neel Singh Panchkot and Kuwar Bhumendra Singh of Awarh.



Cuba's latest blackout underscores deepening economic crisis | In pictures



power. Another major blackout affected western Cuba in early December. Street vendors chat on the Malecón during a blackout in Havana on March 16, 2026. This was the third major blackout in Cuba over the past four months.

People walk on the street during a blackout in Havana on March 16, 2026. President Miguel Díaz-Canel on Friday (March 13) said that the government has had to postpone surgeries for tens of thousands of people. Gladys Valdes, 76, prepares coffee during the blackout, in Havana on March 16, 2026. "Cuba right now is in very bad shape," President Donald Trump said, a day after Cuba's third nationwide blackout in four months as the socialist island's economy suffers under U.S. sanctions. People sit on the side of a street during a blackout. The government also has blamed its woes on a U.S. energy blockade after President Donald Trump in January warned of tariffs on any country that sells or provides oil to Cuba. A person stands on a balcony during a blackout as Cuba's national electric grid collapsed, in Havana on March 16, 2026. The Trump administration is demanding that Cuba release political prisoners and move toward political and economic liberalisation in return for a lifting of sanctions. A mototaxi drives on a street during a blackout, in Havana on March 16, 2026. William LeoGrande, a professor at American University who has tracked Cuba for years, said the country's energy grid hasn't been maintained properly and its infrastructure is "way past its normal useful life." A man uses a flashlight during a blackout as Cuba's, in Havana on March 16, 2026. State-owned media reported that by late on March 16, 2026, power had been restored to 5% of residents in the capital, Havana, representing some 42,000 customers. A view of Havana city with the National Capitol building in the background, as Cuba reconnected its electrical grid across much of the island, according to the Energy and Mines Ministry, in Havana, Cuba on March 17, 2026. Cuba's Ministry of Energy and Mines said on X that the island had restored the electrical system in the western town of Pinar del Rio and the south-eastern province of Holguin and that some "microsystems" were beginning to operate in various territories.

Officials in Cuba reported an islandwide blackout on Monday (March 16, 2026) in the country of some 11 million people as its energy and economic crises deepen and its power grid continues to crumble. The Ministry of Energy and Mines on X noted a "complete disconnection" of the country's electrical system and said it was investigating, noting there were no failures in the units that were operating when the grid collapsed. Lázaro Guerra, the Ministry's Electricity Director, told state media late on Monday (March 16) that crews were trying to restart several thermo-electric plants, which are key to restoring power. (Text: AP)

City lights during a blackout, leaving around 10 million people without power amid a U.S.-imposed oil blockade, in Havana on March 16, 2026. While Cuba produces 40% of its petroleum and has been generating its own power, it hasn't been sufficient to meet demand as its electric grid continues to crumble. People gather on a street during a blackout as Cuba's, in Havana on March 16, 2026. President Miguel Díaz-Canel on Friday (March 13) said the island had not received oil shipments in three months and was operating on solar power, natural gas and thermo-electric plants. People walk on a street during a blackout in Havana on March 16, 2026. A massive outage over a week ago affected the island's west, leaving millions without

Trump urges US allies to send warships to Strait of Hormuz as Iran vows to retaliate

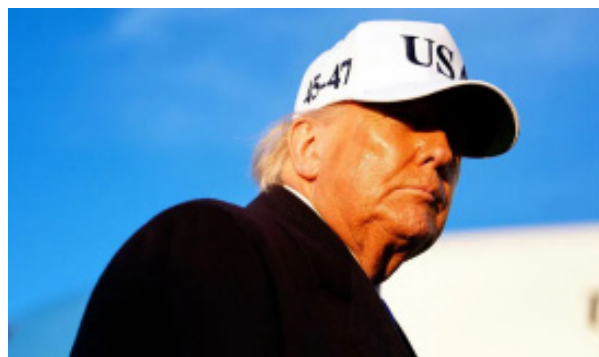
GNS News Agency, March 18

Cairo: US President Donald Trump said he hoped allies would send warships to secure the vital Strait of Hormuz while Iran urged people to evacuate three ports in the United Arab Emirates as its war with the United States and Israel showed no signs of ending. Iran's call to evacuate the Middle East's busiest port and two other UAE ports marked the first time it had openly threatened a neighboring country's non-U.S. assets. Tehran said the U.S. had used "ports, docks and hideouts" in the UAE to launch strikes on Kharg Island, home to the main terminal handling Iran's oil exports, without providing evidence. It urged people to leave areas where it said U.S. forces were sheltering.

Meanwhile, Lebanon's humanitarian crisis deepened, with over 800 people killed and 850,000 displaced as Israel launched waves of strikes against Iran-backed Hezbollah militants. Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, said the US attacked Kharg Island and Abu Musa Island from two locations in the UAE, Ras Al-Khaimah and a place "very close to Dubai," calling that dangerous and saying Iran "will try to be careful not to attack any populated area" there.

US Central Command said it had no response to Iran's claim. A diplomatic adviser to the UAE's president, Anwar Gargash, said on social media the country has the right to defend itself but "still prioritises reason and logic, and continues exercising restraint." Iran has fired hundreds of missiles and drones at Arab Gulf neighbours during the war, but it has said it was targeting US assets, even as hits or attempts were reported on civilian ones such as airports and oil fields. Araghchi said the Strait of Hormuz was closed only to "those who are attacking us and their allies."

As global anxiety soars over oil prices and supplies, Trump said Saturday that he hopes China, France, Japan, South Korea, the UK and others send warships to keep the Strait of Hormuz "open and safe." Britain in response said it



was discussing with allies a "range of options" to secure shipping. Araghchi, in a social media post, urged neighbours to "expel foreign aggressors" and described Trump's call as "begging." On Saturday, Iran's joint military command reiterated its threat to attack U.S.-linked "oil, economic and energy infrastructures" in the region if the Islamic Republic's oil infrastructure is hit. Iran's semi-official Fars news agency said the Kharg Island strikes caused no damage to oil infrastructure. It said they targeted an air defense facility, a naval base, the airport control tower and an offshore oil company's helicopter hangar.

The US Department of Defense on Saturday identified six service members who died when the military refueling aircraft they were aboard crashed Thursday while supporting operations against Iran. The service members were Maj. John A. Klinner, 33; Capt. Ariana G. Savino, 31; Tech. Sgt. Ashley B. Pruitt, 34; Capt. Seth R. Koval, 38; Capt. Curtis J. Angst, 30; and Tech. Sgt. Tyler H. Simmons, 28, according to U.S. officials. The crash in western Iraq followed an unspecified incident involving two aircraft in "friendly airspace," according to U.S. Central Command. The other plane landed safely.

Government mandates airlines to reserve 60% of seats free of charge



ports handle over five lakh passengers daily, "passenger facilitation remains the highest priority" of the Ministry, the MoCA release said.

Family sues ChatGPT-maker OpenAI over school shooting in Canada

Vancouver: The parents of a girl critically wounded in a school shooting in Canada alleged in a civil lawsuit on Monday that ChatGPT-maker OpenAI knew the shooter was planning a mass attack. OpenAI has said it considered but did not alert police about the activities of the person who months later committed one of Canada's worst school shootings in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, on February 10. OpenAI came forward to police after Jesse Van Roostelaar killed eight people and then herself last month, saying the attacker's ChatGPT account had been closed but that she evaded the ban by having a second account.

The legal claim filed in the British Columbia Supreme Court alleged that OpenAI had "specific knowledge of the shooter utilising ChatGPT to plan a mass casualty event like the Tumbler Ridge mass shooting". The lawsuit said OpenAI's chatbot ChatGPT was used by the shooter as a trusted confidante, collaborator and ally, and it behaves willingly to assist users such as the shooter to plan a mass casualty event. A spokeswoman from OpenAI did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment on the lawsuit. The lawsuit said that as a result of the company's conduct, Maya Gebala was shot three times at close range, with one bullet hitting her head, another her neck and the third grazing her cheek.

GNS News Agency, March 18

The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has directed all airlines to ensure that at least 60% of seats on every flight are allocated free of charge. The move is aimed at ensuring "fair access", the Ministry said in a press release on Wednesday (March 18, 2026). Further, the Ministry has announced a slew of other directives through the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to "strengthen passenger convenience, transparency and uniformity of practices across airlines".

With respect to seat allocation, another directive states that passengers, who book their tickets under the same PNR (Passenger Name Record), must be seated together, "preferably in adjacent seats". "Airlines shall also bring out clear, transparent policies for carriage of pets," the release said. The Ministry has also directed the operators to facilitate "transparent and passenger-friendly" carriage of sports equipment and musical instruments. Passenger rights framework

The Ministry, in its latest release, urges strict adherence to "passenger rights framework, particularly in cases of delays, cancellations and denied boarding". The rights framework is expected to get "prominent display" across airline websites, mobile applications, booking platforms, and airport counters. One of the six directives include "clear communication of passenger entitlements in regional languages to ensure wider accessibility and awareness". As Indian air-

India's West Asia reset — more sinned against than sinning



During the past month, Indian policy towards West Asia has stirred domestic controversy. As substantive Indian interests are at stake, a professional assessment, based on two trends, is offered without wading into the domestic political blame game. A link to two trends: First, over the past decade, India has raised its diplomatic engagement with West Asia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made 15 visits to the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — some after a multi-decade hiatus. He also visited Israel twice, and the Palestinian Authority and Iran each once. Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA) have been signed with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman, and similar negotiations are underway with the GCC and Israel.

With over \$160 billion in bilateral trade and 10 million diaspora, the GCC ranks as India's largest socio-economic partner. Last decade's engagements spurred synergy, although the promised investments have lagged. India's political gains include a de-hyphenation with Pakistan, greater strategic convergence with stronger defence and security tie-ups and growing acceptance of India as a responsible and friendly status quo power.

Second, the Gulf monarchies' ardour for a foreign power is normally rooted in the foreign power's potential contribution to the security and stability of their royal family, state and region — in that order. Exceptional turmoil in West Asia since October 2023, and a three-week-old war with the GCC countries under direct Iranian drone and missile attacks and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, have accentuated their search for a better security paradigm than the eight-decade-old regional Pax Americana.

The recent reset in India's diplomacy in West Asia largely acknowledges the aforementioned two trends and attempts to harness them to serve India's national interest. To their credit, India's policymakers have finally realised which side of the bread is buttered, and have launched a qualitative upscaling of a symbiosis with key West Asian countries. Recent initiatives, such as Mr. Modi's visit to Israel and his individual phone calls to all his GCC counterparts during the early days of the hostilities, have not only assured them of India's categorical support to their security and stability but also conveyed that India shares and prioritises their concerns at this critical juncture. Later, he also spoke with his Iranian counterpart. The new doctrine is clearer-sighted and emphasises hard diplomacy. This reset is bereft of two traditional aspects that often dampen the bilateral amity: First, India did not chant the traditional please-all mantras that left all stakeholders partially satisfied and India at the margins of the arena. There was no attempt to "balance" its public policy on controversial issues such as the "two-state solution" and Iran's quest for nuclear technology. Second, India's statements reflected its views without needless third-party citations. This demonstrates India's growing confidence as a credible and autonomous power.

Some domestic detractors have criticised the policy reset on multiple grounds. First, Mr. Modi's Israel visit (February 25-26) that concluded two days before Tel Aviv unleashed a military campaign against Iran is seen as untimely. Second, the perceived abandonment of India's traditional support for Palestinians and Iran is seen as immoral. Third, South Block is accused of surrendering India's sovereign autonomy to western dictates. Fourth, this activist reset may lead to strategic overreach with concomitant challenges such as exposure to security threats and costly defence tie-ups abroad. The dates of the Prime Minister's

Why the affiliation system is outdated

An often less discussed feature of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 is the new regulatory system envisaged for affiliating colleges. The objective of the new system is to foster empowerment and autonomy by gradually phasing out the affiliation system over a period of 15 years through a process of graded autonomy. The NEP suggests that each existing university should play the role of a mentor for its affiliated colleges, and enable them to develop their own capabilities and achieve minimum benchmarks in academic and curricular matters, teaching and assessment, governance reforms, financial robustness, and administrative efficiency in order to become self-reliant. All affiliated colleges will have to attain the minimum required standards to secure accreditation benchmarks and acquire the status of an autonomous degree-granting institution. Needless to say, it is a big reform for which nation-wide efforts and governmental support is a sine qua non.

Untethering colleges The college-university affiliation system has long served as the foundational structure for higher education and is so deeply entrenched in the Indian higher education system that disassociating colleges with the university sounds unrealistic. Universities conduct affiliation for colleges in accordance with the University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines to maintain academic standards, ensure uniform curriculum and examinations, and regulate infrastructure and faculty quality. Moreover, college affiliation in India is not a one-time process. The affiliation is usually granted initially for one year and renewed annually or periodically. However, while the conventional university affiliation model once provided centralised control and administrative stability, it now seems to hinder the growth, autonomy, and quality of colleges. The university affiliation system is now riddled with systemic inefficiencies, archaic academic rigidity, and administrative challenges that impede the progress of colleges.

Multiple challenges One of the most significant problems with the affiliation system is the overwhelming burden it places on universities. Most universities in India are affiliated with hundreds of colleges, and entrusted to manage examinations, evaluate answer scripts, design curriculum, monitor college compliance, and oversee academic and extra-curricular activities for an overwhelming number of students. The attention of resource strained universities, especially State universities, gets diverted from their core functions, such as research, innovation, faculty development, and collaboration, due to heavy administrative workloads. As a result, universities are compelled to act merely as bureaucratic bodies instead of pushing the boundaries of knowledge both for students and faculty. The lack of au-

visit to Israel were likely to have been set weeks in advance without any premonition of the February 28 offensive. The West Asian situation being perennially on the front burner makes any such visit risky, giving the ex-post facto criticism of the timing an unfair advantage of 50:50 hindsight. At the same time, the focus of the visit being bilateral renders it in a different domain. Where other international actors stand

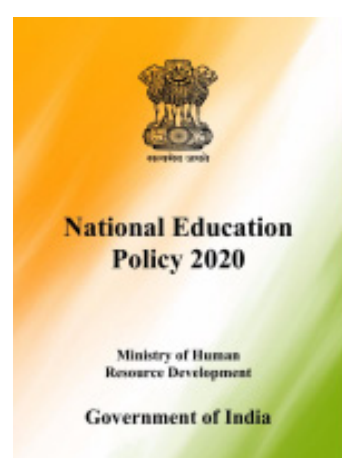
The perceived "immorality" of India's reset is largely misdirected and should be aimed at more worthy targets, such as China, Russia and Pakistan. Beijing siphoned off nearly 90% of the sanctioned Iranian oil exports, rendering only lip service to Tehran; Russia, which signed a 20-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty with Iran last year, has also underdelivered. And last year, Pakistani generals promised to nuke Israel if it attacked Iran; they are now U.S. President Donald Trump's favourites. Similarly, even the Arabs and Muslim states were conspicuously silent during the Gaza conflict.

While the Indian reset is a long-overdue recognition of the tectonic geopolitical shifts in West Asia, the pendulum swung to the other extreme and is being gradually realigned with national interests. The regional dynamic being notoriously mercurial, India should strive to keep its options more open. The Palestine Cause cannot be wished away forever. At the end of the day, Iran would remain an important player for India as an oil supplier and as a large market for Indian products, reconstruction projects and services. Iran, which borders Pakistan and Afghanistan, could be a strategic ally. Further, if subterranean trends such as growing Arab unease with the American and Israeli Armageddon, the Saudi-UAE rift, the Iraq-Iran estrangement, and aggressive positioning by Pakistan and Türkiye are taken on board, a more nuanced reset would have suitably underscored continuity and inclusion. In retrospect, India could have reacted faster to the developments, such as the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader and the appointment of his successor. Political correctness should not make India taciturn, as the diplomatic doublespeak offers many ways to skin the proverbial cat. India's relations with the U.S. and Israel are not so fragile as to be upended by our agreeing to disagree. Finally, India could have rendered more humanitarian relief to millions affected by the hostilities.

An opportunity for India The ongoing reset should accommodate two incipient, but profound, regional movements with long-term positives for India. First, the long-standing "Oil-for-Security" compact between the Washington-led West and the moderate Arab regimes has become a collateral casualty of the ongoing U.S.-Israel war against Iran. The U.S. joined Israel in attacking Iran without prior notification to the GCC, ignoring the latter's cautionary advice. The West not only failed to protect them from Iranian retaliation, but its military bases on their soil became lightning rods for the Iranian attacks. Now, they fear that the U.S. may abruptly conclude the campaign, leaving them to face Iran's wrath. Once the dust settles, the GCC states may reduce their reliance on the U.S. and diversify their security partnership options to countries such as India, which are less likely to act as a Praetorian Guard. India's response to any such proposal ought to be based on a careful SWOT analysis with clear rules of engagement.

Second, the Iranian retaliations against the GCC have disrupted business activity and supply chains, and an early return to 'business as usual' appears unlikely. The GCC's appeal as an oasis of eco-political stability in the turbulent region has taken a serious long-term knock, leading to some stakeholders' clamour for a "GCC+1" strategy. India's eco-diplomacy must strive to position India as a viable and attractive alternative hub to the GCC's ritzy but fragile hotspots, which thrived by weaning away capital and talent from India. The current commotion is a historic opportunity to seize what is rightfully ours. To remain relevant and effective, a country needs a dynamic foreign policy grounded in realism and national interest. Its execution requires the right mix of consistency, agility and modulation. As India's West Asia policy matures, it is relevant to recall British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston's maxim, "We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual..."

onomy for affiliated colleges poses another challenge. Under the present university affiliation system, it is mandatory for all colleges to follow the regulations, syllabi, examination patterns, and administrative instructions issued by the affiliating university. This dependency prevents colleges from designing their own courses that align with their local or industrial needs, and emerging market trends. This rigidity imposes uniformity at the cost of creativity, denying colleges the freedom to differentiate themselves through specialised courses, modern pedagogical practices, or interdisciplinary initiatives. As a result, the potential for innovation is stifled. Then there is the slow pace at which curriculum reforms take place under the university affiliation model. Since universities oversee a large number of colleges, revising curricula requires



extensive consultations, committee meetings with the board of studies and department councils, and administrative approvals from academic councils. This process often takes a very long time, causing course content to become outdated by the time reforms are implemented. The educational needs of students in disciplines such as engineering and technology change very rapidly, but the affiliation system is simply not agile enough to respond with the required speed. Moreover, the affiliation model, despite its best intentions to standardise education, has led to quite the opposite. While all colleges may follow the same curriculum, the actual delivery of education varies drastically due to the huge gaps in infrastructure. Many colleges operate with inadequate laboratories, insufficient library facilities, outdated equipment, and a shortage of qualified teachers. Such disparities weaken the credibility of standardised learning outcomes, as students from different colleges under the same university may graduate with vastly different levels of skill and competence. An alternate model While the university affiliation system once played a vital role in expanding higher education, its limitations now hinder progressive educational aspirations. Instead of affiliations, colleges may be encouraged to participate in the National Institutional Ranking Framework/National Board of Accreditation exercise which is grounded in established quality criteria.

New START's expiry risks pushing the world to unchecked nuclear rivalry

A turning point for nuclear deterrence



GNS News Agency, March 18

On February 5, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) officially expired, marking the end of the last remaining bilateral agreement constraining the nuclear arsenals of the U.S. and Russia. The New START treaty emerged from a period of diplomatic reset between Washington and Moscow in the late 2000s. Its predecessor, START I, was signed in 1991 and expired in December 2009. While the 2002 Moscow Treaty was still in effect, it lacked the rigorous verification and monitoring mechanisms typically of the START era. Negotiations for a successor began in earnest in April 2009 after a meeting between then U.S. President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev in London. The drafting process involved several rounds of talks in Geneva and Moscow. In April 2010, the two leaders signed the treaty in Prague and, after a contentious ratification process in the U.S. Senate and approval by the Russian Federal Assembly, entered into force on February 5, 2011.

New START set up verifiable limits on the strategic offensive arms of both nations and mandated that both parties reach these limits within seven years (by February 5, 2018) and maintain them thereafter. It capped the number of deployed strategic warheads to 1,550 and imposed similar limits on the numbers of heavy bombers, ICBMs, and SLBMs, allowed 18 on-site inspections a year, prohibited each party from interfering with the other's National Technical Means (e.g. satellites), mandated data exchange, and setup a bilateral commission to resolve issues.

However, throughout its existence, New START faced several hurdles that eventually contributed to its demise. Perhaps foremost: Russia often argued that U.S. missile defence systems undermined the strategic balance, suggesting that if one side could neutralise the other's retaliatory strike, the 'mutually assured destruction' dynamic would be broken. Conversely, the U.S. expressed concerns over conventional prompt global strike capabilities, where precise conventional warheads are placed on ballistic missiles — systems that New START counted under its nuclear limits.

In the latter half of the treaty's life, Russia also unveiled several novel strategic systems, including the Sarmat heavy ICBM and the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle. While the U.S. successfully argued that these should be counted under New START, other systems like the nuclear-powered underwater drone Poseidon and nuclear-powered cruise missile Burevestnik remained outside the treaty's technical definitions, creating friction. The treaty was originally set to expire in 2021. Just days before the deadline, the Biden administration and the Kremlin agreed to a one-time, five-year extension, moving the expiration date to February 5, 2026. But in February 2023, after the conflict in Ukraine escalated and undermined bilateral relations, President Vladimir Putin said he was suspending Russia's participation in New START because, Moscow said, the U.S. was seeking a "strategic defeat" of Russia and that western aid to Ukraine made on-site inspections in Russia im-

possible. The U.S. soon followed by withholding its own data and notifications.

Negotiations for a successor treaty, often called Post-New START, have been stalled throughout 2024 and 2025. In late 2025, a Russian proposal for a voluntary one-year informal adherence to the 1,550 limit was met with scepticism in Washington, where the Trump administration signalled a preference for a "better deal" instead.

Thus, today, the legal constraints on the world's two largest nuclear arsenals have dissolved. For the first time since 1972, there are no legally binding limits on the number of strategic nuclear weapons the U.S. and Russia can deploy. The formal channels to verify the locations and status of nuclear forces have ceased to exist, forcing intelligence agencies to rely entirely on satellite imagery and other unilateral methods. And sans the 1,550 cap, both nations possess the technical capability to move thousands of stored warheads to existing missiles, an action previously prohibited by the treaty.

As a result, while the classical logic of deterrence, that each side refrains because it expects a catastrophic response, still holds, the environment in which each government assesses the credibility of the other stands to change. Without the New START infrastructure, both sides will fall back to unilaterally collecting and interpreting data, which is more error-prone and easier to politicise. This uncertainty also interacts with contemporary deterrence problems that weren't there during the early Cold War, when deterrence took shape: the entanglement of nuclear and non-nuclear strategic systems and the premium both sides place on non-contact options like precision conventional strikes and cyberattacks, which can threaten nuclear command and control without crossing a nuclear threshold. This is why analysts such as Karim Haggag of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute have stressed the loss of predictability rather than the appearance of new warheads alone.

You do it first. Second, the expiry of New START makes the prospect of including China and other nuclear states in a larger nonproliferation regime harder in practice. Washington can now argue that it shouldn't be the only state constrained while Beijing grows, and Moscow can argue that it shouldn't accept constraints while NATO's aggregate capabilities shape its security environment. Exactly these arguments have been the stumbling block for the Post-New START talks. It's also harder because China's public line has been that its arsenal isn't comparable in size to those of the U.S. and Russia and that therefore it's "not fair or reasonable" to demand it enter their disarmament framework at this stage. Without an active U.S.-Russia treaty that demonstrates reciprocal restraint, China's incentive to accept intrusive transparency measures is also weak. Beijing can plausibly argue that the two largest arsenals first need to reestablish verifiable limits and only then can they ask others to take on similar obligations. The same logic already complicates the involvement of other nuclear-armed states, including India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea.

In 2025, Arms Control Association board chairman Thomas Countryman argued that the most realistic near-term path is a regime with three prongs: the U.S. and Russia establishing measures to restore a basic level of transparency, even informally at first; the P5 group standardising definitions and modest transparency practices; and setting up of nonproliferation tools such as hotlines, launch notifications, incident prevention, and fissile material security, to involve more states without immediately forcing them to count each other's warheads. In fact the existing P5 process is often cited as one of a few standing forums for this kind of incrementalism even though its output and momentum have been uneven in recent years.

Bill Gates says he regrets 'every minute' with Jeffrey Epstein

GNS News Agency, March 18

Bill Gates has voiced regret over "every minute" he spent with Jeffrey Epstein, even as the Microsoft co-founder's former wife Melinda said he still had questions to answer over his relationship with the convicted sexual offender.

The latest tranche of documents released by the U.S. Justice Department last week contained emails between many prominent figures and Epstein, often revealing warm friendships, illicit financial dealings and private photos. In a draft email among the documents, Epstein alleged Mr. Gates engaged in extramarital affairs, writing that his relationship with Mr. Gates ranged from "helping Bill to get drugs, in order to deal with consequences of sex with Russian girls, to facilitating his illicit trysts, with married women." "That email was never sent. The email is false," he said. "I don't know what his thinking was there. Was he trying to attack me in some way?" A Gates spokesperson issued a similar denial after the fresh cache of millions of files related to the investigation into Epstein, who died in prison in 2019, was released. "The only thing these documents demonstrate is Epstein's frustration that he did not have an ongoing relationship with Gates and the lengths he would go to entrap and defame," the spokesperson said. Melinda French Gates told U.S. National Public Radio in an interview that the document dump brought back "memories of some very, very painful times in my marriage." "For me, it's personally hard whenever those details come up," she said. "Whatever



questions remain there of what — I can't even begin to know all of it — those questions are for those people and for even my ex-husband. They need to answer to those things, not me." The couple divorced in 2021.

Mr. Bill Gates told 9News that he met Epstein in 2011 and had several dinners with him over three years, but never visited his Caribbean island and didn't have relations with women. "The focus was always, he knew a lot of very rich people, and he was saying he could get them to give money to global health. In retrospect, that was a dead end," he said. Someone's name in the Epstein files does not imply any wrongdoing, but the documents revealed connections between Epstein and public figures who have often downplayed — or even denied — such ties.

Taiwan-U.S. ties are 'rock solid', says President says after Trump-Xi call

GNS News Agency, March 18

Taiwan's ties with the United States are "rock solid," the island's president said hours after President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping spoke on the phone about topics that included the self-ruled island's future.

The Taiwan-U.S. relationship is rock solid, and all cooperation projects will continue uninterrupted, Taiwan President Lai Ching-te told reporters during a visit to textile merchants in western Taiwan. The comments came after Mr. Xi, in his first call with Mr. Trump since November, warned the U.S. President to be "prudent" about supplying arms to the self-ruled island, according to a readout of their call provided by China's Foreign Ministry.

Taiwan is a self-ruled democracy that China claims as its own territory, to be annexed by force if necessary. Beijing prohibits all countries it has diplomatic relations with — including the U.S. — from having formal ties with Taipei. Still, while the U.S. doesn't officially recognize Tai-

wan as a country, it is the island's strongest informal backer and arms supplier.

In December, the U.S. State Department announced its largest-ever arms sales package to Taiwan, valued at more than \$11.1 billion and including missiles, artillery systems and drones. The package is yet to be approved by Congress. China reacted angrily to the proposed arms sales, conducting two days of military drills around the island in late December, for which it dispatched air, navy and missile units. The arms sales are also facing pushback from Taiwan's opposition KMT party and some of its population, along with a proposed increase of defence spending to 3.3% of Taiwan's gross domestic product. Taiwan's opposition-controlled parliament has blocked Mr. Lai's budget plan, including a \$40 billion special defence budget, proposing instead a much smaller defence spending plan. Mr. Trump said the call with Mr. Xi was "excellent" and "thorough" in a post late on Wednesday (February 4) on Truth Social.



The rupture between Europe and Donald Trump's U.S. over Greenland may be papered over in time, but Europe's trust in the U.S. as a reliable North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally has been irreparably broken. As the last remaining arms control treaty limiting Russia's nuclear arsenal comes to an end, conversations about defending Europe are acquiring a sharper edge.

NATO came together in 1949 as a defensive nuclear alliance against the Soviet Union with the U.S. as its primus inter pares — the ultimate guarantor of the security of its western European members. Now, the hegemon has turned on its own alliance, over Mr. Trump's desire to acquire Greenland, a sovereign territory under the jurisdiction of NATO member Denmark. Mr. Trump's bullying and economic warfare has broken trust, and without trust NATO as a nuclear alliance is hollowed out. How Europe responds to this rupture will shape not only the future of the continent's security, but also the future of conversations about nuclear deterrence. Depending on whether the new security architecture of Europe privileges nuclear deterrence, thinking about nuclear weapons will either be updated to reflect the lessons of the 80 years since a nuclear weapon was last detonated, or continue to echo conversations that took place when the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) separated the world into nuclear haves and have-nots.

The nuclear conversation The intervening years since the NPT restrained horizontal proliferation have seen threats to world security shift from nuclear rivalry to terrorism and extremism; climate change; economic stress; inequality; and regional rivalries. While none of these is easily addressed by nuclear weapons, conversations about nuclear possession and use continue to privilege nukes as the ultimate guarantor of peace and security even as great power rivalry returns to the global stage.

Moreover, discussions about 'what deters' appear to have ossified. At the dawn of the nuclear age, when possessors were still building their arsenals, there was a debate on whether deterrence rested on certainty or uncertainty. Some believed that uncertainty was enough; that allowing an adversary to not be certain that any adventurism would not be countered with a nuclear response was enough for deterrence to work. A form of this deterrence

Iran, U.S. to hold nuclear talks in Oman on February 6

GNS News Agency, March 18

Nuclear talks between Iran and the United States will take place on Friday (February 6, 2026) in Oman, the Iranian Foreign Minister said, as tensions between the countries remain high following Tehran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests last month. The announcement by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Wednesday (February 4, 2026) came after hours of indications that the anticipated talks were faltering over changes in the format and content of the talks.

"I'm grateful to our Omani brothers for making all necessary arrangements," Mr. Araghchi wrote on X on Wednesday (February 4, 2026) evening. Earlier on Wednesday (February 4, 2026), a regional official said Iran was seeking a "different" type of meeting than that what had been proposed by Turkiye, one focused exclusively on the issue of Iran's nuclear programme, with participation limited to Iran and the United States. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief the media. The Trump administration confirmed the U.S. will take part in high-level talks with Iran in Oman instead of Turkiye as originally planned, according to White House official.

The official, who was not authorised to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that several Arab and Muslim leaders urged the Trump administration on Wednesday (February 4, 2026) not to walk away from talks even as Iranian officials pressed to narrow the scope of talks and change the venue for the negotiations.

The official added that the White House remains "very skeptical" that the talks will be successful but have agreed

arguably operated between India and Pakistan between the 1980s and 1998. Israel, with its opaque nuclear status, also relies on this uncertainty. For the rest of the nuclear possessors, a complex interplay of great power politics led to growing stockpiles and an emphasis on the certainty of a nuclear response. Testing demonstrated intent and number of weapons indicated resolve. Yet, even as nuclear states were racing to stockpile warheads, a taboo on nuclear use was gaining strength. A nuclear weapon has not been deployed since 1945. While nuclear threats have been issued, and states have developed ever smaller and more 'useable' weapons (tactical or battlefield nukes), nuclear use, to the best of our knowledge, has never been seriously contemplated.

Arms control agreements between the U.S. and the Soviet Union/Russia, along with the global non-proliferation architecture may have contributed to sparing the world another Hiroshima, but thinking on nuclear deterrence remains essentially unchanged. And now, after a sharp reduction in nuclear stockpiles between the U.S. and Russia, the pendulum may be swinging back. China, Russia and the U.S. are ambitiously modernising their nuclear stockpiles. China has reportedly added 100 warheads a year since 2023 to reach a total of 600. In 2015, the U.K. reversed a 2006 decision to reduce its stockpile and is at 225 warheads. The last remaining arms control agreement between Russia and the U.S. — New START — expires on February 5, and if both states start increasing their stockpiles from the current 5,459 and 5,277, respectively, it will send a clear message of moving back to Cold War ideas of deterrence.

Lessons from Ukraine The war in Ukraine should have led to a more serious debate about what deters. Russian President Vladimir Putin had made nuclear threats before his invasion and then again in October 2022. Yet those threats were countered not by the certainty of a nuclear response, but by the certainty of a robust response that left the nuclear element unclear. It is worth remembering that Ukraine — a non-nuclear country — has been able to defend itself against a nuclear adversary. Yes, it has had help and yes, it has lost territory, but Ukraine has not yet been defeated by its nuclear neighbour. Therefore, what happens in the next few months as Europe comes up with a security architecture that does not rely on the U.S. could reshape nuclear thinking. Apart from some tepid discussion about how France and the U.K. might extend their nuclear umbrella to cover Europe, most of the previous debate appeared to return to hugging the U.S. ever closer. In the meantime, an ad hoc grouping of mainly European states, called the Coalition of the Willing, has come together to guarantee Ukraine's security. Ukraine now has experience in defending itself against a nuclear state. Against this backdrop, whether Europe chooses to base its new security architecture on some sort of replacement nuclear alliance, or on a defensive alliance that may have a nuclear element, will shape future discussions about nuclear weapons and deterrence.



to go along with the change in plans out of respect from allies in the region. Tensions between the countries spiked after U.S. President Donald Trump suggested the U.S. might use force against Iran in response to the crackdown on protesters. Mr. Trump also has been pushing Tehran for a deal to constrain its nuclear programme. Turkiye urges diplomacy On Wednesday (February 4, 2026), Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reiterated Turkiye's opposition to foreign intervention in neighbouring Iran, calling for the resolution of issues through dialogue. Turkiye has been urgently working for the past week to bring the U.S. and Iran to the negotiating table, and was previously expected to host the talks. "We believe that external interventions involving our neighbour Iran would pose significant risks for the entire region," Mr. Erdogan said during a visit to Cairo. "Resolving issues with Iran, including the nuclear file, through diplomatic means is the most appropriate approach."

India and Gulf Cooperation Council nations signs Terms of Reference for an FTA

Representatives of India and the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on Thursday (February 5, 2026) signed the Terms of Reference for negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA). The GCC countries are together India's largest merchandise trade partners, with total merchandise trade exceeding that done with even the European Union and the U.S. The Terms of Reference (ToR) were signed by India's chief negotiator for the FTA, Additional Secretary Ajay Bhadoo, and his counterpart representing the Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Raja Al Marzouki. The signing of the ToR is a necessary precursor for the start of formal negotiations. The GCC countries are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). "Strategic economic partner"

"Many of us are aware that discussions [on moving towards a trade deal] have been going on for nearly two decades," Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, who presided over the signing, said in his speech. "Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the six-nation GCC group has transformed into a strategic economic partner." "It is most appropriate that we now enter into a much stronger and robust trading arrangement, which will enable a greater free flow of goods and services, bring predictability and stability to policy, help encourage greater degree of investments and take our bilateral relations between the six nation GCC group and India to greater heights," Mr. Goyal added. Largest goods trade Data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry shows that India's total bilat-



eral merchandise trade with the GCC countries stood at \$178.5 billion in 2024-25, the latest full year for which there is data. This is higher than India's total bilateral merchandise trade with the European Union (\$136.5 billion), the U.S. (\$132.1 billion), and China (\$127.7 billion), making the grouping India's largest goods trading partner.

There are about 10 million Indians living and working in the GCC region.

However, the data also shows that 56% of India's total bilateral merchandise trade with the GCC countries is with just the UAE, with which India already has a separate FTA. Further, the data shows that India had a trade deficit of \$64.8 billion with the GCC countries in total in 2024-25, with the UAE itself accounting for \$26.7 billion of this deficit amount due to India's large gold, oil, and petroleum products imports from that country.

Centre looks to empower more ministries to block social media content



ministries and state governments have nodal officers who gather such content and send it to officials at the IT Ministry, which is the final signing-off agency responsible for issuing the blocking order.

The other mechanism works under Section 79 (3)(b) of the IT Act, under which various ministries have been directly empowered to issue blocking orders to online platforms, most commonly through the Home Ministry-led Sahyog portal. "We want to bring parity across both regimes. Like how using the Sahyog portal various agencies at the Central and state level can send blocking orders to social media companies, there is a growing feeling that the Section 69 (A) blocking process should also be similarly decentralised," said a senior government official, speaking on condition of anonymity. The changes are being considered at a time when the government is pushing social media companies to take down content quickly. Last month, it brought about a change in law to reduce blocking timelines from 24-36 hours to 2-3 hours.

Users on social media have since also flagged that many of their posts which were satirical or critical of the government, and not necessarily illegal, have been impacted as companies ramp up their compliance infrastructure in the face of growing regulatory pressure. Broadly, Section 69 (A) of the IT Act empowers the Central government to restrict public access to information in the interest of sovereignty, security, public order or preventing incitement to offences. The process is governed by the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009. Typically, a government agency sends a request to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, which is examined by a committee before directions are issued to intermediaries such as social media platforms to block the specified content. In emergencies, interim blocking can be ordered before review. But in both these cases, it is the IT Ministry which currently sends the final blocking order to intermediaries like social media companies. "What we are seeing increasingly happen due to the structure of the Section 69 (A) blocking process is a bottleneck at the IT Ministry. We are receiving many inputs from nodal officers at other agencies and we simply cannot act on them quick enough given the high volumes. So to free up the IT Ministry, it is being decided that various agencies be given the powers to block now independently, without needing the IT Ministry's signature," a second official said.

Information Technology Act, block social media content, empower more ministries to block social media content, ministries to block social media content, Indian express news, current affairs. The other mechanism works under Section 79 (3)(b) of the IT Act, under which various ministries have been directly empowered to issue blocking orders to online platforms, most commonly through the Home Ministry-led Sahyog portal. The Centre may soon allow the ministries of Home Affairs, External Affairs, Defence, and Information and Broadcasting to issue content blocking orders to social media platforms under Section 69 (A) of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, a power currently only available to the IT Ministry, The Indian Express has learnt.

This will impact tech platforms like Instagram, Facebook and YouTube which may start receiving blocking orders from a wide range of government agencies. According to two senior officials, the government is holding inter-ministerial discussions with various stakeholders to bring an amendment to make the change possible, which they said was being necessitated due to the proliferation of AI-generated misleading content on the internet.

Although these five ministries are currently being discussed, the scope could also widen to allow regulators like the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to send takedown orders directly to tech companies. For a long time now, SEBI has been flagging the issue of incorrect financial information through financial influencers on the internet. Currently, there are two parallel content blocking mechanisms in India. One is under Section 69 (A) of the IT Act, through which content that violates national security, or threatens India's foreign policy, is taken down. Various

Flashpoint at WTO: India set to oppose US proposal seeking permanent ban on e-transmission duties



E-transmission duty, World Trade Organisation, World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference, WTO Ministerial Conference, Indian express news, current affairs. Its representative argued that the moratorium provides great stability and predictability for all WTO members and businesses, especially the MSMEs in developing members. India is set to oppose a key US-led World Trade Organisation (WTO) proposal seeking a permanent moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions at the 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) set to be held in Cameroon later this month. The has learned.

"We do not support the extension of the moratorium. The growth of e-commerce or gains from e-commerce should not be conflated with the so-called benefits of the moratorium. While the cost of the moratorium is almost completely borne by the developing countries that are net importers of digital products, its benefits are accruing to a few developed countries." A re-consideration of the moratorium is critical for developing countries, most importantly to preserve policy space and achieve domestic industrialisation," an Indian representative said as per the minutes of the meeting of a WTO meeting held on December 2 last year.

India's position was sharply contrasting with that of the US, which has not only asked for an extension but has also sought a permanent moratorium, arguing that imposing duty on electronic transmissions would restore "some confidence in the WTO" and its ability to deliver something

meaningful and tangible to those stakeholders — "stability and predictability in the digital economy". The controversial moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmission has been a subject that has divided developing and developed nations and has been renewed every two years since it was first instituted in 1998. However, with the advent of AI-generated products, the significance of rules around digital commerce has rapidly gained prominence. According to a WTO report, digitally delivered services exports have touched about \$5 trillion, nearly double the level they had reached in 2017. However, the regulations around this sector have been a point of tension between developing and developed nations for a long time. The US has forced several trade partners to agree to a moratorium under bilateral trade pacts. India has been arguing against any extension to the moratorium because digital trade has been dominated by big tech and developed countries, and the moratorium squarely favours the developed nations. Experts say that India loses about \$1 billion in tax revenue annually by foregoing duty on e-transmission.

"In listening to those seeking to address the digital divide, the imposition of customs duties on electronic transmissions would actually undermine the efforts to address the digital divide and other development concerns. Doing so would impose significant administrative burdens and divert resources to enforce it — resources that could be better spent addressing the digital divide. So, we look forward to continuing this conversation with Members, and we look forward to making the moratorium permanent at MC14," the US representative said during the meeting. During the WTO meeting in December, India said that concrete actions are needed to address this matter, such as providing technical assistance and capacity-building activities focused on digital literacy and e-commerce skills development, tailored to the specific needs of developing countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). "The actions should include... Facilitating the transfer of digital technologies to developing countries and LDCs to support e-commerce development; creating a mechanism to match developing countries and LDCs' identified needs for digital infrastructure and technologies with available resources and offers of support," the Indian representative said.

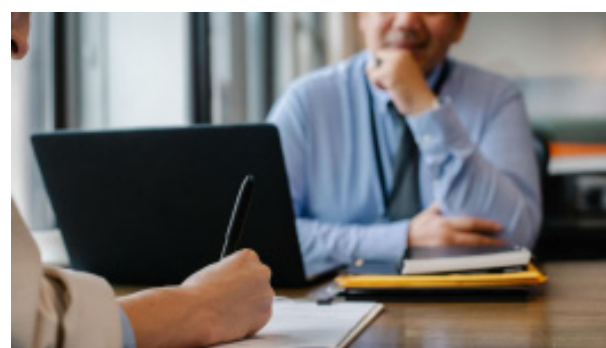
Rupee hits record low of 92.63 against US dollar amid outflows

Mumbai: The rupee on Wednesday touched a fresh record low of 92.63 against the US dollar, amid a firming greenback and continued foreign fund outflows. At the inter-bank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 92.42 and moved in a narrow range before weakening to its all-time low during the session. "The Indian rupee slipped to a fresh record low as a break below the 92.50 level triggered selling pressure, exacerbated by thin dollar liquidity ahead of a bank holiday," said Dilip Parmar, Senior Research Analyst at HDFC Securities. Despite a backdrop of strong risk appetite and softer crude prices, the currency faced aggressive dollar demand from importers, according to Parmar. "With geopolitical tensions stoking fears of a wider trade deficit, year-end demand remains robust. We see USD/INR facing resistance at 92.85, with support at 92.40," he added. Amid the ongoing West Asia conflict, the rupee has weakened by more than 1 per cent. Echoing similar concerns, Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst (Commodity and Currency) at LKP Securities, said the currency remains under pressure due to rising import costs. "The rupee traded sharply weaker at around 92.60, marking fresh all-time lows, as persistent pressure from a rising import bill continues to weigh on the currency. Elevated crude oil prices, coupled with shipment disruptions through the Strait of Hormuz, are increasing concerns over sustained higher import costs for



India," he said. "The macro backdrop remains unfavourable, with crude likely to stay elevated, keeping the rupee under pressure. In the near term, the rupee is expected to trade in the range of 92.25-92.95 against the US dollar," Trivedi added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which tracks the greenback against a basket of six currencies, was marginally higher at 99.62. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading slightly lower at around \$103.2 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equities market, benchmark indices were trading higher, with the Sensex up 719.77 points at 76,790.61 and the Nifty rising 215.75 points to 23,796.90.

Less than 7% of male graduates find permanent salaried job in one year, finds new report



Less than 7% of male Indian graduates manage to find a permanent salaried job within a year, with the proportion being an even lower 3.7% when it comes to a white-collar job, according to Azim Premji University's (APU) State of Working India 2026 report. The report, released on Tuesday, also said a mere 4% of males who pass the 12th standard find a permanent salaried job in the first year, with the figure being a minuscule 1.5% for white-collar jobs. "These numbers reflect a rather worrying scenario, where even with waiting for a year, finding a secure white-collar job is an extremely rare event," the report, titled 'Youth in the labour market: Pathways from learning to earning', said. This is the fifth State of Working India report published by the university. The previous edition, published in 2023, focussed on social identities and labour market outcomes.

Higher youth unemployment levels are readily visible in the government's own monthly surveys. The latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report, released on Monday, showed that while the all-India unemployment rate for those aged 15 years and above edged down to 4.9% in February from 5% in January, it was almost three times as high at 14.8% for those aged 15-29 years. In January, it was 14.7%. Unemployment allowances for the youth have also been announced in recent times.

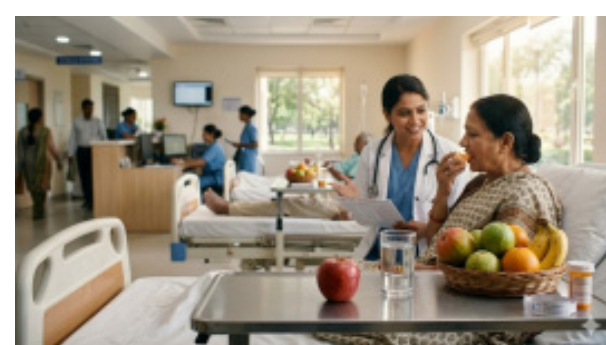
The APU report also said that while 41% of males — graduate or 12th pass — found some employment, salaried or otherwise, in less than four months, a similar proportion did not find any job even after three years, based on data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy's (CMIE) Consumer Pyramids Household Survey (CPHS). The report did not examine figures for females as the employ-

ment rates for women in the CMIE surveys were low. Meanwhile, the report analysed data from the government's PLFS and the erstwhile Employment Unemployment Survey (EUS) and found that graduate youth unemployment has been a "persistent problem" and stood at 39.33% in 2023, up from 35.02% in 1983, for those less than 25 years of age. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate for graduates aged 40 years and above remains very low: 0.51% in 1983 and 1.09% in 2023.

The report said there could be multiple reasons graduate unemployment is particularly high among the youth: too many graduates chasing too few jobs, waiting for the right job, and studying for competitive exams or adding to their skill sets. The report estimated, using PLFS and EUS data, that in 2023, 11 million out of 63 million graduates in the 20-29 age bracket were unemployed. Interestingly, the difference in incomes for graduate and non-graduate youths has narrowed over the last decade. The report noted that while the gap between the two increased "substantially", especially between 2004 and 2011, there has been a "slowdown in earnings growth for young men" since 2017.

However, Rosa Abraham, an Associate Professor at APU and the lead author of the report, said it was premature to say that falling wage growth may be having a discouraging impact on education considering salaries for graduates are more than twice as high as for non-graduates. "So we are not at the point that education doesn't do anything; it doesn't do as much as what it did earlier. It will take time to see a discouraging effect, if at all there is one," Abraham said. To be sure, the share of young men in education has fallen from 38% in 2017 to 34% in the last quarter of 2024, the report said, citing PLFS data. The same survey asks for the reason for non-enrollment: in 2017, 58% cited the need to support household incomes. This figure had risen to 72% in 2023. While high graduate youth unemployment has been a constant feature in India, unemployment has become more prevalent even among the poor. In 1993, 9% of unemployed young male graduates belonged to the poorest 25% of households. By 2023, their share had risen to 16%. For women, the corresponding proportion had risen from 2% to 11%. This, the report reasoned, indicated that a rise in incomes gave families room to forego additional income from one more working member so that they could find a suitable job in line with their qualifications and aspirations.

Oncologist suggests '1 small habit' you should practice every day: 'Din mein ek...'



Oncologist Dr Vartika Vishwani recently shared the one habit that everyone should consistently follow in their routine. "I am not asking you to make drastic changes in your routine. Ek din mein ek fruit khaa lo (Eat one fruit a day). 1 fruit. 1 day. 1 small habit," said Dr Vartika. To verify, we turned to experts. This article is based on information from the public domain and/or the experts we spoke to. Always consult your health practitioner before starting any routine.

Dr K Sreekanth, a senior surgical oncologist at Yashoda Hospitals, Hyderabad, said that people can adopt this simple yet powerful habit. "Fruits provide a wide range of protective nutrients such as vitamins, antioxidants, fibre, and phytochemicals that help support the body's natural defence mechanisms. These compounds help reduce oxidative stress and chronic inflammation in the body, both of which are known to play a role in the development of many cancers. Regular fruit intake also supports immune function and promotes healthier cellular activity," said Dr Sreekanth. Another important benefit of fruits is their fibre content, which helps maintain a healthy digestive system and gut microbiome.

"Good gut health is increasingly recognised as an important factor in reducing the risk of certain cancers, particularly colorectal cancer. Fibre also helps regulate blood sugar levels and supports weight management, both of which are important because obesity and metabolic disorders are linked with a higher risk of several cancers," said Dr Sreekanth. It is important to emphasise that the benefits come from consuming whole fruits rather than relying on fruit juices or processed fruit products. Dr Sreekanth said that whole fruits provide fibre along with a balanced mix of nutrients that work together to support overall metabolic health. Including a variety of fruits such as apples, berries, citrus fruits, papaya, or guava ensures the body receives different protective compounds," said Dr Sreekanth.

The best part about fruits is that they require no cooking or complex preparation, said MS Dnyaneshwari Barve, in charge of the nutrition and dietetics department, DPU Super Speciality Hospital, Pimpri, Pune. "They can be washed and eaten directly, making them one of the most convenient and healthy snack options, especially for people with busy lifestyles. In addition, their natural sweetness can also help satisfy cravings, reducing the urge to consume processed or junk foods that are often high in unhealthy fats, salt and sugar." She said that making fruits a daily habit is a simple yet effective step towards a healthier lifestyle. "Regular consumption not only helps meet nutritional needs but also promotes better energy levels, improved digestion and long-term wellness," said Barve. Dr Sreekanth emphasised that while no single food can prevent cancer on its own, consistent dietary habits can significantly influence long-term health. "Making it a daily routine to include fruits as part of a balanced diet, along with regular physical activity, avoiding tobacco and alcohol, limiting processed foods, and maintaining a healthy weight, can contribute meaningfully to cancer prevention and overall well-being."

Vidyut Jammwal's fitness mantra for 9-to-6 workers: 'If you can do that, you will never be unfit'

Fitness icon Vidyut Jammwal once shared some friendly advice for everyone, stressing that one shouldn't aim for a specific number of hours or days of exercise. "I work out when I get time. When I don't get time, I don't even feel guilty about it. But people who go to work, people who have a regimented life, say 9-6 job, those people need to keep a target that they will lose 5 kilos in the month whether they have to walk 10 kms a day or 1 km. Make a timetable as per your needs and follow it, whatever happens. If you have decided to walk 1 km in the morning, then walk. If you can do that, then you will never be unfit," Jammwal told Fit and Famous on TataPlay Fitness.

Dr Swapnil Zambare, consultant arthroscopy, KIMS Hospitals, Thane, concurred that fitness isn't built through occasional bursts of extreme effort; it's shaped by what you do repeatedly. "A structured routine helps the body adapt gradually and sustainably. Even modest daily movement, when done consistently, improves joint mobility, muscle strength, cardiovascular health, and overall stamina. The real risk lies in irregular activity, long periods of inactivity, followed by sudden intense workouts, which often lead to fatigue or injury," said Dr Zambare.

People with fixed schedules actually benefit the most from planned fitness goals. "Setting a clear, time-bound target, such as losing a few kilos or improving walking endurance, creates focus and accountability. The exact activity matters less than committing to it. Whether it's walking one kilometre or ten, what counts is choosing something realistic and sticking to it," said Dr Zambare.

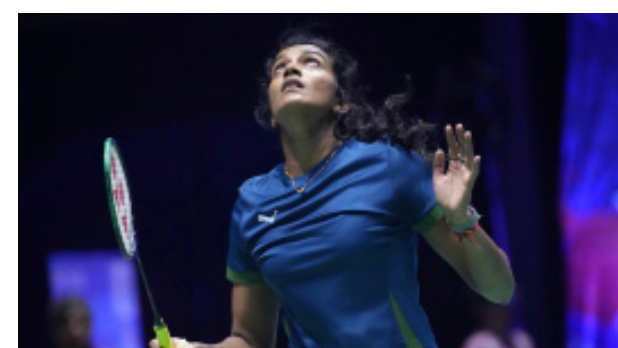
Yes, if done regularly and with intent. "Walking is a low-impact, joint-friendly exercise suitable for all age groups. When practised daily, it helps maintain joint health, control weight, improve circulation, and reduce stiffness. Over time, pace and distance can be adjusted, but even a fixed daily walk builds a strong fitness foundation," said Dr Zambare. Notably, a timetable removes guesswork. "When fitness is treated like a non-negotiable appointment rather



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than an optional task, adherence improves. Morning walks, post-work stretches, or evening activity slots help form habits. Once exercise becomes part of the routine, motivation matters less—discipline takes over," said Dr Zambare. Small, achievable goals are often more effective than ambitious ones. "Completing a daily kilometre without fail does more for long-term fitness than attempting an unsustainable plan. Regular movement keeps muscles active, joints lubricated, and posture aligned. Over time, this consistency reduces the risk of lifestyle-related stiffness, joint pain, and deconditioning." What's the biggest mistake people make with fitness? Dr Zambare cautioned that trying to do too much, too fast, is an issue. "Fitness is not about proving endurance on day one—it's about showing up every day. A routine that fits your lifestyle and can be maintained year-round is what truly keeps the body fit and functional." You don't need extreme workouts to stay fit. A simple, daily, repeatable plan is often enough to keep the body active, mobile, and resilient.

‘I might sound mean, but...’: Ace shuttler PV Sindhu’s honest message to young athletes on studies and sport



GNS News Agency, March 18

Star Indian shuttler PV Sindhu emphasised the need to have a good education for aspiring athletes, warning that it is too “risky” to ignore academics and focus solely on a sporting career that can end with a single injury. “I have been playing for so many years. At some point of time you have to retire, right? And that’s the truth. You can’t be playing sport when you’re 45 or 50 or 60 at the highest level. And you have to accept that fact, whereas education will always be lifelong with you, and that will always stay with you,” said the two-time Olympic medalist at DPS International, while speaking to educationist Devyani Jaipuria.

“Nobody is born with a golden spoon and you have to work hard, whether it is in studies or sports... Studies and sports are equally important. I have done my MBA. So, I

know, like, it’s not easy... you go to training in the morning, come back, study, and then you go for evening sessions. Because at the end of the day, that is the truth, where sports is a very small thing, right? Life-long, you know, you will always have an education by your side. Sport is also important, but not that, you know, completely stop your studies,” said Sindhu.

“I might sound mean, maybe they might not understand now, but in the later stage in their life, they will understand that, yes, studies are also important. Because sport sometimes, it’s very risky where sometimes you have an injury and you never know how it goes... your life might end, you might have a surgery... injuries... they don’t tell you and come, it just happens. At that point of time, you have to make sure that you are ready for everything in life,” she added.

The former world champion is on a break after being stranded in Dubai due to the closure of airspace in the middle of the American and Israeli bombing of Iran. She recalled the year 2015 when a stress fracture on her left foot had threatened to end her career and forced her out for six months, leaving her with very little elbow room before the 2016 Olympics. She went on to win a silver medal in that edition of the Games in Rio de Janeiro. “Everybody tried to stay calm but obviously it was serious. I was just in time to see the doctor after playing for several weeks with pain. So yes I have had self doubt, whether I would play again or not,” she recalled.

When an abrupt fax from his father made Kumar Sangakkara panic on tour Down Under – It was a lesson in love

GNS News Agency, March 18

Former Sri Lanka skipper and one of the greatest left-handed batters the world has ever seen, Kumar Sangakkara, recently narrated an intriguing story about the time an abrupt fax from his father, Kshema Sangakkara, sent him into a panic while he was on tour in Australia. “I was in Australia once, playing a Test match, and I was woken up very early in the morning. The hotel reception called and said, ‘There’s an urgent fax.’ And I got up in a panic... thinking someone was ill or something had happened,” Sangakkara said on the High Performance Podcast on YouTube.

“I was worried about my parents, and then I stopped and thought, in the age of mobile phones, who in the hell would send a fax? And I immediately knew it was my father. It had to be my father. So I said, please send it up, and they did. There were four A4 sheets tucked into it. I took it out, and it was just a few underlined chapters from Donald Bradman’s book on batting. Underlined passages saying: ‘Read this before you go out to bat tomorrow,’” he added.

Sangakkara reflected on the deep influence his parents had on his life and career. “When you’re a kid, you go through different stages of how you understand your parents. You listen to them at the start, and then you doubt everything that they say, especially in your teens. I think it was Mark Twain, I always remember reading this saying: ‘When I was 16, my father was embarrassing. He was a stupid old man. But by the time I was 21, I was amazed at what he had learnt in five years,’” he said with a laugh.

“So, looking back now, you think how lucky I was to have that in my life from both my parents. They took so much time out of their lives to spend it with me and my other siblings. And that influence is really the cornerstone of who I am today,” said a proud Sangakkara, hailing his parents.



“My parents have never made a fuss of anything Sangakkara, who scored 12,400 runs in 134 Tests at an average of 57.40, has always spoken highly of his family. In his famous retirement speech in 2015, he had mentioned the sacrifices of his parents while ending his international career in front of his entire family. “Today was always going to be special for a lot of reasons. It was the first time that I had my parents, siblings, wife, and children all together in one place watching me play. That is always going to be the memorable part of my game. Not the on-field part. But not being able to spend time with my wife, children, and parents... My parents have never made a fuss of anything. They rarely come to the games or see me off during the games. But they keenly follow my game,” he had revealed.

‘Every player is an entrepreneur today, pushing opinions outside’: R Ashwin slams rising fan armies on social media



GNS News Agency, March 18

Spin legend R Ashwin slammed the rising superstar culture in Indian cricket, questioning if some players were actively invested in building their brands through social media fan armies with narratives that could vilify fellow cricketers. Ashwin raised concerns over the heightened attention that fan armies were garnering, claiming that the narratives that he often come across on social media platforms were topics of discussions in prior team environments. Ashwin, who retired from international cricket in late 2024, also hinted that the “disease” of raging fan-wars may be the result of a business model, activated by players themselves.

“There’s something of a disease going around at this point. A lot of these opinions that show up on social media through fan armies—I’ve heard them before, first-hand. Sometimes, I’ve heard these same views at a breakfast table or a lunch table, and later they appear online under some other name. That’s when you wonder—how is this happening?” Ashwin said at the Revsportz Conclave in Kolkata. “I’m not saying players themselves are planting these opinions, but it is scary. Is there some sort of espionage going on? I’m not saying that’s exactly what’s happening, but there is surely some business structure involved. Today, every player is an entrepreneur, and pushing opinions outside can increase brand value or improve PR. I’m all for that. But speaking ill of another cricketer is something I would never do,” Ashwin said.

Ashwin recalled a recent instance when his technical analysis of India ODI and Test captain Shubman Gill’s dismissal patterns generated severe backlash on social media. “Where did all this begin? We started creating narratives around players. We started painting a superhero culture, a cinematic culture. Who even talks about cricket now? Nobody speaks about the game itself,” Ashwin lamented. “Some time ago, I put out a Twitter (X) thread

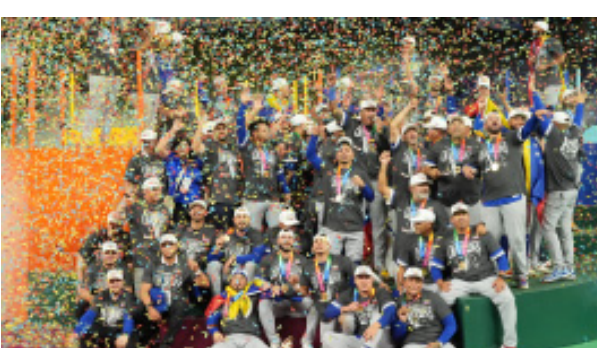
about what Shubman was doing that was leading to his dismissals in a certain way. For me, it is always about the ‘what’ and the ‘why,’ never the ‘whom.’ But immediately it became about comparison—why only Shubman and not someone else? I was like, do you even follow what I do?,” Ashwin added.

Faf du Plessis says Kolkata Knight Riders must turn Eden Gardens into a spin fortress

Former South Africa captain Faf Du Plessis urged Kolkata Knight Riders to build their campaign around spin, particularly due to the pair of ace spinners they have in their ranks in Varun Chakaravathy and Sunil Narine. Du Plessis said that KKR should be asking for spinning tracks at the Eden Gardens; the franchise had publicly voiced their displeasure at the conditions that were on offer for them at their home ground last season.

Du Plessis pointed out that the nature of their pitches at home games can have a big impact on KKR’s performance this season. “If I was part of the KKR team management, I would ask the groundsman to make the wicket spin-friendly. KKR are blessed to have two absolute cannons in Varun Chakaravathy and Sunil Narine. They are two of the best T20 spinners in the game right now,” he said on JioHotstar. “Both, Varun and Narine, have to be in the game. If they play on surfaces where they are not in contention, then you are losing those two cannons and your superpower. Yes, they can bowl well on any wicket, but for KKR to be successful this IPL, they need to fire. The pitch should be prepared keeping those two players in mind,” he added. Chakaravathy will be looking to bounce back from his disappointing performance during India’s title-winning T20 World Cup campaign, where he took 14 wickets at an economy of over nine runs. KKR finished fifth in the 2025 season, winning only five out of 14 matches. Captain Ajinkya Rahane had shown concerns regarding the pitch not favouring spinners at Eden Gardens last season. “We’d love to see the pitch helping the spin bowlers,” Rahane had said after defeat against RCB at Eden Gardens last year. With KKR opening against Mumbai Indians on March 29, pitch conditions could again shape their gameplan.

‘My country needs this’: Venezuela stuns US ‘Dream Team’ to claim historic World Baseball Classic title amid political turmoil



GNS News Agency, March 18

In a politically-charged finale of the World Baseball Classic, Venezuela defeated the United States of America on the Americans’ home turf of Miami to win their first-ever title. The victory comes two months after US armed forces captured Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro. The game was played at Miami’s LoanDepot Park in front of a sold-out crowd of 36,190, reported The Guardian, before adding that the fans were “mostly pro-Venezuela spectators”. The American team fielded by the hosts has been called a “Dream Team” because it was loaded with Major League

Baseball stars. Even though these days US president Donald Trump is occupied with the war against Iran in the Middle East, he took some time out to goad the Venezuelans through a Truth Social post on Monday night before the final: “Good things are happening to Venezuela lately! I wonder what this magic is all about? STATEHOOD, #51, ANYONE?” Trump repeated that joke after the South American team defeated the USA team 3-2 in the final on Tuesday night, posting on his social media account: “STATEHOOD!!! President DJT”.

“We’re here to speak baseball,” Venezuela outfielder Ronald Acuña Jr had said before the game when asked to comment on Trump’s comments. The visiting team did just that, defeating the mighty Americans. “My country needs that championship,” Acuña Jr later said after the triumph as he wiped tears from his eyes. “I just want to make my people proud. That’s what I did today.” The victory prompted wild celebrations back home, with flag-bearing supporters on vehicles coming out on the streets at the Plaza de la Juventud (Plaza of Youth) in the capital city of Caracas. Thousands sang the anthem punctuated by honking horns from cars and motorcycles. Venezuela acting president Delcy Rodríguez declared Wednesday a National Day of Joy and made it a non-working holiday except for essential workers.

‘No batter should pick ball without consent’: MCC explains Salman Agha run-out after spirit of cricket debate

GNS News Agency, March 18

The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), which maintains the laws that govern professional cricket, issued a clarification on Wednesday after Pakistan batter Salman Ali Agha’s controversial run out by Bangladesh skipper Mehidy Hasan Miraz during the 2nd ODI between both sides in Dhaka sparked debate over the spirit of cricket. MCC released a statement that reads: “Under Laws, there is little that either umpire could have done differently. The non-striker was clearly out of his ground when the wicket was broken, and the ball was in play. That is out.”

“It is also worth pointing out that the non-striker had left his ground when the ball was in play and had just started to attempt to regain his ground when he collided with Mehidy. Furthermore, no batter should attempt to pick the ball up without the consent of the fielding side, and had he done so, he would have been at risk of an Obstructing the field dismissal. In retrospect, he would have been better using that time to attempt to regain his ground,” reads the statement.

In the 4th delivery of the 39th over, Miraz was bowling to Mohammad Rizwan who played the ball back towards the right of the bowler which Miraz stopped with his boot. Meanwhile, Agha, who was on the non-striker’s end, was out of his crease and in Miraz’s way with both players in close proximity. Agha then bent down to pick the ball and hand it back to the bowler but Miraz swooped in himself and in an under-armed throw knocked the bails off with Agha still outside the crease. The decision was sent upstairs and the third umpire ruled it as a dismissal much to the chagrin of Agha who then proceeded to throw his batting gloves and helmet to the ground near the boundary ropes before exiting the ground. Salman Agha was also reprimanded by the ICC for breaching Level 1 of the Code of Conduct due to his outburst following the dismissal.

Salman Ali Agha controversial run out vs Bangladesh Pakistan’s Salman Ali Agha was reprimanded by the ICC for breaching Level 1 of the Code of Conduct due to his outburst after getting controversially run out by Mehidy Hasan Miraz. (Screenshots: Bangladesh Cricket X) MCC further said, “There have been some suggestions that the ball should have been treated as Dead. That is not viable under the Laws; the ball does not become dead when play-



ers collide – if it did, that would incentivise players to seek out collisions when the situation was advantageous. There was no question of a serious injury, so there could be no call of Dead ball for that. It could not have been clear to the umpire that all the players ceased to consider the ball to be in play, since Mehidy clearly believed it was live, even if Agha did not. And it cannot have been finally settled in the hands of the bowler or wicket-keeper, since it was on the ground.”

“There is no case to be made that this was Not out under Law” Under the new Laws, which will come into effect in October, an umpire will be able to determine that the ball is finally settled if it is stationary on the ground. However, it is hard to make an argument that the ball is finally settled if the nearest fielder to it is attempting to run the non-striker out, with that non-striker out of their ground. “There is no case, therefore, to be made that this was Not out under Law, nor that the Law could be re-written to somehow make a situation like this Not out. Yet many people have expressed sympathy for Agha and suggested that this dismissal was against the Spirit of Cricket. It certainly would have been possible for Mehidy, as Bangladesh captain, to withdraw his appeal. Agha clearly thought the ball was dead and was attempting to assist the fielding side after an unintentional collision which made it harder for him to regain his ground. The Laws allow a withdrawal for incidents where the batter is out in Law, but the fielding side feels that it would be better, within the Spirit of Cricket, to allow them to continue.”

‘Can’t let this pass... I’m upset and sad’: Emotional Neymar reacts after being snubbed by Brazil again



GNS News Agency, March 18

He was the Brazil football team’s talisman not too long ago. But with injuries taking a toll on his body, Neymar finds himself out of the squad once again after Brazil national team coach Carlo Ancelotti named his team for the friendlies against France (on March 26 in Boston) and Croatia (March 31 in Orlando). Neymar had been eyeing a comeback to the Brazil set-up for the twin friendlies because they are Brazil’s final encounters before Ancelotti names his World Cup roster on May 18.

Neymar, who currently plays for Santos after cutting short his contract at the Saudi Pro League, is Brazil’s all-time leading goalscorer with 79 goals. However, he has not been part of the national squad since October 2023, when he tore the ACL and meniscus in his left knee. After the latest snub, the Brazil forward reacted to the news that he had been left out of the side. “I’m going to say it because I can’t let this pass. Obviously, I’m upset and sad about not being called up,” the forward said while attending the Brazil Kings League tournament where he owns a franchise team.

“The focus remains the same, day after day, training after training, match after match. We will achieve our goal. There is still one final call-up left,” he added. He has previously said that the 2026 FIFA World Cup in USA, Mexico and Canada might be his last football World Cup. Ancelotti, meanwhile, explained why he had left out the forward despite him playing the full 90 minutes recently in a 1-1 draw against the Corinthians where two of Ancelotti’s assistants were in attendance. “Neymar is not at 100 percent and therefore he is not on the list,” Ancelotti said. “He is not at 100

percent of his capability. If he can be at 100 percent physically, he can be there. Neymar could be at the World Cup. Neymar has to keep working, playing, showcasing his qualities and maintaining good physical condition.”

St Francis College wins Osmania University basketball title



Hyderabad: St Francis College for Women defeated last year’s runner-up Villa Marie College 38-29 in the final to win the Osmania University inter-college women’s basketball championship here. For the winners, Pari (15), Sania (10) and Shristi (8) were the lead performers, while Jaharvi (10), Harshitah (10) and Ayesha (6) played well for the losers. Loyola Academy scored a narrow 28-26 win against St Ann’s College for Women (Mehdipatnam) to settle for third place, with Deepthi (21) being the top-scorer for the winners, while Blessy (9) and Heeba (7) put up a fine show for the losers. Prof Uma Joseph, Principal of St Francis College, Senior Prof K Deepa, Syed Farooq Kamal, Head, Department of Physical Education, St Francis, and Dr Amitha Daniel, PD, graced the valedictory function. The scores: Final: St Francis College bt Villa Marie College 38-29. 3rd place: Loyola Academy bt St Ann’s College (Mehdipatnam) 28-26.

Acting since she was 41-days old, Sujitha won nationwide fame playing a boy in Mammooty hit; did the same role in 3 remakes with Chiranjeevi, Govinda

From Shalini and her sister Shamlee to Geetu Mohandas, Nazriya Nazim, Pranav Mohanlal, Manjima Mohan, Sanusha, and Arun A Kumar, there are several who transitioned from child artistes to adult actors in Malayalam cinema. Although not all of them achieved the same level of success when they began taking on mature roles, they all remain beloved to Malayalees, thanks to their notable performances as kids. Among those who left a lasting impression on audiences both as child artistes and as adult actors is Sujitha Dhanush. Interestingly, she faced the camera for the first time when she was just 41 days old and remains active in show business even after four decades.

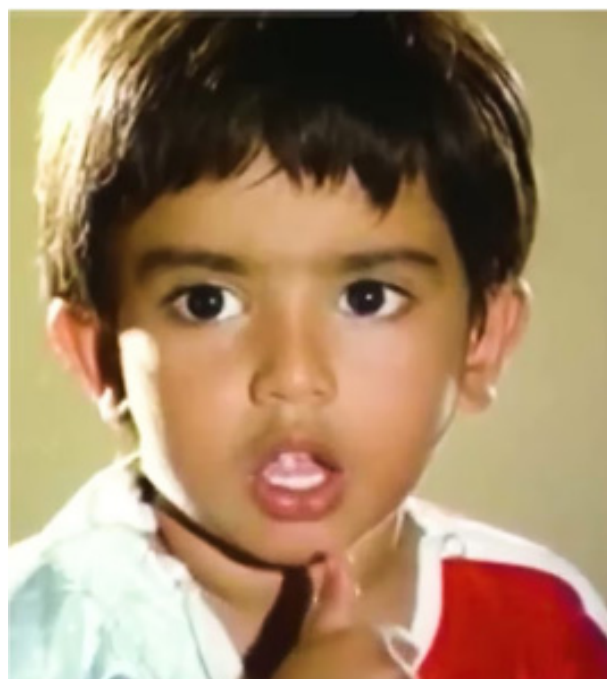
In her debut movie Abbas (Tamil), the newborn played the grandchild of legendary actor KR Vijaya. The daughter of a couple from Thiruvananthapuram, settled in Chennai, Sujitha's parents, TVS Mani and Radha, had no connection to cinema whatsoever. Don't Miss | Aadu: How the 'non-sensical comedy' that bombed in theatres became a pop-culture phenomenon after leaking online Mother's dream led Sujitha, brother to world of cinema

However, they were both movie lovers, and Radha wished to see her children, Sujitha and her elder brother Suresh (Surya Kiran), reach Tinseltown. Just as she hoped, both Sujitha and Suresh landed in movies. After Abbas, she appeared as K Bhagyaraj and Urvashi's daughter in Mundhanai Mudichu (1983) and subsequently played small roles in a few other Tamil and Malayalam movies. However, Sujitha's rise to massive fame arrived when she played a young boy in legendary director Fazil's Mammooty-starrer Poovinu Puthiya Poonthennal (1986). In the film, Sujitha portrayed Benny alias Kittu, a speech and hearing-impaired boy. After witnessing his parents being murdered by two men, Benny runs away from home and ultimately falls into the hands of an alcoholic man, Kiran (Mammooty), who is reeling under the pain of his family's tragic death. Kiran thus becomes Benny's guardian angel as his parents' killers try to hunt him down. Sujitha has been an actor for over four decades. Sujitha faced the camera for the first time when she was just 41 days old. (Credit: Instagram/@sujithadhanushoff)

The Poovinu Puthiya Poonthennal effect Also starring Nadiya Moidu and Suresh Gopi, Poovinu Puthiya Poonthennal became a massive success, and Sujitha's performance as the young boy received widespread acclaim. The film was subsequently remade in multiple languages, and she reprised her role in at least three versions.

While Fazil himself remade it in Tamil as Poovizhi Vasalile (1987) with Sathyaraj replacing Mammooty, the Telugu version, Pasivadi Pranam (1987), was helmed by A Kodandarami Reddy and featured Chiranjeevi in the lead role. Poovinu Puthiya Poonthennal was later remade in Hindi as Hatya (1988), with Govinda in the lead role. Unsurprisingly, all the movies became massive hits, and Sujitha received nationwide acclaim.

ICYMI | Mammooty's on-screen daughter, sister and wife, she won Best Actress Award at 13; tragedy struck



when she became fourth wife of 31 years older man at 17 She worked as a child artiste in about 40 movies across various languages. Afterwards, she began acting in roles that matched her real age and even appeared in a few Mani Ratnam movies in the 1990s, including Roja, Bombay, and Iruvar. She rose to greater fame with roles in films such as Summer in Bethlehem, Vaalee, Ingane Oru Nilapakshi, Jai Chiranjeeva, Aayirathil Oruvan, and Thaandavam, among others.

Sujitha's family In many interviews, she has said that her brother Surya Kiran influenced her career the most. Surya Kiran also began his journey in cinema as a child artiste under the name Master Suresh and appeared in movies such as My Dear Kuttichathan, the first Indian movie to be filmed in 3D format. Sujitha has said that her trips to film locations with her brother and mother ultimately led her to choose acting as her lifelong path. Surya Kiran passed away in 2024. Sujitha's husband, Dhanush, is an ad filmmaker, and they have a son together. Sujitha's husband, Dhanush, is an ad filmmaker, and they have a son together. Sujitha with her husband, Dhanush, and their son. (Credit: Instagram/@sujithadhanushoff) She has so far appeared in nearly 100 films across Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Hindi. She has also acted in several television serials. It was her character Unnimaya in Harichandanam that made her a household name among the Malayalam small-screen audience. She has also done notable roles in Malayalam soap operas like Devimahathmyam, Indira, Sangamam, Snehasangamam, and Kumarasambhavam. Besides, Sujitha played a prominent role in the superhit Tamil serial Pandian Stores.

When Gautam Gambhir dismissed AB de Villiers vs Suresh Raina in IPL debate: 'No comparison, Raina hands down'

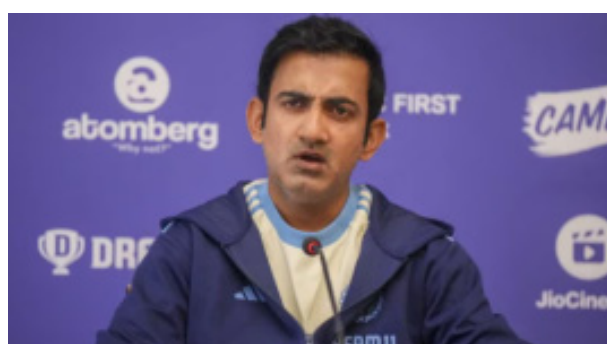
There is a perennial debate among cricket fans about who is the greater player in Indian Premier League history – Mr IPL Suresh Raina or Mr 360° AB de Villiers. While fanbases continue to duel over making their favourite cricketer come out on top in a head-to-head comparison, there was once a verdict from Gautam Gambhir that stirred up the cricketing world and raised eyebrows. The current India head coach had famously dismissed any comparison between the two, calling Raina the undisputed winner based on trophies won.

Gambhir had argued that de Villiers, despite his individual brilliance, has no major silverware to show for his efforts, whereas Raina was an influential figure in Chennai Super Kings' multiple title-winning campaigns. He had said, "What are the parameters? AB de Villiers didn't win anything in his career. He didn't win anything. Neither did he win the IPL nor any ICC events. Suresh Raina played his entire cricket at Chepauk (Chennai). AB de Villiers played one or two years in Delhi and then at Chinnaswamy (Bengaluru). Flat wicket, small ground. Suresh Raina played in Chepauk and won four titles."

'No comparison, Raina hands down'

Raina played for CSK, whereas de Villiers represented the Royal Challengers Bengaluru for the majority of his career. Raina has also led Gujarat Lions, while the South African played for the Delhi Daredevils in the first two seasons of IPL before moving to RCB in 2011.

"I mean, there is no comparison for me. Suresh Raina



hands down (the better player among the two). He plays on turning tracks, slow wickets. You play seven matches at Chepauk, one against KKR (in Kolkata) where the ball grips, one in Hyderabad (against Sunrisers Hyderabad) where the ball grips as well," Gambhir had said on Star Sports a few years ago. "If AB de Villiers plays in a small ground like Chinnaswamy Stadium for 8-10 years, any player might have the same strike rate or ability. So Suresh Raina, four IPL titles. Unfortunately, de Villiers only personal records," he added. In 157 matches for the Bangalore-based franchise, the former South Africa captain has 4,522 runs at a strike rate of 158.33. He is also the second-highest run-getter for RCB in IPL. Nicknamed Mr 360, de Villiers notched up two centuries and 37 half-centuries for RCB. De Villiers has scored 5,162 runs in 184 matches in the IPL.

Nora Fatehi claims she was 'misled' about vulgar 'Sarke Chunar' lyrics, alleges use of AI: 'I warned KD the Devil makers'

Nora Fatehi has finally reacted to the controversy around the song "Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke" featuring her and Sanjay Dutt from the Kannada film KD – The Devil. The song has faced massive backlash from the audience due to its lewd lyrics and suggestive choreography, following which complaints were made, resulting in the government taking down the video of the song. The issue was also raised in the Lok Sabha with the Information and Broadcasting minister Ashwani Vaishnav revealing action has been taken and the freedom of expression is not absolute. Earlier an NHRC notice was also issued against the song makers.

'I shot the song in Kannada, had no idea about lyrics' Nora has now shared a video message on the same in which she claimed that she did the song because she wanted to work with Sanjay Dutt. She also said that since she doesn't know Kannada, she relied on the filmmaker to translate the song, and what was translated to her didn't seem objectionable. Only at the song's launch event, when

she heard the song's Hindi lyrics, did she understand how vulgar its lyrics sounded. She also claimed that she warned the filmmaker about the song and how it could land them in trouble.

'Who would say no to working with Sanjay Dutt?'

She said in the clip, "I shot this song three years ago in a language called Kannada, okay? Which is a part of a different industry called Sandalwood, okay? When I shot this song three years ago, I said yes to it because it was a part of a big film. It was with a big icon, Sanjay Dutt, who would say no to work with him? He's such an icon. And it was a remake, at least that's what I thought, of like, "Nayak Nahi," which is also a very iconic song."

She went on to say that she had no idea how inappropriate the lyrics of the Hindi version would sound. She said, "When I'm on set shooting for this song, I'm relying on the filmmakers to translate the song and that is what I go by, okay? When they're translating the song, nothing seemed inappropriate or vulgar when they were translating the song

On this day in 2018: Dinesh Karthik's career revived with a match-winning last-ball six vs Bangladesh in Nidahas Trophy final

Dinesh Karthik famously enjoyed a second wind towards the latter stages of his career as a finisher in T20 cricket but signs of what he can do in those situations had started appearing in 2017/18 2018 Nidahas Trophy tri-series between India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, hosted by the latter. Karthik first pulled India over the line in a league game against Sri Lanka with an unbeaten 39 in 25 balls and then, a few days later, in the final in which he faced just eight balls but ended becoming one of the enduring images from the tournament. India were led by Rohit Sharma in the series, with Virat Kohli sitting it out. They had won the toss and chosen to bowl first. A 50-ball 77 from Sabbir Rahman and an unbeaten 19 off seven balls by Mehidy Hasan Miraz were the only highlights with the bat for Bangladesh as Yuzvendra Chahal's 3/18 led the way in restricting them to a score of 166/8.

Rohit went ballistic in the powerplay, particularly in the second over in which he went 6, 4, 6 off consecutive balls from Mehidy Hasan Miraz. India lost Shikhar Dhawan and Suresh Raina in the powerplay but remained well ahead of the game at the end of the sixth over largely thanks to Rohit keeping up the pace. That changed in the middle overs, though, with spinners Rubel Hossain, captain Shakib-Al-Hasan and Nazmul Islam strangling India for runs. India could get just 16 runs between the 10th and 13th overs and soon, the pressure resulted in Rohit falling to Nazmul on 56 off 42 balls.

Manish Pandey then kept India in the game but his partner Vijay Shankar struggled to find any momentum. Pandey soon slowed down as well and by the time he fell to Mustafizur Rahman off the last ball of the 18th over, a wicket-keeper, he had scored just 28 runs off 27 balls. And so the equation stood at India needing 34 to win off the last



two overs when Karthik came in to bat. He faced the first ball of the over after Mustafizur's which was bowled by the miserly Rubel and smashed two sixes and a four off the first three balls. Karthik and Shankar ran two off the second last ball and then scooped the last over long leg for a four, thus making it 22 runs off the 19th over. The first ball from Soumya Sarkar was a wide down the leg side, then a dot to Shankar. Shankar then edged the second ball to extra cover for a single and then came another single off the third. Shankar finally found a way to the boundary and hit a four past third man. India needed five to win off the last two balls. Shankar was then caught at long-on, leaving India needing five runs to win off the last ball. Washington Sundar was the new man in but he was at the non-striker's end, this was still the time when batters could cross over when a catch was being taken. Sarkar went fullish well outside off stump, the ball with a hint of movement away from Karthik, who proceeded to smash it flat over covers for a stunning six. Karthik faced just eight balls in the match and he stayed unbeaten on a whopping 29 runs.

Pawan Kalyan's Ustaad Bhagat Singh dominates Dhurandhar 2: The Telugu box office clash no one can call yet

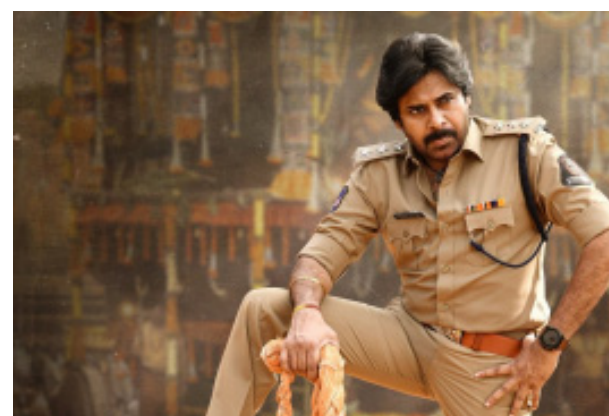
As two of the most anticipated Telugu releases prepare to hit screens on Thursday, the mood across the exhibition circuit is a mix of cautious optimism and honest concern. Ustaad Bhagat Singh, starring Pawan Kalyan, heads into a direct clash with Dhurandhar 2, and early signals from the ground are telling a layered story. Dhurandhar 2, made primarily in Hindi, has been dubbed in Telugu after seeing audience response to the first iteration of the film.

On the exhibition side, there is little ambiguity about where the majority of the trade has placed its bet. A. Srinu, who operates multiple single-screen theatres across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, says the preference has been decisive. "90% of single-screen theatres across both states have given preference to Ustaad Bhagat Singh. The occupancy rates have been strong as well," he said. That kind of dominance on the single-screen circuit, which has historically driven first-week collections for mass entertainers in the Telugu belt, is a solid foundation to build on. Single screens tend to draw the core, loyal audience segment that typically turns out in large numbers on opening day and through the first weekend.

A regional split in audience preference Sunil Narang, a prominent exhibitor in the Telugu film industry, sees a clear geographic pattern emerging between the two releases.

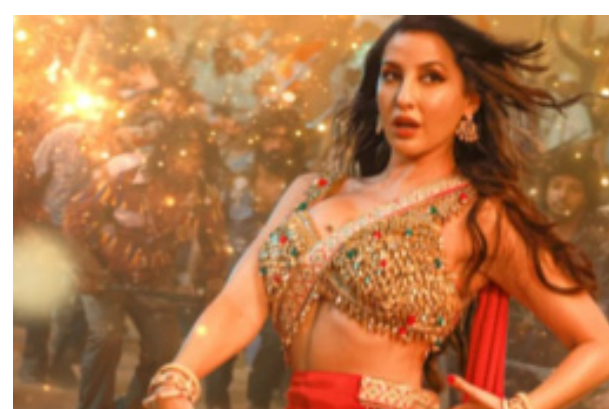
"Compared to Dhurandhar 2, we see a stronger inclination towards Ustaad Bhagat Singh overall. With nearly a month of no major new releases and the festival season upon us, I think audiences are going to end up watching both films. In Andhra Pradesh, Ustaad Bhagat Singh is clearly leading. In Telangana, which has a more cosmopolitan audience base, Dhurandhar 2 has a slight numerical edge. But I don't think that will hurt Ustaad Bhagat Singh's performance in any significant way," Narang said. His reading reflects a familiar pattern in the Telugu market. Andhra Pradesh tends to respond more strongly to mass, rural-facing entertainers, and has a strong fan base for Pawan Kalyan, who is currently the Deputy Chief Minister over there. Telangana, on the other hand, with Hyderabad as its commercial centre, often gravitates toward a wider variety of content. The fact that Dhurandhar 2 is holding its own in Telangana is worth noting, but Narang's broader assessment is that the festive window is large enough to accommodate both films. Where the picture gets more complicated is in the pre-release booking data. Industry analysts tracking numbers across both states say the advance bookings for Ustaad Bhagat Singh are noticeably below expectations when placed against benchmarks from comparable releases.

"Ticket sales in Andhra Pradesh opened a few days ago, accompanied by a price hike. In Telangana, bookings only opened the day before yesterday. When you compare these numbers to They Call Him OG or Hari Hara Veera Mallu, both recent Pawan Kalyan releases, the advances for Ustaad Bhagat Singh look considerably weaker. Com-



bined occupancy across both states stands at roughly 40% at the moment. That said, we expect a meaningful uptick once the evening shows tonight get underway," said an analyst tracking the Telugu theatrical market. A 40% combined occupancy figure at this point in the booking cycle is a number the trade will be watching closely. The late opening of ticket sales in Telangana is one contributing factor. When bookings begin closer to the release date, it naturally compresses the window for early momentum to build, and does not always reflect the true appetite for a film. In an interaction with SCREEN, Naveen Yerneni, producer at Mythri Movie Makers, said, "We were aware of Dhurandhar 2's release and did not see it as a threat to our film. Ours is a regional film, and while a film like Toxic with its wider reach could have posed stronger competition, Dhurandhar 2 operates in a different space. Many audiences would prefer to watch Dhurandhar 2 in Hindi, so we do not see it as direct competition in the Telugu market. While it may perform in major urban centres, we are confident that audiences across the region will overwhelmingly turn up for Pawan Kalyan's film."

The price hike in the two Telugu-speaking states adds another variable. Premium pricing can boost per-show gross collections but tends to reduce the volume of casual walk-in audiences who might otherwise fill seats across multiple shows. In a market where word of mouth after day one drives the bulk of a film's run, that balance carries real weight. The one clear advantage Ustaad Bhagat Singh carries into release is its timing. A near month-long gap without a significant new release, combined with an active festive period, means there is genuine pent-up energy in the market. Narang's point about audiences potentially watching both releases is grounded in reality. Telugu audiences, particularly in smaller towns and district centres, do tend to make multiple theatre visits during festival weeks when the content earns their trust. Whether Ustaad Bhagat Singh can convert that festive goodwill into a strong opening weekend, despite the soft advance numbers, may well come down to the next 24 hours.



spectful regardless. I'm in the presence of media. I'm in the presence of filmmakers, people who give me opportunities, so I have to carry myself in a certain way.