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## Gold jewellery worth Rs. 46.52 lakh seized at Shamshabad Airport

The Shamshabad Airport officials seized 827 grams of gold worth Rs. 46.52 lakhs from a passenger who came from Dubai. The customs officers checked the passengers who arrived from Dubai to Hyderabad on Thursday morning. On this occasion, a person named Sudhir Kumar was found with gold paste being smuggled. The officials said that he tried to move the gold by melting it into a paste and smearing it on the back of the T-shirt. They said that he has been detained for investigation.

## Liquor to be served till 1 am on New Year eve in bars

Hyderabad: In a good news for boozers in Telangana, the State government has decided to extend timings for bars, pubs and liquor shops on New Year's Eve.

Liquor stores and wine shops are allowed to stay open till midnight, according to a memo issued by Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar on December 20.

The Telangana government has granted permission to retail alcohol stores to remain open until midnight on December 31, 2022. Bars and other restaurants that serve liquor can remain open till 1 am, the State government further said.

# Mojtaba rubbishes truce talk as Israel kills 2 top Iranian officials

Iran's new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei has rejected ceasefire or de-escalation offers conveyed by intermediaries even as Israel on Tuesday claimed to have killed top Iranian security official Ali Larjani and Revolutionary Guard's all-volunteer Basij militia head Gen Gholam Reza Soleimani.

Larjani was the secretary of Iran's top decision-making body Supreme National Security Council and was widely believed to be running the nation as it reeled from the killing of its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on February 28 and a widening war. Soleimani led the powerful internal security service that has crushed waves of mass protests against the Shiite theocracy.

Larjani and Soleimani were killed in overnight strikes in a blow to Iran's leadership, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said on Tuesday, while Tehran defiantly fired new salvos of missiles and drones at its Gulf neighbours and Israel.

Mojtaba Khamenei's stance for revenge against the US and Israel was "very tough and serious" in his first foreign policy session, an Iranian official said, without clarifying whether the leader attended the session in person.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said the scale of Iran's retaliation caught them off guard, especially as it targeted the Gulf nations. "The US had not anticipated that Iran will strike beyond its immediate targets," said Trump, describing the Iranian response as "unexpected and surprising". "They weren't supposed to go after all these other countries in West Asia. Those missiles... hit Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait. Nobody expected that. We were shocked. You know, they fought back," Trump told reporters.

Meanwhile, news agency Reuters cited its sources as saying that Trump had been warned that Iranian retaliation was certain. Trump was also warned that Iran might attempt to close the Strait of Hormuz.

In Washington DC, the Pentagon sought to underscore the scale of the campaign. The US Central Command said it had hit more than 7,000 targets across Iran by the end of Monday, including missile sites, naval assets and command facilities.

Earlier, Trump had defended the decision to join Israel in launching airstrikes on February 28, arguing the economic fallout was justified. He called the war's impact on stock markets "a very small price to pay". He also

argued the war was necessary to prevent a wider conflict, saying that "had we not done this, you would have had a nuclear war that would have evolved into World War III".

Elsewhere, Israel reported continued overnight operations in Lebanon and Iran, while the US Embassy in Baghdad came under attack again, according to the Iraqi government. Projectiles were fired in Abu Dhabi and a tanker was struck in Oman.

Health authorities have reported about 1,300 killed in Iran, 886 in Lebanon and 12 in Israel since the start of the war. The US Central Command has said 13 US service members had been killed and roughly 200 troops wounded.

Meanwhile, European leaders again rejected Trump's demand for naval assistance to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz, with leaders in the UK, Germany, Spain and Italy all signalling they would not send ships to the strategic waterway.

The refusal came as the leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy and the UK issued a joint statement warning about escalating violence between Israel and the militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon and urged immediate de-escalation.



## KTR accuses Congress of playing 'biggest fraud' after making 420 promises

Hyderabad, March 17

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K. T. Rama Rao on Tuesday launched a sharp attack on the Congress government in Telangana and remarked that the 'credit' for playing the 'biggest fraud' in the world after making 420 promises in the elections goes to the Congress party.

Speaking on the motion of thanks to the Governor's address in the Assembly, he claimed that nowhere in the world has a party made such a large number of promises in the elections and then failed to honour them.

He accused the Congress of failing to deliver on its promises despite claiming that the guarantees would be implemented within 100 days. "The Congress said each family would benefit to the tune of Rs 2.5 lakh. Even after over two years, can the government show a single family that has received such benefits?" he asked.

KTR said that a Governor's address carries immense importance as it reflects the policy direction and commitments of the ruling government. However, he alleged that the present government had reduced it to a mere formality devoid of accountability.

He recalled that during the first Governor's address after the Congress came to power, then Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had publicly stated that the "six guarantees" promised by the Congress would be given legal status, and



that the Chief Minister had even signed a file to that effect. KTR questioned what had happened to that file and demanded answers from the government.

"Where is the file signed by the Chief Minister granting legal status to the six guarantees? If such an important document has disappeared, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) must be constituted immediately to trace it," he demanded. KTR further said that when the very first Governor's address lacked credibility due to unfulfilled assurances, the value of subsequent addresses also comes into question. "If the Chief Minister's signed file itself has no value, how can people trust this government? Every declaration made by the Chief Minister today carries zero value in the eyes of the public," he remarked.

## Fact checking is crucial in the digital age – District Collector Pravinya

Journalists to be made aware of modern technology with Vartalap workshop....

PIB Additional Director General Shruti Patil

"Sangareddy Indian Chronicle March 17" "In the current digital age, in the backdrop of the rapid spread of misinformation, fact checking has become of utmost importance, said District Collector Pravinya. She said that the role of journalists is very crucial in identifying content created by artificial intelligence, misleading images, and false information and delivering real news to the people." "A one-day workshop titled "VARTALAP" was organized for journalists at the Sangareddy Zilla Parishad Conference Hall on Tuesday under the auspicious of the Press Information Bureau Hyderabad." "Issues such as gender-based violence, schemes implemented by the Central Government for women, and use of artificial intelligence in journalism were discussed extensively in the program." "District Collector Pravinya, who was the chief guest of the program, along with PIB Additional Director General Shruti Patil, inaugurated the workshop by lighting the lamp. About 130 journalists from print and electronic media participated in the workshop." "Speaking on the occasion, District Collector Pravinya said that in the digital age, fact checking has become very important. She said that even a small misleading information can have a negative impact on fear and public trust in the society. She said that the media is like the fourth pillar of democracy. She said that the role of journalists is crucial in reaching the people with government policies, schemes and welfare programs. She suggested that journalists should provide quality news with ethical values." "The Collector said that such workshops would be useful for journalists to learn new knowledge and enhance their professional skills." "PIB Additional Director General Shruti Patil said that PIB plays a key role in accurately conveying official information from various ministries of the central government to the public.

She said that PIB Fact Check Unit is playing an important role in identifying and debunking fake news, especially in this era of expanding artificial intelligence. She explained about the various programs being conducted by the Press Information Bureau. "Senior journalist Sajaya Kakarla, speaking on gender equality and women's well-



fare schemes, said that gender equality should start from the family and parents need to instill the right attitude in children. She said that the role of journalists is also crucial in creating awareness on these issues." "Satya Priya explained about the use of AI in journalism. She explained how to use various AI tools like Notebook KLM, Chat GPT, Google Pinpoint, Eleven Labs, Gemini AI. However, it was advised to be careful while sharing personal or sensitive information on AI platforms." "A question and answer session was organized with journalists at the end of the workshop." "The Additional Director General of PIB answered several questions posed by journalists and assured that their suggestions and opinions would be conveyed to the concerned ministries.

## FM claims steady LPG flow as oil ministry flags concern

New Delhi, March 17

As the second Indian tanker Nanda Devi carrying 45,000 metric tonnes of LPG arrived in Gujarat in the wee hours of Tuesday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman allayed concerns around cooking gas shortage, saying "supplies were being maintained". The Petroleum Ministry, however, described the LPG supply situation as a "matter of concern".

Speaking in the Rajya Sabha on the Appropriation Bill, Sitharaman said the government was ensuring steady flow of LPG despite global turbulence. She also said India had enough fertilisers for the kharif sowing season and would begin bidding globally for nutrients for the next rabi season.

"India imports about 65 per cent of its LPG requirements, of which 90 per cent come through the Strait of Hormuz. As a result, there was speculation about whether we would get it or not. There are enough reports on how we are ensuring a steady flow during these turbulent times," Sitharaman said.

She pointed to ramped up domestic LPG production to add that this entire additional production was going to domestic consumers. "Domestic LPG production is up about 25 per cent since March 8 when the government asked oil refiners to maximise production," the minister said.

At a separate inter-ministerial briefing on the energy situation, Petroleum Ministry Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma, however, described the LPG supply situation as a "matter of concern", urging citizens to use cooking gas "rationally" and switch to induction stoves and piped natural gas wherever possible.

Officials said panic booking of LPG cylinders had begun to ease, with refill requests declining from a peak of nearly 89 lakh on March 13 to about 70 lakh, indicating a downward trend. However, the government maintained that the overall supply situation continued to require close monitoring.

At a high-level inter-ministerial briefing on the West Asia crisis, the Petroleum Ministry said domestic LPG supply remained uninterrupted, with daily distribution still ranging between 50 lakh and over 62 lakh cylinders, as in the pre-war days. "There has been no decline in LPG



supply to the households," an official said, adding that commercial and bulk LPG supplies had been curtailed to prioritise domestic consumers.

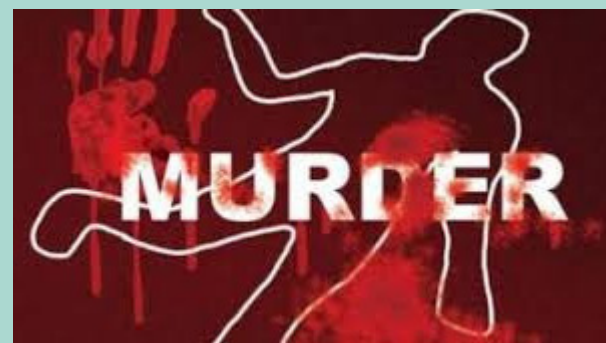
Providing a clearer picture of incoming supplies, officials indicated that a single LPG carrier typically carried around 45,000 metric tonnes of LPG. Based on preliminary estimates, the official said total LPG cargo linked to the currently tracked vessels was in the range of about 3 lakh metric tonnes, though precise figures were being compiled and would be shared later.

The ministry said the reported 17 per cent drop in LPG consumption in March was a result of these curbs on commercial usage rather than any fall in household demand. Reiterating its appeal, the Centre urged commercial establishments to shift to PNG and advised households to adopt alternative cooking options such as induction and electric cooktops wherever feasible. States have also been asked to fast-track approvals for pipeline infrastructure and waive local levies to expand PNG networks.

On the supply side, officials said domestic LPG production from refineries had been ramped up by about 38 per cent by diverting feedstock streams into the LPG pool, while imports were being diversified beyond the Gulf region, including recent procurement from the US. The Shipping Ministry said both LPG carriers--Shivalik and Nanda Devi--were currently discharging cargo at Kandla. In the case of Nanda Devi, ship-to-ship transfer operations are underway.

## Brutal Killing of Seven-Month Pregnant Woman Shocks Penchikalpet

"Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 17," "Penchikalpet, March 16: A pregnant tribal woman was brutally murdered in Penchikalpet mandal of Kumram Bheem Asifabad district, creating tension and shock in the locality." "According to police, the victim has been identified as Aatram Sammakka (25), a tribal woman from Kondapalli village. She was allegedly murdered in a forest area by Kelkari Jalapathi, a resident of a hamlet in Jahindpur. Police confirmed that the victim was seven months pregnant at the time of the incident." "Preliminary investigation suggests that the accused and the victim had been in a close relationship for the past four years. It is suspected that Sammakka had been pressuring Jalapathi, who is already married, to marry her. Under this pretext, he allegedly lured her to the Jahindpur area on Saturday, took her to a forest region between Kondapalli and Tulugupalli villages, and killed her." "After committing the crime, the accused is believed to have informed his brother over the phone. Following this, the brother alerted the police, who later located the victim's body in the forest area." "The body was shifted to the Gov-



ernment Hospital in Sirpur (T) for post-mortem examination. Based on a complaint filed by the victim's family, police have registered a murder case against the accused, along with charges under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, said Kagaznagar Rural Inspector Kumaraswamy. "Police have launched a manhunt to trace the absconding accused.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Transgender Persons Amendment Bill, 2026, under a cloud

The idea of a nanny state drawing the boundaries of morality for people is anathema to mature and evolved democracies. It must be left to individuals to exercise their freedom of choice. Governments must keep this fundamental principle in mind while formulating laws that have wider social ramifications. When they fail to do so, public backlash is only to be expected. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, introduced in Parliament last week, falls into the category of legislation that is hurriedly put together without wider consultations. The Bill, seeking to replace the 2019 Act, has a fundamental flaw as it alters the statutory definition of transgender person. It scraps the right of transgender individuals to self-identify. As per the new Bill, gender recognition for a transgender person will now depend on medical verification rather than self-identification. This makes it harder to obtain documents such as transgender identity cards or certificates because it introduces bureaucratic verification of a transgender person's identity. In a society that treats transgender persons with derision, requiring official verification could expose them to discrimination and create additional barriers in accessing education, employment and healthcare. While supporters of the amendment argue that clarity in definition is necessary for the effective administration of statutory benefits and protections, it must be pointed out that constitutional guarantees extended to transgender persons have to be respected.

## Reused and cheap edible oils a major cause of disease in Adilabad tribal belt

"S. Harpal Singh, Adilabad, March 17" Why are tribals in the agency tracts of old unified Adilabad district reporting sick of late, The ever increasing number of patients visiting Primary Health Centres, Community Health centers and the headquarter hospitals is an indicator of increasing incidence of health issues among the normally healthy Adivasis. "One of the major reasons for the tribals to report heart diseases is the use of cheap and adulterated edible oils and reuse of edible oils. "Adulterated, and



cheap oils, or for that matter reuse of edible oil over a period of time results in increase in cholesterol levels and incidence of fatty liver. Yes, we get patients down with these ailments in rural areas," acceded Dr. Ashok Nagargoje, Civil Assistant Surgeon at Jainoor PHC in Kumram Bheem Asifabad district. "Comparatively, usage of edible oils is higher in quantity among Adivasis. In order to save money or simply unable to afford better quality edible oils, the tribals opt for cheaper varieties which have suspect quality. The unbranded plastic containers found with scrap dealers in the agency areas is an indicator of the extent to which such oils are used. "The tribals also visit hotels and other eateries especially on the day of weekly shandy in respective areas. The hotels and eateries invariably recycle the edible oil while cooking eatables. "According to experts the oil that is reused has reduced quality.. Toxic compounds are formed sooner thereby depleting nutritional value. The Foos Safety and Standards Authority Of India, has a set of rules and regulations when it concerns curbing reuse of edible oils but the rules are observed more in breach.

## Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Extends Support by Distributing LOC Documents to Victim Families

LOC documents proving highly beneficial for patients' medical treatment

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 17 (Indian Chronicle):"Uppal constituency MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy has once again taken a step forward in providing financial assistance for healthcare to the people of his constituency. He handed over a Letter of Credit (LOC) worth ?2 lakh under the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) to Palla Aruna, a resident of Bharat Nagar in Uppal division, who belongs to a poor family and requires urgent medical treatment. "Through this LOC, she will be able to receive free treatment at NIMS Hospital in Hyderabad. In addition, two other individuals from the Uppal constituency were also provided with C M R F cheques. "The LOC facility under the CMRF



enables poor patients to receive treatment at hospitals without paying money in advance. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy stated that he will always stand by the people in times of need and emphasized that protecting the health of the poor is his primary goal. He also advised the public to make use of government schemes so that they do not face financial difficulties due to health issues.

# District Prepares for Digital Census with Intensive Training

"Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 17," District Collector K. Haritha has emphasised that officials must develop complete understanding of every aspect of the census format to ensure the smooth and error-free conduct of the upcoming house listing (census enumeration) programme in the district. "The Collector participated in the second day of a three-day training programme held on Monday at the Integrated Collectorate conference hall, along with Additional Collector M. David and RDO Lokeshwar Rao. "Speaking on the occasion, she instructed officials to clearly understand each component of the census format to avoid any errors during house listing. She said that it is the responsibility of officials to clarify doubts faced by enumerators and supervisors. "The Collector further informed that the census process will be conducted through a digitalised system. "ZP CEO Lakshminarayana, DPO Bikshapathi, Tahsildars, and MPDOs also participated in the training programme.



## Special Focus on Infrastructure at Anganwadi Centre Electricity Supply Provided to Anganwadi Centre Surroundings Must Be Kept Clean "Municipal Chairperson Dr. Kapa Chandrakala Muralikrishna



"Arvapalli Nagesh khammam Staff Reporter March 17 Indian Chronicle:"An electricity meter was handed over to the Anganwadi Centre in the 20th ward of Wyrva Municipality by Municipal Chairperson Dr. Kapa Chandrakala Muralikrishna on Tuesday. The meter was

presented to Ward Councillor Undru Varalakshmi in the presence of Electricity Department DE Ramesh. "Speaking on the occasion, Chairperson Dr. Kapa Chandrakala Muralikrishna said that Councillor Varalakshmi has been making continuous efforts for the development of the Anganwadi Centre. She mentioned that during the recent Praja Palana - Pragathi Palana program, District Collector Anudeep Durishetty visited the ward, where Councillor Varalakshmi brought the issues of the Anganwadi Centre to his attention. "As part of this initiative, officials arranged and brought the necessary materials required to provide electricity supply to the Anganwadi Centre, she said. The Chairperson also instructed that the premises of the Anganwadi Centre should be kept clean and hygienic to ensure that children do not face any inconvenience. "District Congress Medical and Health Chairman Dr. Kapa Muralikrishna, Undru Shyam Babu, former Councillor Guguloth Lakshmbai, Podili Harinath, Teja Vat Nageswara Rao, Guguloth Vijay, Thadi Raju, Prudhvi, Line Inspector George and others participated in the program.

## TWJF State President Mamidi Somayya Appointed as Central Assistant Chief Returning Officer (ACRO)

IFWJ Elections on May 20 — Mamidi Somayya to Serve as Central Assistant Chief Returning Officer Election Process Commences — Nominations Open Until the 26th of This Month

"(Mandava Srisailam, Hyderabad | Indian Chronicle, March 17): "Santosh Chaturvedi, the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ), has released the schedule for the organization's nationwide elections. IFWJ National Councilors from various states across the country, along with representatives from affiliated journalists' associations, will participate in these elections. The election for the organization's National President is scheduled to take place in Delhi on May 20. As part of the election management process, the appointment of State-level Returning Officers is currently underway. In this context, orders have been issued appointing Mamidi Somayya—an IFWJ representative from Telangana and the State President of the Telangana Working Journalists Federation (TWJF)—as the Central Assistant Chief Returning Officer (ACRO). Speaking to the media on this occasion, Mamidi Somayya expressed his appreciation for his appointment as ACRO,

noting that it is a commendable step aimed at ensuring the smooth conduct of the prestigious IFWJ elections, which are held nationwide once every two years. He further affirmed that he would discharge the responsibility entrusted to him with integrity and in strict accordance with the rules and regulations of the organization. He stated that, alongside the election of the National President, the election of National Council members and State representatives—allocated on a state-wise basis—will also take place. He further informed that the acceptance of nominations will be held from the 16th to the 26th of this month, the scrutiny of nominations on the 28th, the withdrawal of nominations on April 5th, and polling on May 20th. He added that 12 National Council members and another 12 State representatives will be elected from the state of Telangana.



## Mess with Dalits, and We Won't Stay Silent — We Will Chase You Down!

— Barre Jahangir, Former Municipal Chairman of Bhuvanagiri

"(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... March 17): The attack on the residence of Dalit MLA Mandula Samuel is an atrocious act. Former Municipal Chairman Barre Jahangir has demanded that MP Bandi Sanjay issue an apology for the incident. Barre Jahangir—a senior leader of Dalit associations and former Municipal Chairman—further demanded that State President Ramachandra Rao provide an explanation regarding the humiliating incident that occurred at the home of Mandula Samuel, the Dalit MLA representing the Thungaturthi constituency in the erstwhile Nalgonda district. On Tuesday, protesters expressed their outrage by burning an effigy symbolizing "Manuvadi religious fanaticism" near the statue of Babu Jagjivan Ram in the district headquarters. Speaking on the occasion, they stated that they strongly condemn the humiliating incident that took place at the home of Mandula Samuel—the MLA for the Thungaturthi constituency—who is a public representative belonging to the Dalit community and who secured a victory with a massive majority of 52,000 votes, one of the highest in the entire state of Telangana. They alleged that BJP leaders are attempting to weaken Dalit leadership by inciting communalism, Manuvadi ideology, and class divisions. They further remarked that while the BJP government at the Centre adopts a certain approach toward Dalits and Adivasis, Bandi Sanjay—who serves as the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs and is expected to uphold the Indian Constitution and treat all sections of society with equal dignity—should have respected Mandula Samuel at Gandhi Bhavan... Regarding the incident that took place, Dalit ministers and legislators criticized Union Minister Bandi Sanjay—who had previously offered an apology through the media if his remarks, which some Brahmins perceived as distorted, were deemed offensive—for speaking in a disrespectful and derogatory manner toward them. They condemned the orchestrated attack on a Dalit MLA's residence involving eggs and tomatoes as a shameful and utterly despicable act. They alleged that individuals affiliated with Union Minister Bandi Sanjay



were the ones who perpetrated this attack. They demanded that BJP State President Ramachandra Rao take responsibility for this incident and immediately suspend those involved in the assault on the party. They warned that while BJP leaders in other states might engage in such attacks, such behavior would not be tolerated in Telangana. They called upon the BJP state leadership to provide an assurance that incidents of this nature would not recur, emphasizing that unwarranted attacks on the homes of Dalit leaders are unacceptable. Former PCC General Secretary Pothnak Pramod Kumar participated in the event and strongly condemned the incident, joined by Bandaru Ravivaradhan, Pittala Balaraju, Itukala Mahender, Dubba Ramakrishna, Nagaram Shankar, Bandaru Shiva Shankar, Nilugonda Shivashankar, Sukka Swamy, Barre Karunakar, Dakuri Prakash, Gas Chinna, Mothe Manohar, Gope Babu, Bushapaka Shivateja, Devarakonda Mahesh, Buchchala Swamy, Dargayi Devender, Chilveru Ramesh, Nalla Krishna, Itukala Mahender, Bushapaka Mallesh, Bushapaka Manish, Bushapaka Nagender, Kondapuram Ganesh, Uppala Shanti, and others. They participated.

# Shivayogi Shivacharya's birthday celebrations on March 22

Congress leader Munipalli Satyanarayana announced

"Sangareddy: Indian Chronicle Correspondent



March 17 "Sri Sri Shivayogi Shivacharya's birthday celebrations will be held on March 22 at the Gangadhara Swami Ashram in Tagadapalli village of Sadashivpet mandal of Sangareddy district. Congress leader Munipalli Satyanarayana. He asked devotees to participate in the program in large numbers.

## 24 speed post' for Next-Day guaranteed delivery in 6 cities

"Hyderabad / New Delhi: , 17 Mar: The department of posts launched "24 speed post" in presence of union minister of communication Mr. Jyotiraditya Scindia & MoS for communications Dr. Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani ,



here on Tuesday. " The 24 speed post introduces next day guaranteed delivery for urgent and time-sensitive consignments. " In the first phase, the service is available across Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru & Hyderabad. " Alongside this, 24 & 48 speed post services would provide assured D+1 & D+2 delivery timelines, enabled through dedicated processing windows & priority air transmission. The services will also feature OTP-based secure delivery, end-to-end tracking with SMS alerts, BNL facility for business customers, free pickup for bulk bookings, API integration & centralized billing, along with a money-back guarantee in case of delay further strengthening India Post's premium express delivery capabilities.

## Journalists' Relay Hunger Strike Enters Second Day in Khammam

Support extended by Telangana Activists Forum Manda Venkateswarlu, Khammam District Media Convener

Demand to implement government's promise to journalists

"Arvapalli Nagesh khammam Staff Reporter March 17 Indian Chronicle:"The Telangana Activists Forum has demanded that the government immediately allocate house sites to journalists. Speaking on the occasion, Khammam District Media Convener Manda Venkateswarlu urged the government to fulfill its promise to journalists. "He said that the relay hunger strike being held at the Khammam Press Club for the allotment of house sites to journalists continued for the second consecutive day on Tuesday. "Venkateswarlu stated that, fol-



lowing the directions of Dr. Cheem Srinivas, State Chairman of the Telangana Activists Forum, the state committee and Khammam district committee have extended full support to the relay hunger strike being carried out by journalists at the Khammam Press Club. "He demanded that the 23.02 acres of land allocated for journalists in Khammam should be immediately handed over to the 320 journalists who are members of the society, with 200 square yards allotted to each member. "He further said that journalists serve as a bridge between the government and the people and work for public welfare, therefore the government should allocate house sites to them without delay. "Venkateswarlu also called upon all political parties, public organizations, intellectuals, public representatives, employees, teachers, students, workers, women's organizations, and voluntary service groups to come forward and extend their support to the journalists' cause.

# MMC Office to be Constructed at Uppal Baghayat

### Congress party in-charges of Assembly constituencies inspected the site

#### Leaders thanked CM Revanth Reddy



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 17 (Indian Chronicle): “The Congress party in-charges of various Assembly constituencies stated that the Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation (MMC) office will be established on the banks of the Musi River at Uppal Baghayat. ‘Assembly constituency in-charges Madhu Yashki Goud (LB Nagar), Thotakura Vajresh Yadav (Medchal), and Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy (Uppal) said that the MMC office will be constructed over 10 acres at Uppal Baghayat with an estimated cost of ₹98 crore, featuring modern facilities and designed to be a landmark structure. They expressed special thanks to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for agreeing to construct the MMC office in Uppal, making it accessible to everyone. ‘On Tuesday, Madhu Yashki

Goud, Thotakura Vajresh Yadav, Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, former Floor Leader Dharpalli Rajasekhar Reddy, former Boduppal Mayor Ajay Yadav, former corporators Bonthu Sridevi, Dhanpal Reddy, Pavani Reddy, division presidents, and Congress party workers visited and inspected the proposed site at Baghayat. ‘They stated that the site at Uppal Baghayat was selected by the concerned department officials as per the decision of CM Revanth Reddy. They added that Uppal is a suitable location for the Assembly constituencies under the MMC limits, including Uppal, Malkajgiri, LB Nagar, and Medchal, and will be easily accessible to people from all these areas. ‘Hence, it has been decided to construct the MMC office at Uppal Baghayat along the Musi River.

# Officials Must Adhere to Guidelines to Efficiently Conduct Census-2027 Process: Bhaskar Rao, Additional Collector (Local Bodies),

Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District (Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... March 17):— Bhaskar Rao, Additional Collector for Local Bodies, stated that officials and Charge Officers must strictly adhere to the prescribed guidelines to ensure the efficient conduct of the Census-2027 process. On Tuesday—the final day of the training program for Charge Officers regarding Census-2027—he participated in the valedictory session and instructed that the census, which is to be conducted in two phases, be executed comprehensively. Speaking on the occasion, the Additional Collector informed that the population census would be carried out in two distinct phases. He remarked that if the ‘House Listing’ phase is executed accurately, the census can be considered effectively complete. He suggested organizing the process on a block-wise basis to facilitate a smoother and more manageable census operation. He further instructed the concerned officials to conduct every stage of the census transparently and effectively at the field level. He emphasized that the personnel participating in the Census-2027 process must work in close coordination and focus intently on collecting comprehensive information. He urged every official to discharge their duties with utmost commitment to ensure the success of this monumental initiative undertaken by the government. He added that, as this process is being conducted through



a digital mode, it is imperative to ensure that every household and every individual is included, and that their details are recorded without fail. Furthermore, emphasizing that public cooperation is of utmost importance, he urged that awareness programs be organized to actively involve the public in the population census. The District Chief Planning Officer, District Statistics Officer Venkataramana, Municipal Commissioners, Tahsildars, MPDOs, and other concerned officials participated in this program.

# Farmers Urged to Leverage Government Schemes for Sustainable Agriculture.

“P. S ASHOKAN “KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. “Farmers should effectively utilize the various welfare and development schemes introduced by the government, said Assistant Director of Agriculture (ADA) Anjani Mishra. ‘Speaking at a program held on Tuesday at the Rythu Vedita in Suryapalli, she distributed Soil Health Cards and Natural Farming Kits to farmers practicing natural farming under the NMNF (National Mission on Natural Farming) scheme. The distribution was carried out in accordance with the directives of the State Agriculture Minister, Tummala Nageswara Rao. ‘Addressing the gathering, ADA Anjani Mishra noted that excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has become widespread in agriculture. She advised farmers to gradually adopt natural and eco-friendly farming practices and to utilize fertilizers and inputs derived from natural resources as much as possible. ‘Later, along with Manthani Agricultural Market Committee Chairman Kududula Venkanna, she distributed farming kits to farmers from Manthani, Suryapalli, Kakarlapalli, and Lakkepur villages. ‘The event was attended by Manthani Mandal Agriculture Officer Dr. Dasari Navya, Mandal Agricultural



Extension Officers, former sarpanches from various villages, and a large number of farmers who are practicing or interested in natural farming.

# Pagidi Sai Krishna Appointed as South India Joint Secretary of Head World Human Rights Council

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI , Uppal, March 17 (Indian Chronicle): “Pagidi Sai Krishna has been appointed as the South India Joint Secretary of the Head World Human Rights Council, which is actively functioning in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Orders to this effect were issued by the organization’s Chairman, Madhav. ‘On Tuesday, at the office located in Habsiguda, National General Secretary Satish Devarakonda handed over the appointment letter to Pagidi Sai Krishna. ‘Speaking on the occasion, newly appointed Joint Secretary Pagidi Sai Krishna expressed his gratitude to Chairman Madhav for placing trust in him and assigning this responsibility. He also thanked National General Secretary Satish Devarakonda for his efforts in facilitating the appointment. ‘He stated that he would work to the best of his ability for the protection of human rights, stand by the victims, and continuously strive to ensure justice. He further added that while working towards the development of the organization, he would strongly respond on behalf of the Head World Human Rights Council whenever rights are violated and support the affected individuals. He mentioned that this appointment has increased his responsibility even further. On this occasion, trust members, local dignitaries, and social activists felicitated the newly appointed South India Joint Secretary and extended their congratulations.



# State Government Must Fulfill Promises Made to the Public: CPM State Committee Member Kondamadugu Narsimha

the Congress-led Revanth Reddy government, stating that while it announced numerous promises to win the elections, it is failing to implement them. He pointed out that, with the sole exception of free bus travel for women, not a single other promise has been implemented—including pension hikes, subsidized LPG cylinders, the ‘Indiramma Atmiya Bharosa’ scheme, a monthly allowance of ₹2,500 for women, unemployment allowance, the ‘Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Bandhu’ scheme for Dalits, comprehensive farm loan waivers, and the ‘Rythu Bharosa’ scheme. He further criticized the ruling administration, accusing them of offering promises merely to mislead the public before the elections, only to neglect their implementation once they had secured victory. Narsimha issued a stern warning to the government: it must, at the very least during the current budget session, allocate adequate funds for the fulfillment of these promises and ensure their complete implementation; otherwise, the CPM party will launch large-scale protests and struggles under its leadership. CPM Mandal Secretary Pallerla Anjaya, Mandal Secretariat members Konda Ashok and Kondamadugu Nagamani, and Mandal Committee members Mota Yellaya, Kondapuram Yadagiri, Madhyapuram Bal Narsimha, Jitta Anjireddy, among others, participated in this meeting.

“Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... March 17): CPM State Committee member Kondamadugu Narsimha has demanded that the Congress government in Telangana state implement all the promises it made to the public prior to the elections. Speaking as the chief guest at a meeting of the CPM Bhuvanagiri Mandal Committee—held on Tuesday at the local Sundarayya Bhavan in Bhuvanagiri under the chairmanship of Mandal Secretariat member Annampatla Krishna—Narsimha criticized

# Determination Leads to Success: Traffic Inspector Shivashankar Addresses NSS Valedictory

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 17, (Indian Chronicle): “Jawahar Nagar Traffic Inspector Shivashankar said that with determination and consistent effort, anyone can achieve their goals. He was speaking at the valedictory function of the National Service Scheme (NSS) program organized by Osmania University. The NSS activities were conducted under the supervision of Program Officer Dr. Ashok and his team in areas including Kapra Circle, Kushaiguda Jai Jawan Colony, Kapra, and ECIL. Shivashankar attended the event as the chief guest, while Lion Jyothirmayachari, President of Live Club Bhayannagar Green City, Kapra Press Club President, and Chief Advisor of Kapra Vishwakarma Trust, participated as the guest of honor. Kushaiguda Sub-Inspector Venkanna also attended the program. Osmania University Principal Prof. Karunasagar and Vice Principal Prof. Ramadevi were present at the event. Speaking on the occasion, Shivashankar emphasized that failure should not lead to disappointment and that continuous effort is key to success. He also spoke about road safety, stressing the importance of wearing helmets. He said that wearing a helmet can save lives and highlighted the importance of reaching home safely. He mentioned that awareness initiatives like the ‘arrive Alive’ program are being actively conducted. He added that nothing is impossible for the youth if they are determined. Jyothirmayachari, in his address, stressed the importance of value-based education. He said education should not be limited to certificates but should help individuals understand life and develop human values. He urged students to become responsible citizens contributing to the nation. The program was attended by NSS Program Officer Dr. Ashok, Prof. Dr. Naresh from Osmania University, ASI Gopal Goud, Vishwakarma Trust Chairman Kalakonda Bikshapathi, donor Maroju Narasimha Chari, and NSS student volunteers.



# GHMC Women Employees Felicitated by Jyotirao Phule Seva Sangham Leaders and BRS Members

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI , Uppal, March 17 (Indian Chronicle): “On the occasion of International Women’s Day, GHMC women employees were grandly felicitated at Sri Rama Colony in Ramanthapur. BRS women leader K. Vijayalakshmi, Jyotirao Phule Seva Sangham President Burra Mahender Mudiraj, along with BRS leaders Tippani Sampath, Muralimohan and others, honored the women employees and conveyed Women’s Day greetings. ‘Speaking on the occasion, they emphasized the importance of women excelling in all fields. They praised the dedicated services of GHMC women employees, stating that it is commendable how they balance their professional responsibilities along with supporting their families. They further stated that true progress is achieved only where women are respected,



and that the nation can move forward only when women achieve development. They also highlighted the need to give proper recognition and opportunities to women employees and women leaders working in various organizations and political parties.

# CC Road Works Worth Rs 95 Lakhs Inspected by Former Corporator Bannala Geetha Mudiraj



“--- Works will be completed on time: Former Corporator Bannala Geetha Mudiraj” KISHORE VADDEPALLI , Uppal, March 17 (Indian Chronicle): “Former Corporator of Chilkanaagar Division and GHMC Standing Committee Member, Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj, inspected the ongoing CC road construction works in the streets opposite Beerappa Gadda Library in the division. ‘Speaking on the occasion, she said that the CC road works sanctioned across various areas in the division are being completed in phases. She added that the remaining pending and yet-to-be sanctioned works will also be taken up with the support of MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy. She instructed the contractor to ensure that the road is constructed with a minimum width of 4.5 meters, and where that is not feasible, the length of the road should be increased accordingly. She emphasized maintaining quality standards during construction and directed GHMC engineering officials to

closely monitor the works. She also instructed the contractor to complete the works at the earliest without causing inconvenience to the public. Work Inspector Kedar, senior leaders Kokkonda Jagan, Pandla Kishan, Tirupati Yadav, Edulla Kondal Reddy, Vanjari Nursing Rao, Banti Goud, Muddam Srinivas Yadav, Balakrishna Goud, Shyam, Balu Ravi, Suresh, and local residents including Bala Narasimha, Mangamma, Sharada, Yadamma, Krupa, and Sreekanth Reddy participated in the program.



## On the implementation of the promises made by the Congress party in the elections

**Chinnambavi Tahsildar submits petition**

**District General Secretary Jaggari Sridhar Reddy**

**Mandal BJP Party President Boggu Kurumaiah**

“Wanaparthy correspondent Indian Chronicle” At the Chinnambavi Mandal Center in Wanaparthy District, on the instructions of the State BJP Party, Chinnambavi Mandal BJP Party President Boggu Kurumaiah, under the leadership of Nagarkurnool District General Secretary Jaggari Sridhar Reddy, the staff of the local Tahsildar's office handed over a petition to R.I. Ramulu regarding the implementation of the promises made by the Congress Party in the elections. This Speaking on the occasion, BJP Mandal President Boggu Kurumaiah and Nagarkurnool District General Secretary Jaggari Sridhar Reddy said that first of all, the farmer's insurance funds should be deposited in the farmer's account, Kalyana Lakshmi should be given one lakh rupees along with a gold weight, a pension of Rs. 6,000 should be given to the elderly and the disabled, a pension of Rs. 2,500 to women, unemployment allowance to the unemployed, and an annual salary of Rs. 12,000 to auto drivers and workers. Similarly, since none of the promises made by the Congress Party during the elections have been fulfilled, a petition was submitted to the Chinnambavi Mandal branch of the Bharatiya Janata Party to implement these promises. BJP Nagarkurnool District General Secretary Jaggari Sridhar Reddy, Chinnambavi Mandal BJP Party President Boggu Kurumayya, Anukali Sampath Kumar, Dasari Narayana, DN Raju, BJP workers and others participated in this program.



## Congress Government Failed to Implement 6 Guarantees, Must Address Public Issues: BJP

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 17 (Indian Chronicle):” Following the call given by the BJP state leadership and directions from the district unit, a representation was submitted on Tuesday regarding local issues. Under the leadership of Habsiguda Division BJP General Secretary Chelloju Ellachari, party leaders submitted petitions to Uppal Tahsildar Pool Singh Chauhan and Deputy Commissioner G. Raju, alleging that the Congress government has deceived the public in the name of its six guarantees. “Speaking on the occasion, former councillor and senior leader Chintoju Srinivasachari expressed anger that the Congress government, which came to power in the state by making several promises during elections, has failed to fully implement even a single assurance so far. He stated that key promises such as a job calendar for youth, unemployment allowance, increased pensions for the elderly, widows and differently-abled, housing schemes for the ????, Rythu Bharosa for farmers, and resolution of land issues are yet to be fulfilled. “He further said that people who voted with trust in the Congress government are now expressing deep disappointment. He also pointed out delays in issuing residence, income, and caste certificates. Additionally, he criticized the GHMC administration for poor sanitation, lack of basic infrastructure, and inadequate street lighting. The leaders demanded that the government take immediate action to resolve these issues.” Former councillor Tindera Hanumantha Rao,



state leaders Vemulakonda Somashekar Goud, Bommagonni Raghupathi Goud, Jillella Ravinder Reddy, Gaddam Sai Kiran, General Secretary Chintakindi Praveen, Bandi Padma, Sadineni Geetha, Gyara Ravinder, Bhanoth Ramesh Naik, Alkapuri Suresh, Katta Bhaskar, Pentavalli Venkanna, Soma Srinivas Gupta, Dharam Venkatesh Gupta, Pisari Shankar, Puchala Ashok, Illitam Narasimha Reddy, Kalmakala Lingam, Uligonda Narayanadasu, Gaddam Venkat Sai and others participated in the program.

## Kabaddi competitions begin today

**Taluka level kabaddi competitions at Chinnambavi mandal center**

**Former MLA Beeram Harshavardhan Reddy was the chief guest**

“BRS Party state leaders Rangineni Abhilash Rao” Wanaparthy correspondent Indian Chronicle “Taluka level Kabaddi competitions will be organized in Chinnambavi Mandal Center to celebrate the Ugadi festival, the beginning of the Telugu year. The cash prize for the first winner in this Kabaddi competition is Rs. 30,000 thousand. The cash prize for the second winner is Rs. 15000 thousand. The first Kabaddi game will be held on 18/3/2026, at 8:00 am in Chinnambavi Mandal Center. The final match will be held on the day of Ugadi festival. There will be a Best Rider and Best Catcher Shield for each match. And there will be a Kabaddi Man of the Series. The phone numbers to contact for the teams are 1) Thagaram Ugra Narasimha 7075422618, 2) Parimala Prakash 9052817433, 3) Jinkala Ramesh 9010099268, these numbers can be contacted. Terms and conditions 1) Every Kabaddi team must be punctual. Any team that does not arrive on time will be crossed. 2) The final of the game The decision is made by the Kabaddi Umpire. 3) The management intervened and expelled the team from the tournament for acting against the spirit of sportsmanship. Removes. 4) Each team should



display sportsmanship and continue playing Kabaddi with brotherly spirit. 5) If you have any doubts On behalf of the management, we request that each and every player take advantage of this opportunity and make an effort to participate by calling the phone numbers mentioned above and getting complete information.

## District hosts MUN, Spell Bee competitions; 11 selected for State meet.

Khaja Sikander Mohiuddin Staff Reporter, Indian Chronicle Karimnagar, March 17: The District Education Department on Tuesday organised district-level Model United Nations (MUN) and Spell Bee competitions for PM SHRI schools, drawing participation from students across the district.

According to officials, 40 students from 22 schools took part in the MUN programme. Of them, 11 students were selected to represent the district at the State-level Model United Nations event.

In the Spell Bee competition, 36 students participated, of whom 10 were shortlisted for the next stage.

Winners in both events were presented with mementos and certificates in recognition of their performance.

District Education Department Quality Co-ordinator Ashok Reddy, DCEB Secretary Bhagavanthaya, and District Science Officer Jayapal Reddy were present on the occasion.

B. Tirupati, A. Kumaraswamy, and R. Pawan Kumar served as judges for the MUN event, while Vinaydhar Raju, Shivakumar, and Manzoor Ali conducted and adjudicated the Spell Bee competition.

Students and teachers from various schools attended the programme.



## Devotional Fervour Marks Renuka Yellamma Idol Installation and Kalyanotsavam

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 17, (Indian chronicle):” The idol installation (Vigraha Pratishthapana) and celestial wedding (Kalyanotsavam) of Sri Sri Renuka Yellamma Thalli were celebrated with grand religious traditionalism at Rajiv Gruhakalpa, Telugu Thalli Nagar, under the Subhash Nagar Division of Quthbullapur constituency. The spiritual event was attended by BRS Party Division President Pole Srikanth, prominent leader Puppala Bhaskar, and senior leader Gubbala Lakshminarayana as chief guests. The leaders performed special prayers and sought the blessings of the deity for the well-being of the community. They later participated in the Kalyanotsavam ritual, overseeing the arrangements alongside a large gathering of devotees. Local leaders and activists, including Pasula Krishna, Shekhar, Swarupa Reddy, Prabhakar Reddy, Pasula Lakshmi, Balakrishna, Ramakrishna, Lakshman, David, and others, played a key role in ensuring the success of the programme. The temple premises resonated with devotional chants and spiritual music throughout the day as devotees turned up in large numbers to witness the auspicious ceremony.”



## Inauguration of Cineverse Multiplex in Uppal Division



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 17 (Indian Chronicle):” A new multiplex named Cineverse was inaugurated in Uppal Division. The event was attended by former corporator of Chilkanagar Division and GHMC Standing Committee member, Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj, as the chief guest. “She extended her congratulations to the multiplex owners Shankar Mudra, Raj Kumar Mudra, and Anil Mudra on the launch of the new facility. Speaking on the occasion, she appreciated the transformation of the former Asian Cine Square into the newly branded Cineverse Multiplex, a Gujarat-based brand, and congratulated the management for the initiative. Later, the proprietors Shankar, Raj Kumar, and Anil Mudra stated that Cineverse Multiplex is a Gujarat-based venture equipped with advanced 4K projectors and Dolby Atmos screens with 7.1 sound system, offering a luxurious cinematic experience. They also mentioned that quality food and beverages will be available at reasonable prices. “They further added that special facilities, including escalator access for senior citizens and the elderly, have been arranged to ensure convenience for all visitors. Among those present at the event were BRS party state leader Praveen Mudiraj, Uppal senior leaders Advocate Mahender, Sukka Kiran, Eddula Kondal Reddy, Kokonda Jagan, Muddam Srinivas Yadav, Kadige Shekhar, Chinna, Shyam Balu, and cinema manager Tyson Vincent, along with others.”

## BSP Leaders Attend Massive Public Meeting; Uppal Constituency President Narsingh Rao Expresses Joy Over Success

Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, March 17: “A grand public meeting was held at Badangpet to commemorate the 92nd birth anniversary of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) Founder President Kanshi Ram. The event witnessed an overwhelming response from party leaders and supporters, marking a significant milestone in the party's outreach efforts. “The meeting was attended by a large delegation under the leadership of Uppal Constituency President Mindrala Narsingh Rao, who expressed his delight over the successful turnout and the enthusiastic participation of the attendees. The gathering demonstrated the unity and strength of BSP cadres in the region. “Prominent leaders who participated included Medchal-Malkajgiri District In-Charge Goud Sudarshan, Ragiri Gnaneshwar, Senior Leader Goud Manjula, Mindrala Anita, Asia Begum, BSP cultural leader Ram Swami, and Mindrala Navya Sri, among others. Their presence highlighted the commitment of BSP leaders at both the district and constituency levels toward party activities and public engagement. “Narsingh Rao appreciated the dedication of all members who traveled from various areas to ensure the success of the event. He emphasized the importance of such gatherings in strengthening the



party's base and connecting with the community, reaffirming the BSP's vision of social justice and empowerment for all. “The public meeting also served as a platform to honor the legacy of Kanshi Ram, inspiring party members and supporters to continue working toward the welfare of marginalized communities and promoting the party's ideals across the region.

## ASHA Workers' Protest Shakes Medchal Collectorate; Tension as Police Detain Protesters



the Collectorate, with loud slogans and heated exchanges. Minor clashes broke out as police tried to restrain the workers from entering the premises. The situation was brought under control after the police detained the protesters. “Government Failed to Address Issues: Jayalakshmi” Speaking before her detention, P. Jayalakshmi, State President of the Telangana ASHA Workers Union (affiliated to CITU), criticized the Congress government for failing to resolve the long-pending issues of ASHA workers even after two years in power. She stated that despite decades of service to the public—especially the poor and working classes—the demand for a fixed monthly wage of ₹18,000 remains unfulfilled. She also demanded that the state government take a decision in the Assembly to ensure fixed wages, insurance, ESI, PF benefits, and ₹50,000 support for work-related expenses. “Exploitation of Labour: Ashok” CITU Medchal District Secretary Erra Ashok alleged that the government is neglecting ASHA workers and exploiting their labour. He demanded job security for ASHA workers and condemned the arrests, warning that such actions would not suppress the movement. Union leaders including district secretary Revathi, president Anita, assistant secretary I. Rajashekar, B. Lingaswamy, P. Ganesh, R. Santosh, M. Naresh, Shankaramma, Rama, Sabia, Padma, Vasantha, Krishna Veni and others participated in the protest.

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 17, (Indian chronicle):” The Medchal District Collectorate witnessed tense scenes as ASHA workers intensified their protest, demanding a minimum wage of ₹18,000, clearance of pending bills, and allocation of funds under the National Health Mission for additional duties. The protest, which began as a 48-hour sit-in on Monday, escalated on Tuesday when the workers attempted to enter the Collectorate premises to press their demands directly before the District Collector. Police intervened and stopped them, leading to a brief scuffle between the protesters and the police personnel. Amid sloganeering and chaos, the situation turned tense for some time as ASHA workers tried to push past security barricades. Police later detained several protesters, shifting them to Bollaram, Jawahar, and other police stations. They were released in the evening on personal bonds. “Tension at Collectorate” The protest created a charged atmosphere at



## Una Dalit flogging case: 5 convicts sentenced to 5 years in jail, Rs 5,000 fine



GNS News Agency, March 17

A Gujarat court on Tuesday sentenced the five men convicted in the 2016 Una flogging case, where four Dalit men were assaulted and paraded by self-styled cow vigilantes, to a maximum of five years' imprisonment, and a fine of Rs 5,000 each. While Ramesh Jadav, Rakesh Joshi, Nagjibhai Vaniya, Pramodgiri Gausvami, and Balvantgiri Gausvami were convicted by a Sessions Court in Veraval in Gujarat's Gir-Somnath district on Monday, the quantum of sentence was declared on Tuesday.

The court of Additional Sessions Judge Jignesh Pandya convicted the men on charges of voluntarily causing hurt using dangerous weapons, wrongful confinement and intentional insult to provoke breach of peace, and humiliating the members of the Scheduled Caste community, etc., under provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The men were also facing a range of other charges, like attempt to murder, criminal conspiracy, as-

sault or criminal force used against a woman with intent to outrage her modesty, etc., but the court did not convict them under these charges.

A senior lawyer connected with the case said that the maximum punishment for the offences for which the five were convicted is five years and a fine. "All five have already spent more time in jail than the maximum punishment, so they are likely to have it set off against the sentence," the lawyer said.

The 2016 incident occurred on the outskirts of Mota Samadhiyala village of Una tehsil of Gir Somnath district on July 11. Vashram Sarvaiya (the complainant in the case) and two of his relatives were skinning dead cows—one of them killed by a lion—when the accused gathered as part of an alleged conspiracy and started beating them, accusing them of cow slaughter. They also allegedly took away the victims' mobile phones. On getting a message that his sons were being beaten up, Balu Sarvaiya reached the spot and allegedly asked the accused to stop, saying that skinning dead cows is their traditional occupation. Balu and his relatives were also allegedly attacked by the accused.

Later, the four victims—Vashram, Bechar, Ashok, and Ramesh—were allegedly taken into wrongful confinement by the accused in their SUV and flogged with wooden/plastic sticks, iron pipes, etc. They were then paraded half-naked in Una town, before being handed over to the police. The accused allegedly recorded this act on their phones and circulated it on social media, which sparked protests in Gujarat and across the country. The CID (Crime) unit of the Gujarat Police investigated the case and filed a chargesheet against 41 people. While one of the accused died during the trial, 35 were acquitted.

## In round 2 of bureaucratic reshuffle, ECI transfers 2 IGs, 12 SPs, 4 commissioners and a deputy commissioner in Bengal

GNS News Agency, March 17

After transferring the chief secretary, home secretary, DGP, Kolkata police commissioner, and other top officials, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Tuesday reshuffled 12 police superintendents, four police commissioners, and a deputy police commissioner in Assembly poll-bound West Bengal. The ECI also deployed 478 central observers, the highest among the five states/UT going to the polls next month. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has protested against such "sweeping" transfers of administrative and police officials, expressing "deep concern and surprise" in a letter written to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, whom she asked to "refrain from adopting such unilateral measures in the future".

On Sunday night and Monday, after the announcement of the poll dates, the ECI replaced Chief Secretary Nandini Chakraborty with Dushyant Nariala. Similarly, Home Secretary Jagdish Prasad Meena was replaced with Sanghamitra Ghosh. The poll body also replaced Director-General of Police Peeyush Pandey with 1992-batch IPS officer Siddh Nath Gupta. Ajay Kumar Nand was appointed police commissioner of Kolkata, replacing Supratim Sarkar. On Tuesday, the EC ordered the posting of Rajesh Kumar Singh as ADG and IGP, South Bengal Region, and K Jayaraman as ADG and IGP, North Bengal. By the same order, it posted Pranav Kumar as Commissioner of Police, Asansol-Durgapur; Akhilesh Kumar Chaturvedi as Commissioner of Police, Howrah; Amit Kumar Singh as Commissioner of Police, Barrackpore; and Sunil Kumar Yadav as Commissioner of Police, Chandannagar.

Yeilwad Shrikant Jagannathrao is the new deputy commissioner for the Central Division of the Kolkata Police. By



a separate order, it posted police superintendents in 12 districts: Pushpa (Barasat police district), Jaspreet Singh (Coochbehar), Surya Pratap Yadav (Birbhum), Rakesh Singh (Islampur police district), Kumar Sunny Raj (Hooghly Rural), Ishani Paul (Diamond Harbour police district), Sachin (Murshidabad police district), Alaknanda Bhowal (Basirhat police district), Anupam Singh (Malda), Angshuman Saha (Purba Medinipur), Surinder Singh (Jangipur police district), and Papiya Sultana (Paschim Medinipur). "The directions of the Commission to be implemented with immediate effect and a compliance report in respect of joining of above officers be sent by 11:00 AM on 18.03.2026. Further, the officers transferred out shall not be posted in any election-related posts till the completion of elections," the ECI order stated. The ECI stated that 478 central observers would be deployed in West Bengal to oversee the Assembly polls. These include 294 general observers—one each for a seat—84 police observers, and 100 expenditure observers for Bengal.

## 11-year-old girl killed near Pune after LPG delivery van 'parked' on slope hits her

GNS News Agency, March 17

An 11-year-old girl was killed in Talegaon Dabhade near Pune on Monday after an LPG cylinder delivery vehicle, allegedly parked recklessly on a slope in a residential area, rolled down and hit her. The police have booked the driver and the deliveryman on charges of culpable homicide. The incident took place around 3 pm on Monday in front of Suyash Green Society on Somatane Gaathan Road in Talegaon Dabhade.

The police identified the deceased as Dnyaneshwari Gurhe, and said that they have booked Budharam Gokulram Bishnoi, 35, the driver, and Omprakash Arjunram Bishnoi, 48, the delivery man. "The vehicle came to the Suyash Green Society area on Monday afternoon. The driver and deliveryman parked the tempo on a slope with the load of the cylinders. The probe suggests that they had not applied the handbrakes and had not even put the vehicle in a gear to ensure that it did not move," an officer from the Talegaon Dabhade police station said. "The vehicle suddenly moved, and 11-year-old Dnyaneshwari, who was standing nearby, was hit from behind and fell due to the impact. She sustained critical injuries. She was rushed to a hospital where she was pronounced dead," the officer added. "Despite be-



ing aware that such reckless parking on a slope can cause injury or death, the suspects parked the vehicle without taking precautions, causing the death of the girl. They fled the scene without taking the girl to the hospital or informing the police," the officer further said. The police have invoked Section 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which pertains to culpable homicide not amounting to murder, and sections 134 (duty of driver in case of accident and injury to a person) and 122 (Leaving vehicle in dangerous position) of the Motor Vehicles Act against the accused, among others.

## In a first, 103 staffers suspended as Maharashtra boards see surge in exam fraud cases



GNS News Agency, March 17

Out of the 3,387 HSC examination centres, over 85 per cent had CCTV coverage. Similarly, of the 5,111 SSC examination centres, around 90 per cent had CCTV

coverage. Out of the 3,387 HSC examination centres, over 85 per cent had CCTV coverage. Similarly, of the 5,111 SSC examination centres, around 90 per cent had CCTV coverage.

At least 103 teaching and non-teaching staff members have been suspended in Maharashtra over malpractice cases in this year's Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and Secondary School Certificate (SSC) board examinations—the highest number recorded in board exams so far. "These many suspensions have never taken place because there was no comprehensive CCTV coverage. The increased coverage has led to more evidence," Nandkumar Bedse, interim chairperson of the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (MSBSHSE), said. Out of the 3,387 HSC examination centres, over 85 per cent had CCTV coverage. Similarly, of the 5,111 SSC examination centres, around 90 per cent had CCTV coverage.

## Several rural habitations in Punjab supplied contaminated water under Jal Jeevan Mission: CAG report



GNS News Agency, March 17

Several rural habitations in Punjab were supplied contaminated water under the Jal Jeevan Mission, despite clear guidelines requiring safe potable water supply, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) 2023–2024 audit report revealed. In its report, the CAG said that the State Water and Sanitation Mission implemented water supply schemes based on contaminated water sources, even though the programme guidelines specifically require priority action in areas affected by hazardous contaminants such as arsenic and fluoride.

The audit found that 1,634 rural habitations in Punjab were affected by water contamination as of April 2020, with piped water being supplied from unsafe sources. Among them, 815 habitations were receiving arsenic-contaminated water and 319 habitations were supplied fluoride-contaminated water, raising serious public health concerns. Although the number of affected habitations gradually declined over the years due to partial mitigation measures, the CAG noted that 1,114 habitations were still receiving contaminated water as of April 2023. Even by April 2024, at least 101 habitations continued to receive contaminated piped water through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs).

The audit pointed out that the JJM operational guidelines require states to prioritise water quality-affected areas and ensure safe drinking water to every rural household, especially in habitations affected by arsenic and fluoride. However, the Punjab government failed to prioritise such areas and continued to rely on contaminated water sources for piped supply. The state government, in its reply in May

2025, acknowledged that mitigation measures for all affected habitations were yet to be completed and said corrective steps were being taken. However, the CAG criticised the government for not explaining why contaminated water sources were initially selected for supplying piped water and why the affected habitations were not prioritised for safe drinking water supply by March 2021, as mandated under the mission guidelines. The audit flagged the issue as a serious lapse in the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission, warning that continued supply of contaminated water could pose significant risks to public health in rural Punjab.

The CAG also pulled up Punjab Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board and the Government of Punjab for releasing financial assistance under the Shagun scheme without obtaining mandatory marriage registration certificates from beneficiaries. According to the CAG's 2023–24 audit report, the scheme provides financial assistance of Rs 31,000 to eligible beneficiaries for the marriage of up to two daughters or for the marriage of a female worker herself, subject to submission of a registered marriage certificate. The audit examined records of 146 beneficiaries who received assistance during 2020–2023 in the test-checked circles. It found that Rs 18.29 lakh was released to 59 beneficiaries, about 40 per cent of the cases, without obtaining registered marriage certificates, which is a clear violation of the scheme's provisions.

In its response in February 2024, the Welfare Board said that certificates issued by religious institutions that solemnised the marriages were considered, citing hardships faced by beneficiaries in registering marriages. The Board also said it would examine waiving the requirement of a registered marriage certificate. However, the CAG termed the explanation unsatisfactory, pointing out that the submission of a registered marriage certificate was mandated by the Board itself, and no formal decision to relax the rule had been taken in any Board meeting. The Punjab government, in its reply in September 2024, said the matter would be placed before the next Board meeting to review the requirement and to seek post-facto approval for cases where assistance was already granted without registered certificates. Rejecting the explanation, the CAG said waiving the requirement of a registered marriage certificate is a risk-prone intervention with potential for fraud, and flagged the lapse as a serious violation of the scheme guidelines.

## Lawrence Bishnoi case: State moves to end HC scrutiny of Punjab Police, says PIL has outlived scope

GNS News Agency, March 17

However, amicus curiae Tanu Bedi urged the court to continue monitoring the matter as a "continuing mandamus", submitting that the case had been under consideration for over two years and that earlier orders had remained undisturbed even before the Supreme Court. The matter came up before a division bench of Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Sanjiv Berry. Senior advocate Puneet Bali appeared for the Punjab government.

At the outset, the state pointed out certain factual corrections in a previous order, submitting that a draft transfer policy for police officers was pending approval with the home department and would subsequently be placed before the Cabinet. It also clarified that additional patrolling vehicles had already been procured and would be operational by March 31. Bali submitted that the PIL, which was initially taken up suo motu by an earlier division bench headed by Justice Anupinder Singh Grewal, who superannuated on March 9 this year, had achieved its primary objectives. He said the proceedings began with a focus on jail reforms but later expanded to cover issues such as a controversial interview of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi from custody, gang-related violence, and policing measures.

Detailing the state's response, Bali said a Special Investigation Team (SIT) had conducted an inquiry into the Bishnoi interview and submitted multiple reports, leading to disciplinary action against erring officials. A deputy superintendent of police was dismissed from service, while departmental proceedings were initiated against others. On concerns relating to law and order, including targeted killings and alleged police encounters, the state informed the court that affidavits had been filed by the director general of police outlining steps taken. These included registration of FIRs, constitution of SITs, and initiation of judicial or magisterial inquiries into encounter incidents, in line with Supreme Court guidelines. The court was also apprised of measures such as the establishment of an anti-gangster police station with statewide jurisdiction, the introduction of helplines, the formulation of standard operating procedures to tackle extortion calls, and proposals for installing over 12,000 CCTV cameras across urban areas. A manpower audit and augmentation of patrolling infrastructure were also underway, with a deadline of March 31.

Bali argued that the scope of the PIL had expanded



excessively over time. "This cannot be an open-ended proceeding monitoring every aspect of policing in the state," he submitted, urging the bench to close the matter after perusing the reports placed on record, including those in sealed cover. The hearing also saw submissions from counsel representing a dismissed police officer, DDP Gursher Singh, who contended that he had been made a scapegoat in the SIT probe and that his challenge to the dismissal was pending. His counsel claimed that Bishnoi's custody was being supervised by the anti-gangster task force and not the Crime Investigation Agency as alleged. The bench, however, indicated that such issues would be taken up separately and should not prejudice pending proceedings. Amicus curiae Tanu Bedi, however, opposed closure of the proceedings, submitting that the PIL had evolved in response to emerging concerns flagged by the court itself and could not be viewed as an unwarranted expansion. Bedi said the matter had been monitored for over two years, during which multiple orders had addressed jail reforms, the conduct of police officials, and broader law and order issues, all of which had been tested before the Supreme Court without any interference. Bedi further suggested that, given the continuity and complexity of the proceedings, the court may consider retaining institutional memory by associating a judge who had earlier dealt with the matter, noting that one of the judges from the earlier bench continued to be part of the high court. Taking note of the submissions, the bench said it would consider whether continued monitoring was required. The court deferred further hearing to March 24, when pending applications in the matter are also scheduled to be taken up.

## Man arrested for throwing his wife in the path of a running train at Mumbai's Mulund railway station

GNS News Agency, March 17

The Mumbai Government Railway Police (GRP) Monday arrested a 42-year-old electrician for allegedly killing his wife by pushing her in the path of an oncoming train at the Mulund railway station in front of their son Saturday.

According to the police, the accused, identified as Raju Gupta, frequently fought with his wife, Pushpa, 36, who also filed two police complaints against him in the past. An officer said the incident took place on Saturday when Raju Gupta, Pushpa and their younger son, 13, were at the Mulund Police Station when the couple began fighting. "It was during the argument that Gupta pushed her on the tracks in a fit of rage. She was run over by a Kalyan local," an officer said. Soon after the incident, Gupta and his son took a train and fled to Surat. The railway police were alerted about the incident, following which a murder case was registered, and the police launched a manhunt for Gupta. They traced him to Surat, from where he was placed under arrest. An officer said that during interrogation, they found that the couple who fought frequently and the deceased had lodged two Non-Cognisable (NC) complaints at the local Mulund Police Station. She had also moved to UP with their elder son and was eventually convinced to return home by her brother, who brokered peace between the couple.

The police also found that the woman's brother, Kamlesh, who is in the Indian Army, had come to the couple's Mulund residence a few days ago. When he realised that Gupta was still harassing his sister, he de-



cidated to leave with her and the couple's elder son and went to Mulund Railway Station Saturday. At the station, Kamlesh realised Gupta, who was at his house, had stolen his bank cards and Army ID. When Kamlesh and his elder nephew went to recover it, Gupta locked them in their house and went to the Mulund Railway Station along with the younger son to convince his wife to return home. After his wife refused to return home, he allegedly pushed her. An officer said the accused was produced before the court and remanded to police custody. In a separate case, GRP registered an attempt to murder case against an unidentified person who flung an 11-year-old boy selling pens in local trains from the train at the GTB Nagar Railway Station. The boy sustained injuries and was admitted to the Sion Hospital. The incident took place on March 14, and the police registered an attempt to murder case in the matter.

## Rs 1.40 lakh crore debt looming, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu strips cabinet perks, defers 20% salary

GNS News Agency, March 17

A day ahead of its budget session, the cash-strapped Himachal Pradesh government on Tuesday withdrew all 'cabinet rank' facilities accorded to chairpersons, vice-chairpersons, and other functionaries of various boards, corporations, and commissions, as well as principal and political advisers to the chief minister. The government also decided to defer 20 per cent of their salaries and monthly emoluments till September 30, 2026.

The decision, conveyed through a notification issued by the General Administration Department (GAD), comes into immediate effect. All administrative secretaries have been directed to ensure prompt implementation of the orders and to inform officials concerned under their jurisdiction. As per the notification by Kulvinder Singh, Joint Secretary, GAD, the 'cabinet rank' status extended to several appointees—including chairmen, vice-chairmen, deputy chairmen of boards and corporations, and principal and political advisers—has been withdrawn forthwith as part of efforts to streamline administrative protocol and reduce expenditure.

Sources in the government said Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu took the decision in view of the prevailing financial situation of the state, which is grappling with a debt burden exceeding Rs 1.40 lakh crore. The move is being seen as part of a broader strategy to rationalise non-essential expenditure and improve fiscal discipline. The government has been under increasing pressure to initiate structural reforms, particularly after the 16th Finance Com-



mission reportedly recommended discontinuation of the Revenue Deficit Grant (RDG) for Himachal Pradesh for the financial year 2026-27. The potential withdrawal of this crucial grant has raised concerns over the state's financial sustainability, prompting the administration to explore austerity measures. Officials indicated that the latest move is aligned with the government's stated objective of moving towards a more self-reliant Himachal by curbing avoidable expenses. The withdrawal of cabinet rank perks—often seen as a symbol of status and accompanied by additional benefits—is expected to result in significant savings for the exchequer. The move assumes significance as the Sukh-led government prepares to present its budget, with expectations of more cost-cutting measures and policy shifts in the coming days. The budget session will commence on March 18 and will continue till March 21.

## Karnataka women's commission seeks report into sexual harassment allegation against Mangaluru police inspector

GNS News Agency, March 17

The officer has also been accused of harassing other women, with three alleged victims reportedly sharing their experiences with the media. The officer has also been accused of harassing other women, with three alleged victims reportedly sharing their experiences with the media. The Karnataka State Commission for Women (KSCW) has sought a detailed report from the Mangaluru City police after a woman filed a complaint alleging sexual harassment by a police inspector. The accused officer, Sandesh P G, is attached to the Moodabidri Police Station. The Commission took note of the matter after a Kannada news channel aired a report on the allegations.

The woman has also filed complaints with the Karnataka Chief Secretary, Shalini Rajneesh, the Director General of Police, M A Saleem, and the state Home Minister, G Parameshwara. According to her complaint, the woman submitted a CD containing more than 250 audio and video files as evidence. She also alleged that her husband had earlier been wrongfully arrested and kept in custody. She alleged that the inspector demanded sexual favours from her and sought Rs 25 lakh, threatening to in-

clude her husband, a social activist, in the "rowdy-sheeter" list if she refused. The officer has also been accused of harassing other women, with three alleged victims reportedly sharing their experiences with the media. The victims further claimed they were threatened inside the police station and warned that false cases would be filed against them if they did not comply. KSCW has written to the Mangaluru City police commissioner, directing that a report be submitted. The Commission said the officer's conduct, if proven, would amount to serious misconduct, dereliction of duty, and misuse of power by a government official tasked with protecting women. The Commission has asked the police to conduct a proper inquiry, take disciplinary action if the allegations are substantiated, and submit a report at the earliest. In a separate complaint, another woman has also accused Sandesh of harassment. She alleged that her husband had worked as a driver for the officer's private car, and that the family was subjected to harassment by him. She said she had earlier complained to Manoj Kumar, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Mangaluru. Kumar later apologised to the family and assured them they would not face further trouble.

## Cops carry out raids against LPG black marketing at 5 sites in Delhi, 5 held

GNS News Agency, March 17

As the Capital remains gripped with panic over LPG shortage amid ongoing conflict in West Asia, the Delhi Police have initiated a crackdown against hoarding, black marketing, and illegal refilling of cylinders. Five people have been arrested after raids at five sites in the last few days, officers said on Monday. In the first such action, the Anti-Extortion Cell of the Delhi Police Crime Branch on Sunday conducted a raid at Guruji Indane Gas Service, an agency in Outer Delhi's Mundka area, and recovered 610 commercial and domestic gas cylinders allegedly kept illegally on the premises. Officers said these cylinders belonged to multiple companies, including Indane, Bharat Gas and HP Gas.

Of the 610 cylinders recovered, 197 were filled, while 392 were empty commercial cylinders. Police also found 21 small domestic cylinders and 26 industrial cylinders with a capacity of 47 kg belonging to Indane. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Sanjeev Yadav said that the investigation revealed that the agency was authorised to distribute only commercial Indane cylinders. However, cylinders of other gas companies were also allegedly hoarded at the site.

As per the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Yadav added, the distributor's Indane stock was supposed to be "nil" as of March 15, yet 133 filled commercial Indane cylinders were found during the raid. The owner and the manager of the agency are absconding. In East Delhi's Shakarpur, a 46-year-old man was apprehended for allegedly running an illegal LPG refilling operation and black marketing domestic gas cylinders. According to a senior police officer, information was received on Sunday about illegal LPG refilling at a shop in Shakarpur. The tip-off was recorded through a Daily Diary entry at Shakarpur police station, following which a team led by the Station House Officer conducted a raid. During the operation, a man identified as Yogesh Gupta, a resident of Shakarpur, was found at the premises. During questioning, Gupta allegedly admitted that he had been refilling LPG gas from large domestic cylinders into smaller cylinders at his shop for the past few days without any licence or authorisation. Police recovered two 14.2 kg domestic LPG cylinders, three 5 kg cylinders, a gas transfer pipe, an LPG refilling machine and a weighing machine from the spot.

A case has been registered under the Essential Commodities Act and relevant sections of the BNS, officers said. In Northwest Delhi, at Rohini's Vijay Vihar area, a 38-year-old shopkeeper was found selling gas at Rs 110 per litre. An officer said the accused, identified as Pushpendra, was allegedly illegally transferring gas from large cylinders to small cylinders and selling it from a dilapidated house located on Rithala Phirni Road. Police recovered 15 filled cylinders of Hindustan Petroleum and two empty cylinders of Bharat Petroleum, along with a motorcycle used to transport the cylinders, four gas-weighing machines, and refilling tools from his possession.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rohini) Shashank Jaiswal said on March 12, the local police were patrolling the area. In a lane on Phirni Road, the police noticed the smell of gas. When they checked a dilapidated house there, they saw a man illegally transferring gas from a large cylinder to smaller cylinders. The police immediately caught him. In the fourth such crackdown in East Delhi at Shahdara's Gandhi Nagar area, a 55-year-old man was



caught for allegedly illegally transferring LPG gas from a domestic cylinder into smaller cylinders at a shop in Gali number 5, Gurudwara Gali on March 13. The accused, identified as Ram Vilas Sharma, allegedly continued the activity despite being questioned and failed to produce any licence or permission. Another officer said the police seized two large cylinders (one filled, one empty), six medium cylinders, one small cylinder, two filling machines and a weighing machine from the shop. In the fifth incident, the police nabbed two shopkeepers identified as Lokesh Kumar Yadav and Ajeet Kumar, both aged 37, from North Delhi's Bawana area for allegedly illegally refilling and selling LPG cylinders at inflated prices on Saturday. Both were booked under Section 287 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Sections 3, 7, and 6A of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. Police seized large cylinders, small cylinders, and pipes used in the operation, warning against hazardous and illegal LPG trade.

## Khar police officer caught taking Rs 1.5 lakh bribe to 'fix' court-ordered property dispute report: ACB

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) of the Mumbai police said it arrested an assistant police inspector of the Khar police station after catching him red-handed accepting a bribe of Rs 1.5 lakh on Monday. Tushar Kale, 40, had been directed by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Bandra to investigate a property dispute case and submit a report. He allegedly demanded Rs 3 lakh initially to favour the bribery complainant's brother in his report. The brother had moved the court regarding the property dispute. After recording the statement of the complainant's brother in the property case, Kale told him to "look at us" as well, according to the police. When the complainant approached Kale following this comment, the assistant police inspector demanded a bribe of Rs 3 lakh for submitting the inquiry report in favour of his brother. However, as he did not want to bribe the public servant, the complainant approached the ACB on January 19 with a complaint.

## "Unsafe" 30-year-old footbridge collapses in North Delhi, woman aged around 50 dead

GNS News Agency, March 17

An iron foot overbridge over a drain in North Delhi's Roop Nagar collapsed Tuesday, leaving a woman aged around 50 dead, officials said. The body of the woman, believed to be about 50, was retrieved from the drain with the help of personnel from the Delhi Fire Service, the National Disaster Response Force and Boat Club divers, officials said. Video of the rescue operation has surfaced on social media.

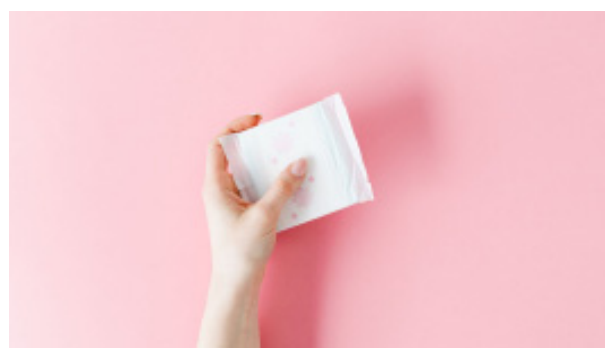
The incident occurred around 9 a.m. as local residents were crossing the bridge, according to officials. As it began to collapse, people rushed to safety, witnesses said. However, the woman, suspected to be a beggar, became trapped and fell with the structure into the drain, an official said. "It was a steel truss foot overbridge located near Mother Dairy in North Delhi's Roop Nagar across the Najafgarh Drain. The bridge is around 30 years old and had already been declared unsafe, with barricades and warning signages in place," said a senior government official. However, it was reportedly still being used by the public despite restrictions, officials added. A Delhi Fire Service official said a call about the collapse was received around 9:15 a.m. Rescue teams, along with local police, conducted a search and located the woman under debris after nearly two hours, the official said. She was taken to a hospital, where doctors declared her dead. A senior police officer said that, prima facie, it appears only the woman was trapped. A search operation to determine whether anyone else was caught in the collapse was underway, the officer said. Teams from civic authorities were



also called to remove debris from the drain. Preliminary assessment suggests that the collapse occurred due to structural deterioration of the ageing bridge, officials said. "The site has been secured and further details are being ascertained," the official added.

Meanwhile, the Irrigation and Flood Control (I&FC) Department has constituted a three-member committee to probe the incident and submit a report within 48 hours. The officer said the bridge's dilapidated condition may have led to the collapse. Meanwhile, Aam Aadmi Party leader Saurabh Bhardwaj said in a post on X that an iron bridge had collapsed in Roop Nagar and that several people were feared dead. Senior officials from Delhi Police and civic authorities reached the site, and an investigation has been initiated, officials said.

## No sanitary pads for women inmates, overcrowding in Punjab jails: CAG



GNS News Agency, March 17

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has pulled up the Government of Punjab for failing to provide the prescribed number of sanitary napkins to women inmates in state prisons. According to its 2023-24 audit report, which was tabled in the state Assembly on Monday, the CAG flagged that most jails in Punjab did not supply even the minimum required sanitary pads to eligible women prisoners between 2020 and 2023, raising concerns about menstrual hygiene and basic welfare inside prisons. As per the October 2015 clothing scale notification issued by the state government, women inmates up to the age of 50 are entitled to 5-10 sanitary pads per month, based on the recommendation of the Medical Officer. However, the CAG found that 12 out of 18 test-checked jails, housing between 839 and 1,271 women inmates, failed to provide even the minimum five pads per month during the period under review. The audit further noted that the average supply of sanitary pads per eligible woman inmate was far below the prescribed norm in 11 of the 12 jails examined, with District Jail Mansa being the only exception.

Due to the shortage, women inmates in Central Jails at Amritsar and Faridkot and Women Jail Ludhiana were forced to purchase sanitary pads from jail canteens, the report said. The government, in its response in March 2024, stated that sanitary pads were being supplied based on recommendations of Medical Officers and that additional demand was being supplemented through donations from NGOs and purchases from jail canteens.

However, the CAG termed the reply unsatisfactory, noting that none of the jails maintained records to show the number of sanitary pads issued per inmate, those received as donations, or those distributed on medical recommendation. The audit concluded that the short supply compromised menstrual hygiene among women prisoners, highlighting gaps in the prison administration's compliance with the state's own welfare guidelines. "Overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure in Punjab jails" The report also flagged

overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and poor medical facilities in Punjab jails, reports news agency PTI. According to the audit report, the administration took six years to adopt the framework outlined in the model prison manual, 2016 and notify the Punjab Prison Rules, 2022. Despite recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee, overcrowding in jails persisted, the report noted.

There are 26 jails of various categories in the state: 10 central jails, seven district jails, two women jails at Bathinda and Ludhiana, one borstal jail at Ludhiana, one open air jail at Nabha (Patiala), and five sub jails. According to the report, the capacity of 23,638 male inmates, the occupancy was 24,101 in 2021-22. Similarly, the occupancy was 28,481 in 2022-23 against the capacity of 23,658 male inmates. The report pointed out that the problem of overcrowding was a major deterrent in making basic facilities available to the inmates.

Audit of records of the test-checked jails disclosed that among others, prolonged custody of undertrial prisoners due to missed court hearings and delay in construction or renovation of new jails had notably contributed to the increase in overcrowding year after year, thereby worsening the already inadequate availability of facilities for jail inmates in Punjab. The government, in its response, said building additional barracks in existing six jails, and construction of a new high-security jail at Ludhiana and a new district jail at Mohali were under process and this would increase the authorised capacity. Further, the government said that a weekly review of the jail population was being assessed by the State Level Committee headed by the inspector general (prisons) and on the basis of such reviews, from January 2021 to December 2023, 17,916 inmates had been transferred from overcrowded jails to less crowded ones. The government further apprised that all adult male prisoners except lifers, as far as practicable, may be allowed to stay in the district or central prisons nearest to their home district in respect of convict inmates. However, the CAG report said the government's reply was not in conformity with the actual situation on the ground, as 6,204 male inmates and 203 female inmates were still housed in jails in excess of authorised capacity despite having vacancies in other jails and only 5,017 inmates (806 during 2021-22 and 4,211 during 2022-23), out of total 17,916 inmates, were transferred to ease overcrowding. It also found that toilet facilities were inadequate in 74 per cent of male and 63 per cent of female barracks, leading to unhygienic conditions. Health care facilities also exhibited 72 per cent shortage of hospital beds and 60 per cent shortage of medical staff, the report said. This necessitated the treatment of 45,497 inmates in Civil Hospitals outside the jail, thereby enabling 22 prisoners to escape, it added.

## Ukrainian, US nationals accused of 'conspiring to carry out terror activities' using 'drones from Europe': What the NIA has found

GNS News Agency, March 17

A United States national was detained by the Bureau of Immigration at Kolkata airport, and three Ukrainians each were detained at airports in Lucknow and Delhi. The National Investigation Agency (NIA), the country's top anti-terrorism agency, registered an FIR that same day. An extended remand until March 27 was granted on Monday by a Patiala House court in Delhi, and the seven arrested persons are currently in the NIA's custody. This is what is known about the arrests so far.

Who are these seven individuals?

According to documents submitted by the NIA in court, the US national has been identified as Matthew Aaron Van Dyke. The six Ukrainians have been identified as Hurba Petro, Slyviak Taras, Ivan Sukmanovskiy, Stefankiv Marian, Honcharuk Maksim, and Kaminskyi Viktor. According to the FIR registered by the NIA on March 13, 14 Ukrainians had entered India on tourist visas on separate dates, and had flown to Guwahati. The six Ukrainians who have been arrested appear to be part of this group of 14. It is not immediately clear where the American who has been arrested fits into the Ukrainian group. From Guwahati, the Ukrainians had allegedly travelled to Mizoram without the requisite document, that is the Restricted Area Permit (RAP), also known as Protected Area Permit (PAP).

They had then allegedly crossed the border illegally into Myanmar with the intention of carrying out a "pre-scheduled training for Myanmar-based Ethnic Armed Groups (EAGs)", the NIA has said in its FIR. These EAGs, according to the NIA, are known to support insurgent organisations operating in India in the domain of "drone warfare, drone operations, assembly and jamming technology etc., targeting the Myanmar Junta". The seven men were arrested in a coordinated operation by multiple NIA teams. They have been accused under Section 18 (punishment for being part

of a terrorist conspiracy) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), along with sections. All the suspects were produced before the Duty Magistrate on Saturday, and were remanded in three days' custody of the NIA. In these three days, the accused persons were questioned thoroughly. The Indian Express has learnt. The accused were produced again in court for extension of the NIA's custody.

What has the investigation found so far?

According to sources, the NIA's investigation has found evidence that suggest that multiple consignments of drones from Europe were delivered by the accused persons to individuals and groups in Mizoram. The NIA submitted before the court that the accused persons have disclosed during interrogation that they were in "direct touch and abetted in their terrorist illegal activities by unknown terrorists carrying AK47 Rifles". The NIA has also claimed that the questioning of the accused persons has confirmed that they had travelled to Mizoram without requisite documents and entered Myanmar illegally. They had "conducted training for EAGs on more than one, in addition to illegally importing huge consignments of drones from Europe to Myanmar via India for the use of EAGs", the NIA said. These groups were known to be supporting some proscribed Indian Insurgent Groups "by way of supplying weapons and other terrorist hardware and training them", the NIA claimed. What does the NIA expect to achieve through further custody of the accused persons? The NIA has told the court in its remand papers that it needs the custody of the accused persons "to collect more evidence to unearth the overall conspiracy of the present case hatched by the accused persons and their accomplices". It has said that it wants to "unearth the route opted" by the accused persons to illegally enter into Myanmar, and to "apprehend the close unknown associates still at large who are likely to surface after technical analysis of the data/social media accounts being extracted and examined".

## India condemns Pakistan airstrikes on Kabul hospital



GNS News Agency, March 17

India on Tuesday (March 17, 2026) "unequivocally" condemned Pakistan's alleged airstrikes on the Omid Addiction Treatment Hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan, calling it a "cowardly and unconscionable act of violence". The statement released by the Ministry of External Affairs said the Monday night (March 16) strike "has claimed the lives of a large number of civilians in a facility which can by no means be justified as a military target", adding that Pakistan is "now

trying to dress up a massacre as a military operation".

The Afghan Taliban government says at least 400 people were killed and 250 injured in the Monday night attack, but Islamabad denied having targeted any such facility, saying it had struck military installations and "terrorist support infrastructure". The statement by the MEA further said: "This heinous act of aggression by Pakistan is also a blatant assault on Afghanistan's sovereignty and a direct threat to regional peace and stability. It reflects Pakistan's persistent pattern of reckless behaviour and its repeated attempts to externalise internal failures through increasingly desperate acts of violence beyond its borders." India has urged the international community to hold the perpetrators of the act accountable and ensure that "the wanton targeting by Pakistan of civilians in Afghanistan ceases without delay". "India extends its deepest condolences to the bereaved families, wishes a swift recovery to those injured, and stands in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan in this tragic moment. We also reiterate our unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan," the ministry said. The strike is the latest in a bitter conflict between the two Islamic nations that has flared during the holy month of Ramadan.

## I was thrown into jail, with no communication with my legal team or family, says Sonam Wangchuk



GNS News Agency, March 17

Ladakhi activist Sonam Wangchuk said on Tuesday (March 17, 2026) that he was "bundled and thrown into jail" with no communication with his family and legal team for almost ten days. Mr. Wangchuk was released from Jodhpur Central Jail on Saturday (March 14, 2026), after the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) revoked with "immediate effect" his 170-day detention under the National Security Act (NSA). He was detained under the provisions of the National Security Act (NSA) last year after police took

action against his protest demanding Statehood and Sixth Schedule status for the Union Territory of Ladakh.

In his first interaction after his release, Mr. Wangchuk said, both the government and people have to be flexible on demands. "Talks are a give and take process, both sides have to be flexible and considerate," he said and warned, unnecessary prolonging of the dialogue, would hamper meaningful conversation. "I never wanted to do agitations, was forced to sit on protests. We don't want to. We should join hands and set an example," he added. Questioning government's move to arrest protesters from Ladakh, Mr. Wangchuk claimed that people who went to donate blood were detained, and two people were still in jail. Dozens of local residents, including many of Mr. Wangchuk's supporters, were rounded up in Leh over a 24-hour period following the violent protests in Leh in September 2025. Commenting on his release from jail, he said, "The advances from the government was possible due to our status in the court." "I was well prepared to spend 12-months in jail," said Mr. Wangchuk. Talking about reason behind his detention he said, "Misunderstandings crept into the hierarchy and led them to believe that I am wrong. Linguistic misunderstandings led to the grounds of detention."

## India's second LPG carrier 'Nanda Devi' arrives at Gujarat port

GNS News Agency, March 17

India's second LPG carrier 'Nanda Devi' arrived safely at Vadinar port in Gujarat on Tuesday (March 17, 2026), carrying 46,500 metric tonnes of gas after navigating the Strait of Hormuz amid the West Asia conflict, an official said. The first ship, 'Shivalik', reached Mundra Port in Gujarat on Monday (March 16, 2026).

'Nanda Devi' has docked at Vadinar port in Devbhumi Dwarka district, and preparations were being made to shift the LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) to the daughter ship, Deendayal Port Authority Chairman Sushil Kumar Singh told reporters. "A consignment of 46,500 metric tonnes of LPG has been brought in; this cargo will be transferred to a vessel named BW Birch, which will subsequently proceed to discharge portions of the consignment at the ports of Ennore (Tamil Nadu) and Haldia (West Bengal) along the eastern coast," he said. "The transfer process takes place at a rate of 1,000 tonnes per hour; consequently, the entire operation is expected to take two days to complete," he added. The port authority at Vadinar is tasked with ensuring that these operations are executed with maximum efficiency, as per the directive of the Ministry of Ports, Mr. Singh said.

"This constitutes a standard operational procedure that we have consistently carried out here at Vadinar. However, the current directive issued by the ministry mandates that incoming LPG vessels be accorded top priority; we must ensure that their transfer and discharge processes are completed as expeditiously as possible," he said. All relevant operational parameters are to be monitored rigorously, with multiple agencies involved in the process, the official noted. "We visited the vessel and met with its crew members. The 'daughter vessel' is currently en route; upon its arrival, it will berth alongside the 'mother vessel' Nanda Devi, at which point the ship-to-ship transfer operation will commence," he said. Mr. Singh said the Ministry has issued a clear directive stipulating that all future incoming LPG vessels must also be handled on a priority basis, strictly adhering to all safety protocols and avoiding the adoption of



any shortcuts. "Our objective is to eliminate any procedural bottlenecks and ensure that the cargo is discharged as quickly as possible," he added.

Gujarat minister Jitu Vaghani on Monday (March 16) said that LPG carrier Shivalik safely reached Mundra port from Strait of Hormuz amid the West Asia crisis due to the strong diplomatic relations of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with world leaders. The ship passed safely through the Strait of Hormuz despite global unrest and tensions involving Iran, Israel and other countries, he told the State Assembly. India imports about 88% of its crude oil, 50% of natural gas and 60% of LPG needs. Before the U.S.-Israel strikes on Iran on February 28 and Tehran's retaliation, more than half of India's crude imports, about 30% of gas and 85-90% of LPG imports came from Middle East countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The conflict has led to a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, the main transit route for Gulf energy supplies. While India has partly offset crude supply disruptions by sourcing oil from countries including Russia, gas supplies have been curtailed to industrial users and LPG availability to commercial establishments such as hotels and restaurants has been reduced. Currently, 22 Indian-flagged vessels with 611 seafarers remain in the western Persian Gulf and efforts are on to secure safe passage for them, as per officials.

## Rashid Khan, Afghanistan cricketers condemn deadly Kabul air strike by Pakistan

GNS News Agency, March 17

Several Afghanistan cricketers have spoken out against the civilian casualties reported in Kabul following airstrikes by Pakistan, expressing grief and calling for justice. Afghanistan's Deputy Government spokesman said early Tuesday (March 17, 2026) the death toll from an airstrike by Pakistan that hit a hospital treating drug users in the Afghan capital Kabul has increased to 400. Pakistan had earlier denied that it had hit a hospital.

The latest bombardment highlights rapidly deteriorating relations between Pakistan and the Taliban administration as both sides continue to trade accusations over security issues. Rashid Khan took to X to express his outrage, saying he was "deeply saddened by the latest reports of civilian casualties in Kabul". The all-rounder added that targeting civilian homes, educational facilities, or medical infrastructure, whether intentional or accidental, amounts to a war crime.

"I am deeply saddened by the latest reports of civilian casualties as a result of Pakistani airstrikes in Kabul. Targeting civilian homes, educational facilities or medical infrastructure, either intentional or by mistake, is a war crime. The sheer disregard for human lives, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, is sickening and deeply concerning. It will only fuel division and hatred. I call upon the UN and other human rights agencies to thoroughly investigate this latest atrocity and hold the perpetrators to account. I



stand with my Afghan people in this difficult time. We shall heal, and we will rise as a nation. We always do. Inshallah!" Rashid Khan wrote. Veteran all-rounder Mohammad Nabi shared a video on X, writing, "Tonight in Kabul, hope was extinguished at a hospital. Young men seeking treatment were murdered in a bombing by the Pakistani military regime. Mothers waited at the gates, calling their sons' names. On the 28th night of Ramadan, their lives were cut short." Similarly, Ibrahim Zadran, who is the captain of the T20I side, condemned the air strike by Pakistan. "Tonight I heard a massive explosion here in Kabul. Moments later, we saw flames rising into the sky from a hospital. Our brothers who intended to fast tomorrow are now gone, or wounded. My thoughts are with every family grieving tonight. Kabul is in pain. We pray for justice."

## UAE briefly closes airspace as Israel strikes Beirut, Tehran

GNS News Agency, March 17

Dubai: A drone attack in the United Arab Emirates sparked a fire at an oil tank farm Tuesday in Fujairah, an emirate on the country's east coast with the Gulf of Oman that has been repeatedly targeted, the state-run WAM news agency reported. It said no one had been injured in the blast.

This came after a brief closure of the UAE's airspace when the military reported it was "responding to missile and drone threats from Iran." Also on Tuesday, the Israeli military said it had launched new attacks across both Tehran and Beirut, with those on the Lebanese capital targeting Hezbollah militants. On Monday, US President Donald Trump said "numerous countries" have told him "they're on the way" to help police the Strait of Hormuz. But he also suggested some countries' reluctance showed a lack of reciprocity in defence agreements with the United States.

The war has killed at least 1,300 people in Iran, at least

850 in Lebanon and 12 in Israel, according to officials in those countries. The US military says 13 US service members have been killed and about 200 wounded. In Iran's capital, Tehran, witnesses heard airstrikes in the night even as heavy rain and a thunderstorm swept across the area.

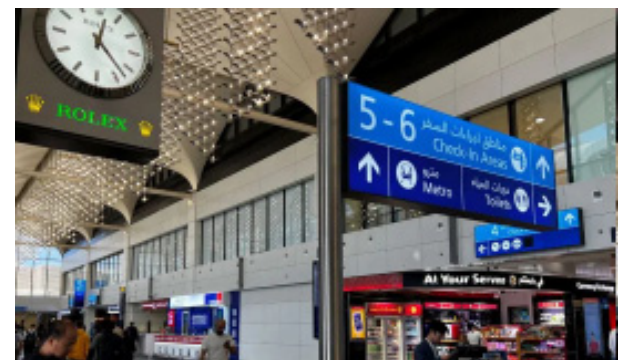
Saudi Arabia's Defence Ministry says it's intercepting a dozen drones on Tuesday morning over the country's vast Eastern Province, home to oil infrastructure. A fire broke out in an industrial area on Tuesday morning in Qatar after a missile was intercepted over the gas-rich country, the interior ministry said. An Associated Press journalist in Qatar heard explosions as air defences near Doha worked to intercept incoming Iranian fire on Tuesday morning. Qatar's Defence Ministry said it intercepted a missile attack on the country a short time later. In the United Arab Emirates, Dubai residents received a missile alert around the same time.

GNS News Agency, March 17

New Delhi: Dubai Airport on Monday announced to temporarily suspend all flights as a precautionary safety measure, after a drone struck a fuel tank in the area. "Flights at DXB (Dubai International Airport) are temporarily suspended as a precautionary measure to ensure the safety of all passengers and staff. Please contact your airlines for the latest flight updates. Further updates will be shared as they become available," Dubai Airport said in a post on X.

The Dubai Civil Aviation Authority said travellers are advised to contact their respective airlines for the latest updates regarding their flights. "Further updates will be announced through official channels as soon as they become available," the Dubai Media Office wrote on X. A fire broke out near Dubai International Airport on Monday after a drone struck a fuel tank, prompting a rapid response from emergency teams and the temporary suspension of flights. Authorities said Dubai Civil Defence crews were immediately deployed to tackle the blaze and that no injuries were reported as safety measures were activated across the vicinity.

Dubai Civil Defence crews were immediately deployed to tackle the blaze and that no injuries were reported as safety measures were activated across the



vicinity. Meanwhile, an Emirates flight bound for Dubai from Kochi returned to the airport here on Monday following a security incident reported from the destination airport. "Flight EK533 departed Cochin International Airport (CIAL) at 04.30 am with 325 people on board. En route, the aircraft was directed to turn back due to the sudden closure of Dubai International Airport," a CIAI spokesperson said. Meanwhile, the UAE's defence ministry has reported six deaths since the conflict began – four civilians and two military personnel. The soldiers died in a helicopter crash that was linked to a technical issue.

## Over 400 killed in Pakistani airstrike on Kabul hospital, Taliban claims

GNS News Agency, March 17

Kabul: Pakistani airstrike on a major addiction treatment hospital in Kabul killed more than 400 people and injured at least 250 others, Taliban officials and local media reported, in what could become one of the deadliest incidents in the Afghan capital. According to officials of the Taliban-led government, the strike targeted the 2,000-bed Umid addiction treatment hospital in Kabul at around 9 p.m. Taliban Deputy spokesman Mullah Hamdullah Fitrat said that the attack caused extensive destruction across the facility. "Pakistan's military regime bombed the 2,000-bed addicts' treatment hospital named Umid, destroying much of the hospital and raising fears of even higher casualties than estimated," Fitrat wrote on X, adding that the number of deaths had reached around 400 while as many as 250 others were wounded.

Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid also condemned the incident in a post on X, saying the victims were largely vulnerable civilians. "Innocent civilians and addicts who were mostly killed last night at the 2,000-bed hospital due to the bombing by (Pakistani military circles). Indeed, we belong to God and to Him we shall return," he wrote. Officials from Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health said emergency teams rushed to the scene overnight as rescuers searched through damaged sections of the hospital. Ministry spokesman Sharaf Zaman said at least 170 wounded patients were initially transferred to nearby medical facilities. "Rescue operations are still ongoing, and the death toll may rise," Zaman told reporters, adding that several sections of the hospital had been destroyed, local me-



dia reported as rescue teams battled fires and attempted to retrieve bodies from the rubble.

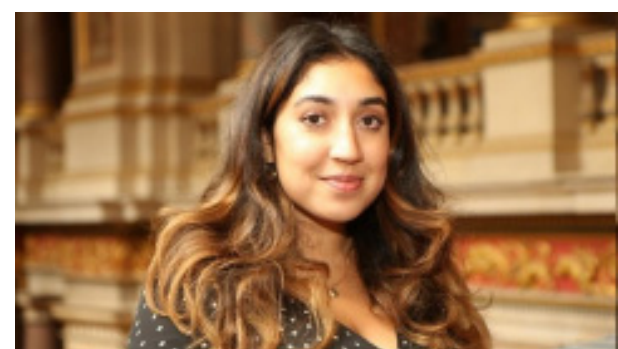
According to Khaama Press, the strike has been described by officials as one of the deadliest attacks in Kabul in recent years. The outlet reported that international figures quickly reacted to the incident. Richard Bennett, the UN Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, expressed concern over the reported civilian casualties and urged restraint between Kabul and Islamabad. Former Afghan peace negotiator Abdullah Abdullah also condemned the attack, calling it a violation of international law and urging that disputes be resolved through dialogue. Former US special representative for Afghan reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad similarly voiced concern about the civilian toll and called for humanitarian assistance for victims.

## U.K. military bases given to U.S. to reduce impact of war on millions of Indians in Gulf, says U.K. Deputy High Commissioner

GNS News Agency, March 17

Global energy markets were rattled within days of the outbreak of the war between Iran and U.S.-Israel, with oil prices surging sharply amid fears of further supply disruptions. In a brief chat with The Hindu, Shalini Medepalli, the acting British Deputy High Commissioner for Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry, spoke about the unfolding crisis in West Asia, which severely hurts the State as well as other parts of the country, along with its decision to engage with Kerala under the India-U.K. Comprehensive Trade Agreement (CETA), which offers India access to the U.K. market.

The U.K. recently decided to allow the U.S. to use its military bases to strike Iranian missile sites, hours after its base in Cyprus was hit by a drone. Has the U.K. government assessed the impact on the expat population in the Gulf, including 3.5 million Keralaites? Firstly, our thoughts are with the innocent people caught up in these events. Of course, the immediate priority is the safety of the U.K. nationals and our staff across the region, restoring regional stability as soon as possible, and acting in the U.K. national interest through calm leadership and diplomacy. We did not get involved in the 'initial strikes,' and we are not joining 'offensive action' now. Our decision to allow the U.S. to use our bases is in support of 'defensive action' to reduce the threat of Iranian retaliation. This is to prevent Iran from firing missiles across the region, killing innocent civilians, putting British nationals' lives at risk, putting the lives of millions of



Indians who live and work in the region at risk, and hitting countries that have not been involved.

What role is the U.K. playing in diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the crisis?

Ongoing intensive diplomacy and close military coordination are vital in the coming days, and we support action that will help bring a swift resolution to this conflict and an end to Iran's reckless and escalatory response, including the economic pain Iran is inflicting by targeting oil and gas facilities. The longstanding British principle is that the best way forward for the regime is a negotiated settlement with Iran, where they give up their nuclear ambitions. The Foreign Secretary has been in touch to express the U.K.'s solidarity with partners in the region, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait.

## New nanomedicine-based gel from BITS Pilani shows encouraging preclinical results for rheumatoid arthritis



Researchers at BITS Pilani have developed a smart nanomedicine-based topical gel that demonstrated encouraging outcomes in preclinical studies for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. They plan to further validate the formulation through advanced preclinical safety studies, followed by clinical trials to evaluate its efficacy in human patients. A chronic autoimmune disorder affecting many worldwide, rheumatoid arthritis causes persistent joint pain, swelling, stiffness and gradual joint damage. The condition often requires long-term medication, which can lead to systemic side effects.

According to the research team, rheumatoid arthritis is currently managed using anti-inflammatory drugs, disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs, and biological therapies. These treatments can effectively control inflammation and slow disease progression. However, long-term use is often associated with systemic side effects, as rheumatoid arthritis requires prolonged treatment. Therefore, there is increasing interest in exploring natural or plant-derived molecules and developing localised therapeutic approaches that can target inflamed joints more precisely while minimising systemic exposure, they said. To address the challenges, the team improved the delivery of a natural anti-inflammatory compound: 3-Acetyl-11-keto-β-boswellic acid or AKBA - derived from *Boswellia serrata*. While AKBA has therapeutic potential, its poor solubility and low absorption limit its effectiveness. The research team went on to engineer novel hyaluronic acid-coated lipid-based nanoparticles

to overcome major limitations and enable enhanced delivery to disease sites through topical application, a press release said.

The research, published in the *Journal of Nanobiotechnology*, was led by Sakshi Priya (DST-INSPIRE Senior Research Fellow) under the supervision of Gautam Singhvi, Department of Pharmacy, BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus. Certain experimental components of the study were carried out by Vagesh Verma under the guidance of Aniruddha Roy, Department of Pharmacy. According to Ms. Priya and Prof. Singhvi, laboratory and preclinical studies showed that the developed nanoparticle system demonstrated enhanced drug uptake at the targeted site and reduced joint inflammation and swelling. These findings suggest that the formulation can deliver the therapeutic agent more efficiently to inflamed tissues, resulting in improved anti-inflammatory effects in the experimental models. One of the key advantages of this approach is the development of a nanoparticle-embedded gel that can be applied directly to the affected joints. This localised topical delivery has the potential to reduce dependence on oral medications and may help minimise systemic side effects, making the therapy more patient-friendly and convenient for long-term management. Professor Singhvi noted that this targeted nanogel approach combines the benefits of natural therapeutics with precision drug delivery. With further clinical validation, it may offer a safer and more patient-compliant treatment strategy for rheumatoid arthritis.

Next, the team will take steps for further validation of the formulation through advanced preclinical safety studies, followed by clinical trials to evaluate its effectiveness in human patients. "In addition to the topical nanoparticle gel approach, our ongoing research is exploring advanced transdermal delivery systems, such as dissolving microneedles, which are efficient and targeted methods of drug delivery through the skin. These technologies can offer promising, patient-friendly strategies for managing rheumatoid arthritis," they said. A patent has already been filed for the developed formulation, and the team is actively seeking industry collaboration to support further development and clinical translation.

## AI fakes about Iran-US war swirl on X despite policy crackdown

AI-created videos circulating on Elon Musk's X depict American soldiers captured by Iran, an Israeli city in ruins, and U.S. embassies ablaze; a surge of lifelike deepfakes despite a policy crackdown to curb wartime disinformation. The West Asia war has unleashed an avalanche of AI-generated visuals, eclipsing anything seen in previous conflicts and often leaving social media users unable to distinguish fabrication from reality, researchers say.

In a bid to protect "authentic information" during conflicts, X announced last week that it would suspend creators from its revenue sharing program for 90 days if they post AI-generated war videos without disclosing they were artificially made. Subsequent violations will result in permanent suspension, X's head of product Nikita Bier warned in a post.

The new policy is a notable pivot for a platform heavily criticised for becoming a haven of disinformation since Musk completed his \$44 billion acquisition of the site in October 2022. It also won praise from senior U.S. State Department official Sarah Rogers, who called it a "great complement" to X's Community Notes, a crowd-sourced verification system, that results in "less reach (thus monetisation)" for inaccurate content. But disinformation researchers remain skeptical. "The feeds I monitor are still flooded with AI-generated content about the war," Joe Bodnar of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue told AFP. "It doesn't seem like creators have been dissuaded from pushing misleading AI-generated images and videos about the conflict," he said. Bodnar pointed to a post from a premier "blue check" X account, which is eligible for monetisation, that shared an AI clip depicting an Iranian "nuclear-capable" strike on Israel.

The post garnered more views than Bier's message about cracking down on AI content. X did not respond when AFP asked how many accounts it had demonetised since Bier's announcement. AFP's global network of fact-checkers, from Brazil to India, identified a stream of AI fakes about the West Asia war, many from X's premium accounts with blue checkmarks that can be purchased. They include AI videos depicting a tearful American soldier inside a bombed-out embassy, captured U.S. troops on their knees beside Iranian flags, and a destroyed U.S. navy fleet. The flood of AI-fabricated visuals, mixed with authentic imagery from West Asia, continues to grow faster than professional fact-checkers can debunk them. Grok, X's own AI chatbot, appeared to make the problem worse, wrongly telling users seeking fact-checks that numerous AI visuals from the war



were real.

Researchers have also warned that X's model, allowing premium accounts to earn payouts based on engagement, has turbocharged the financial incentive to peddle false or sensational content. One premium account, which posted an AI video of Dubai's Burj Khalifa skyscraper engulfed in flames, ignored a request from Bier that it label the content as AI.

The post remained online, racking up more than two million views. Last month, a report from the Tech Transparency Project said X appeared to be profiting from more than two dozen premium accounts belonging to Iranian government officials and state-controlled news outlets pushing propaganda, potentially in violation of U.S. sanctions. X subsequently removed blue checkmarks for some of them, the report said. Even if X's demonetisation policy were strictly enforced, a vast number of X users peddling AI content are not part of the revenue sharing programme, researchers say.

Those users are still subject to being fact-checked through Community Notes, a system whose effectiveness has been repeatedly questioned by researchers. Last year, a study by the Digital Democracy Institute of the Americas found more than 90 percent of X's Community Notes are never published, highlighting major limits. "X's policy is a reasonable countermeasure to viral disinformation about the war. In principle, this policy reduces the incentive structure for those spreading disinformation," said Alexios Mantzarlis, director of the Security, Trust, and Safety Initiative at Cornell Tech. "The devil will be in the implementing detail: Metadata on AI content can be removed and Community Notes are relatively rare," he said. "It is unlikely that X will be able to guarantee both high precision and high recall for this policy."

partment, in a press statement, revoked the sanctions exception issued in 2018 under the "Iran Freedom and Counter Proliferation Act 2012 for Afghanistan's reconstruction and economic development, effective September 29, 2025. Pursuant to discussions with the US side, the latter issued guidance extending the conditional sanctions waiver until April 26, 2026," the report says. "Besides, the recent development has cast a shadow on the future of Chabahar Port," the panel says. The committee is of the view that Chabahar is a "vital and strategic port for India", as it provides access to Afghanistan and Central Asia. It is also a key port for connecting with International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC). The committee said it welcomes that "the Government of India remains engaged with all concerned parties in order to address the implications of these developments. The Committee desire that the ministry may keep the Committee apprised of all the plans and progress in this regard," the report says. On February 5, the government had told Parliament that it "remains engaged" with all parties concerned in order to address the implications of recent changes in US sanctions or tariff policies on India's participation in the Chabahar project. "As per the main contract signed between India Ports Global Limited and the Ports and Maritime Organisation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for equipping and operating the Shahid Beheshti Terminal of Chabahar Port on 13 May 2024,

## Wholesale price inflation at 11-month high of 2.13%; higher crude prices to push WPI higher



Wholesale price inflation rose to a 11-month high of 2.13% in February, driven by an uptick in prices of food and non-food articles, even though vegetable prices eased on a month-on-month basis, government data showed on Monday (March 16, 2026). This is the fourth straight month of rise in Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation. It was 1.81% in January and 2.45% in February last year. Economists said the WPI inflation is likely to pick up pace further if the oil price rise persists, and spills over to other goods (fertilisers, aluminium) given it tracks international prices more closely relative to the CPI basket. According to WPI data, inflation in food articles was 2.19% in February, as against 1.55% in the previous month.

Although in vegetables, inflation eased to 4.73% in February against 6.78% in January, pulses, potato and egg, meat and fish saw an uptick in inflation in February. "Positive rate of inflation in February 2026 is primarily due to an increase in prices of other manufacturing, manufacture of basic metals, non-food articles, food articles and textiles, etc.," the Industry ministry said in a statement. Negative inflation, or deflation, in the fuel and power basket narrowed to 3.78% in February, vis-a-vis 4.01% in January. Global oil prices averaged \$68/bbl in February from \$63/bbl in January.

## Why do we need a living will?

Birth and death represent the two ends of a person's timeline. A disproportionate amount of preparation, attention and care is given to the first half—ranging from the anticipation of pregnancy, counseling and checkups, to delivery and extravagant first birthday celebrations. Unfortunately, the same attention is rarely given to the opposite end—that is death. It is often left to chance, fueled by the vague hope that "the right treatment decision will somehow be taken at the right time by someone." Therein lies the problem. No one—not even a doctor—knows exactly how their life will end, or whether they will be able to speak for themselves in their final days. It could be a relatively sudden event or a long-drawn-out process following a severe, irreversible illness. That choice isn't ours to make. Ultimately, failing to plan ahead is often what separates a peaceful, dignified passing from a prolonged and distressing ordeal for the patient and their family.

What is a living will?

A living will is a legal document that safeguards the individual's treatment preferences for certain irreversible conditions, essentially taking the burden off relatives and doctors in deciding on treatments in specific situations. Not having one could sometimes lead to crucial treatment decisions that the patient would not have made by themselves, needlessly prolonging their suffering.

When does a living will become necessary?

The focus of a living will is specifically for situations in which the person develops a medical condition that is terminal or irreversible. There will be no compromise in routine treatment measures for other illnesses. For instance, a college lecturer suffers a brain injury from hypoxia after a near-drowning incident in a river. The person is paralysed, opens their eyes but cannot recognise anyone or respond—a condition commonly referred to as a persistent vegetative state. This could also happen following head injury, choking on food, strangulation or a stroke. In such situations, not only is recovery not generally possible, but the person may remain in that condition for prolonged periods—painful for the family to watch and also expensive in the long run. Another example is a person with metastatic cancer at a stage where further treatment offers no improvement, where the person may be better off receiving comfort care (palliative care) than remaining in the ICU receiving more rounds of chemotherapy that only diminish quality of life in the limited days that remain.

Why not leave treatment decisions to our family?

Most people would expect their family members or close friends to step in and take the right decisions along with the doctors. However, in reality, the situation can turn chaotic because of emotional conflict, guilt, differences of opinion and contrasting attitudes among several decision-makers—at the end of which doctors will often take the safest route possible: continuing every treatment measure prescribed in the books, without consideration for quality of life or prospects for recovery. In addition, our next of kin may not be alive or available to make these decisions for us in the distant future. A safer alternative is for individuals to document their preferences ahead of time, when they are still in good physical and mental health, and also discuss it in advance with family members so that there is no conflict if and when the time comes.

What are the consequences of not having a living will?

The living will does not need to be invoked for everyone who is dying, especially when the person is still able to discuss their wishes with their doctors. The danger of not preparing one is that sometimes, other people may end up making life-changing decisions on our behalf when we are not in a position to indicate our preferences. For instance, if a person enters an irreversible persistent vegetative state, doctors may place a feeding tube that pierces the stomach wall—because the patient can no longer swallow. Such individuals can remain in a paralyzed, bedridden state for several years, sometimes a decade or longer. This may not be what the person would have wanted. In contrast, if this person had previously made a living will (advance directive) stating they did not want artificial feeding in the event of an irreversible illness, the treatment plan could shift to comfort care. This gives the person a chance to pass away gradually, in peace, and surrounded by loved ones. The Supreme Court of India legally recognised these "advance directives" in the Common Cause vs. Union of India (2018) case. More recently, in the case of Harish Rana—where no living will existed—the Supreme Court enabled doctors to stop artificial feeding by classifying it as a treatment measure, while continuing comfort care until a natural death occurred. Without a living will, many terminally ill patients spend their final days in the ICU, attached to numerous tubes, unable to speak, and cared for by strangers. This "disconnected" mode of dying not only results in poor quality of life for the patient but also causes profound emotional distress for the family left behind.

ary.

Barclays in a research note said the passthrough of the rise in crude oil prices from the Middle East conflict will reflect more in WPI inflation vs retail CPI inflation, as retail fuel prices are unchanged in the latter. "With a sharp jump in crude oil prices crossing USD100/bbl as of 16 March, the corresponding WPI will likely reflect this in the March print," Barclays said. India Ratings and Research the rising crude oil prices since the U.S.-Iran war will have a strong impact on wholesale inflation from March 2026, till the supply side issues are resolved.

The average price of Indian crude basket March 2026 (up to March 12) touched a 44-month high of \$101.25/bbl. Ind-Ra Chief Economist Devendra Pant expects wholesale inflation to stay high amidst U.S.-Iran war and a low base. "The retail prices of petroleum products might remain the same for some time, which may negate any sharp jump in retail inflation. However, the increase in crude oil prices will push wholesale inflation higher. Ind-Ra expects wholesale inflation in March to jump to 3.7%," Mr. Pant said. As per WPI data for February, inflation in manufactured products inched up to 2.92% in February, from 2.86% in the preceding month. Non-food articles category inflation spiked to 8.80% in February, from 7.58% in January. PHDCCI president Rajeev Juneja said given the geopolitical risks, a continued policy focus on improving supply-chain efficiencies, lowering logistics costs, supporting domestic manufacturing, and ensuring adequate availability of critical inputs for industry is critical to contain cost-push pressures. As per data released last week, India's retail inflation rose to 3.2% in February, from 2.75% in January. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reduced policy interest rates by 1.25 percentage points in the current fiscal year as inflation remained low. The RBI mainly tracks retail inflation for deciding on benchmark interest rates.



Does having a living will mean that life-saving treatment will be denied?

No. A living will typically specifies which life-sustaining treatments to withhold or withdraw—such as ventilators, feeding tubes, or CPR—only if the patient has no hope of recovery. It does not apply to routine hospitalisations, surgeries, or the treatment of common illnesses. For example, a person with metastatic cancer who has written a living will to avoid ICU care and artificial feeding for their underlying terminal illness will still receive full treatment for a limb fracture or appendicitis. In such cases, if they are temporarily unable to eat, they will receive artificial feeding and post-operative ICU care just like any other patient—to help them recover. Artificial feeding is a life-saving tool for reversible conditions; it only becomes a point of concern when used to indefinitely prolong a state of irreversible suffering. Studies have shown that having a living will does not affect total survival. At the same time, it helps reduce unnecessary medical interventions and expenses.

How to make a living will?

Discussing one's preferences with close relatives and the family doctor is helpful to receive guidance and clarity while planning a living will. Guidelines for EOLC (End Of Life Care) by The Indian Association of Critical Care Medicine and the Indian Association of Palliative Care have been published. Templates available online can be customised—as each individual may have different viewpoints for end of life care. For instance, one person may not want any form of artificial feeding if an irreversible illness is confirmed—that is, if they become unable to swallow or feed themselves. Others may agree to artificial feeding, but may not want to be attached to a ventilator if their breathing becomes weak. A third person may agree to ventilator care but will not want CPR, and a fourth may want everything possible to be done. Patient autonomy dictates that individuals have the right to decide the treatment measures they will receive—as long as these decisions are taken in a state of sound mind. Once drafted, the document requires the signatures of two witnesses and that of a public notary or gazetted officer. A magistrate's signature is no longer a requirement in India, thus the process has been simplified.

Should young adults make a living will?

A living will is not just for older people. Young adults may be involved in road accidents or other sudden catastrophic events—and hence benefit from having one. They can always update their living will depending on any change in preferences as they get older. To sum it up, a living will might be all that we have available to speak on our behalf when we no longer have a voice, in a life filled with unpredictability. Reserved for irreversible or terminal illnesses, it cannot be invoked for recoverable illnesses, and therefore will not affect routine medical or surgical care.

## IT department confiscates Nayeem's benami properties in Karimnagar

GNS News Agency, March 17

Karimnagar: The Income Tax department confiscated the benami properties of gangster Mohammed Nayeemuddin alias Nayeem in Nagunur of Karimnagar rural mandal on Tuesday. IT officials from the Benami Prohibition Unit, Hyderabad, visited the village and pasted a copy of the confiscation order at the gram panchayat office, besides making a proclamation in the village.

Nayeem, who owned 13 open plots in different survey numbers within Nagunur limits, had registered the land in the name of one of his family members, Ahela Begum. The IT department, which is probing benami properties, had issued the confiscation order on October 3, 2025. On Tuesday, a copy of the order was displayed at the gram panchayat office.

## Why 'illegal immigration' was not cited as reason for SIR, Supreme Court asks EC



GNS News Agency, March 17

The Supreme Court on Thursday (January 22, 2026) questioned whether the Election Commission of India had "clearly and eloquently" cited illegal, cross-border immigration as a reason for holding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and verifying citizenship of registered voters. The query from the Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi came even as nearly 6.5 crore names were removed from draft electoral rolls published by the poll body in nine States and three Union Territories. Around 3.26 crore voters in Uttar Pradesh, one of the nine States where the second phase of the SIR was done, received notices asking them to attend hearings and show citizenship credentials.

Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, for the Commission, argued that the poll body was authorised to verify citizenship under Article 324 of the Constitution. Article 326 made citizenship mandatory for a person to vote. He referred to the amendments made in the Citizenship Act in 2003, which made conditions for citizenship more stringent, requiring both parents of electors to be Indian citizens. The concept of 'illegal immigrant' was introduced in the 2003 amendment. But Justice Bagchi said the poll body had listed only "frequent migration" as one of the reasons for holding the SIR. "Was the requirement of examination of citizenship in light of 2003 amendments to the Citizenship Act a trigger to hold the SIR in 2025? If so, that trigger does not have an eloquent expression in the SIR notification," Justice Bagchi observed. Mr. Dwivedi agreed that the reason of "illegal migration" could have been expressed "more clearly, more happily".

Justice Bagchi said by 'migration' in the SIR notifica-

tion, the poll body seemed to have been referring more to inter-State migration and not cross-border illegal movement. Verification of citizenship was not exactly needed if an elector had only moved from one State to another within the country. Mr. Dwivedi responded that the term 'migration' would subsume both inter-State and trans-border movement. "We could have said 'inter-State migration', 'intra-State migration', 'cross-border migration' or use the one expression 'migration' to mean it all," he said. The judge, however, said there was a clear distinction between migration and illegal immigration. "Migration, when it is inter-State, is always lawful. The word 'migration' means 'lawful migration'. When you talk of inter-country migrations, it may amount to illegal immigration. In India, citizens are entitled to move to any part of the country. It is a fundamental freedom. The aspect of illegality comes only in the case of immigration. Your SIR order does not eloquently state that your SIR is also about illegal immigration... When it is migration simpliciter, we will interpret it as inter-State migration," Justice Bagchi observed.

The Bench asked "what was really in the mind" of the poll panel when it started the SIR exercise. "What was in your mind then, you say 'rapid urbanisation, 'frequent migration' without clearly saying 'illegal immigration'. Is it that now you are second-guessing the SIR," the judge asked the poll body. The Bench said over 20 years have passed since the last SIR. There has been an enormous movement of population. Urbanisation has spread. It was admitted that wrongful entries have occurred in the electoral roll. The court asked whether the poll panel wanted to focus on these reasons and give itself some "elbow space" or press on with the 'illegal immigration' angle. "Are you defending that a special revision can go into the aspect of illegal immigration? If so, that is not clear," Justice Bagchi asked. Mr. Dwivedi said the other reasons given in the SIR notification was more than sufficient to hold an SIR. He clarified that the SIR, being legislative in character, must also take into consideration the 2003 amendments made in the citizenship law. "This amendment came after the previous SIR. The amendment had never been applied in the intervening years, until now. Revision of electoral rolls had been done earlier on the basis of self-declaration of citizenship. This [SIR 2025] we found was an opportune time to take note of this statutory amendment of 2003 and examine citizenship for the purpose of preparing the electoral roll," Mr. Dwivedi argued.

## Ukraine, Russia hold first direct talks on latest U.S. peace plan

GNS News Agency, March 17

Negotiators from Russia, Ukraine and the United States met in Abu Dhabi for the first direct negotiations on a plan being pushed by U.S. President Donald Trump to end the almost four-year-long war. The U.S. initially drafted a plan to end the conflict that was heavily criticised in Kyiv and western Europe for being too close to Russia's line, while later proposals were criticised by Moscow for floating the idea of European peacekeepers.

Ahead of Friday's (January 23) talks, which are set to continue on Saturday (January 24), Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said territory remained the key issue — with Moscow having said it is not dropping its demand that Kyiv pull out of its eastern Donbas region. After the first day of talks, Ukraine's chief negotiator Rustem Umerov posted on social media that the meeting had focused "on the parameters for ending Russia's war and the further logic of the negotiation process", adding that meetings were scheduled for Saturday (January 24). The UAE Foreign Ministry said in an earlier statement the talks were scheduled to last two days and were "part of ongoing efforts to promote dialogue and identify political solutions to the crisis". Mr. Trump met Mr. Zelenskyy at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Thursday (January 22) and U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff later held talks with Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin.

The Emirates meeting took place as thousands of people in Kyiv were without heating in sub-zero temperatures due to Russian strikes. The European Union, which has sent hundreds of generators, accused Moscow of "deliberately depriving civilians of heat". Kyiv said Russian strikes had killed three people on Friday in the Kharkiv region and four people — including a father and his five-year-old son — overnight in the east.

While diplomacy to end Europe's worst conflict since World War II has gained pace, Moscow and Kyiv appear deadlocked over the issue of territory. Hours after Mr. Putin met Mr. Witkoff — and Mr. Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner — in Moscow, the Kremlin said its maximalist demand that Kyiv withdraw from the eastern Donbas region still stood. "Russia's position is well known on the fact that Ukraine, Ukrainian armed forces, have to leave the ter-



ritory of the Donbas," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Both sides say the fate of territory in Ukraine's east is one of the main outstanding issues in the search for a settlement to a war that has killed tens of thousands, displaced millions and decimated eastern Ukraine. "The Donbas is a key issue," Mr. Zelenskyy — who said he and Mr. Trump had agreed on post-war security guarantees in Davos — told reporters on Friday (January 23), ahead of the talks. Later in a post online, he added: "It is necessary that not only Ukraine has the desire to end the war and achieve full security, but that a similar desire somehow emerges in Russia as well." Russian and Ukrainian negotiators are last known to have met face-to-face in Istanbul last summer, in talks that ended only in deals to exchange captured soldiers. The Abu Dhabi meeting is the first time they have faced each other to talk about the Trump administration's plan. Mr. Putin has repeatedly said Moscow intends to get full control of eastern Ukraine by force if talks fail. After the Russia-U.S. talks in the Kremlin, Putin aide Yuri Ushakov insisted Moscow was "genuinely interested in resolving" the war diplomatically. But he added: "Until that happens, Russia will continue to achieve its objectives... on the battlefield." Mr. Trump has in the past pressured Ukraine to agree to terms that Kyiv sees as capitulation. Mr. Trump repeated on Wednesday (January 21) his belief that Mr. Putin and Mr. Zelenskyy were close to a deal. "I believe they're at a point now where they can come together and get a deal done. And if they don't, they're stupid — that goes for both of them," he said.

## U.S., Ukrainian and Russian negotiators to meet in UAE for security talks

GNS News Agency, March 17

Ukrainian, U.S. and Russian officials will hold security talks in the United Arab Emirates the Kremlin said, following a meeting of top U.S. negotiators with President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on a U.S.-drafted plan to end the Ukraine war. Diplomatic efforts to end Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II have gained pace in recent months, though Moscow and Kyiv remain at odds over the key issue of territory in a post-war settlement.

U.S. negotiators, led by envoy Steve Witkoff, talked with the Russian leader in Moscow into the early hours of Friday (January 23, 2026), according to a Kremlin statement. Kremlin diplomatic adviser Yuri Ushakov told reporters their discussions had been "useful in every respect". Mr. Witkoff and the U.S. team are next flying to Abu Dhabi, where talks are expected to continue. A Russian delegation, headed by General Igor Kostyukov, director of Russia's GRU military intelligence agency, will also head there "in the coming hours", according to Mr. Ushakov. "It was agreed that the first meeting of a trilateral working group on security issues will take place today in Abu Dhabi," Mr. Ushakov added. "We are genuinely interested in resolving (the conflict) through political and diplomatic means," he said but added, "Until that happens, Russia will continue to achieve its objectives... on the battlefield."

Mr. Witkoff previously said he believed the two sides were "down to one issue", without elaborating. Video published by the Kremlin showed a smiling Mr. Putin shaking

hands with Witkoff, U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and White House advisor Josh Gruenbaum. The high-stakes meeting came just hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said a draft deal was "nearly, nearly ready" and that he and Trump had agreed on the issue of post-war security guarantees. He also said the U.K. and France had already committed to forces on the ground. Russia, which occupies around 20% of Ukraine, is pushing for full control of the country's eastern Donbas region as part of a deal. But Kyiv has warned that ceding ground will embolden Moscow and says it will not sign a peace deal that fails to deter Russia from launching a renewed assault.

Europe "fragmented" The full details of the upcoming talks in the United Arab Emirates have not been released, and it is not clear whether the Russian and Ukrainian officials will meet face-to-face. Mr. Zelenskyy said these talks would last two days. Mr. Trump repeated on Wednesday (January 21, 2026) his oft-stated belief that Mr. Putin and Mr. Zelenskyy were close to a deal. "I believe they're at a point now where they can come together and get a deal done. And if they don't, they're stupid — that goes for both of them," he said after delivering a speech at Davos. Mr. Zelenskyy, at his address in Davos, blasted the EU's lack of "political will" in countering Mr. Putin in a fiery address. "Instead of becoming a truly global power, Europe remains a beautiful but fragmented kaleidoscope of small and middle powers," he said. Mr. Trump's dramatic foreign policy pivots.

## Kerala man's death: Trial by social media



A day after a woman posted a video on social media alleging sexual harassment by a man on a bus, he died by suicide. The episode sparked outrage across Kerala and led to heated discussions on the use of social media, the possible consequences of public shaming, and mental health. Mini Muringatheri reports on an episode that has divided society

It was U. Deepak's birthday on January 17. The 42-year-old sales executive, who worked at a garment company, lived with his parents in a two-storey house in Govindapuram, a couple of kilometres from Kozhikode city in Kerala. He had promised his father, Choyi Ullattuthodi, and mother, K. Kanyaka, that he would take them to Guruvayur temple, an ancient Hindu site dedicated to Lord Krishna and popular among pilgrims. For the closely knit family of three, whose lives were rooted in routine, such pilgrimages were not rare, Kanyaka says.

Deepak had instructed his parents to be ready by the afternoon for the journey that would take about 2 hours. He said they would leave once he returned from work. But when he came home, his parents realised that he was not himself. "He was very upset," Kanyaka recalls. "He didn't eat. Without any explanation, he said, 'Amma, we will go to Guruvayur later'." Kanyaka kept asking him what had happened, but Deepak did not respond. He shut himself inside his room. That night, citing incidents of theft in the area, Deepak asked his parents to close their bedroom door. They did as they were told. The next morning, they found Deepak dead in his room. For Ullattuthodi and Kanyaka, the discovery was shocking especially since they saw no warning and no visible signs of despair. "We couldn't understand why he took his own life," says Kanyaka, her voice cracking. A day earlier, unbeknownst to his parents, Deepak had struggled to process a video in the public domain that featured him. The circumstances surrounding his death have sent shockwaves across Kerala, sparking widespread discussion and outrage. His death highlights the complex intersection of social media, public shaming, sexual abuse, and mental health.

Deepak's parents, Choyi Ullattuthodi and K. Kanyaka, discovered his body in his room the morning after his birthday. The previous day, 35-year-old Shimijitha Musthafa from Vadakara, who describes herself on Instagram as a "trained psychologist", posted a video. She alleged that Deepak sexually harassed her on a bus in Payyannur, Kannur district. She claimed that Deepak, who had been travelling in the private bus from Payyannur railway station to the bus stand, deliberately elbowed her breast.

The video struck a nerve. Sexual harassment in crowded public transport is a lived reality for countless women across India. The clip went viral, reaching more than 2 million people within a few hours. When some people in the comments section questioned her intent and the framing of the video, Musthafa deleted the clip. Later, she posted a follow-up video. She said that her aim was not to target an individual, but to highlight a "serious social and mental health issue." It was Asgar Ali, a friend of Deepak, who informed him about the video. "Deepak was introverted," Ali says. "He was recovering from the trauma of a divorce. When I spoke to him on the night of his birthday, he was very distressed. He feared public humiliation. He told me he would take legal measures against the woman."

For Kanyaka, the memory of that night is unbearable. "Though he was 42, he was like a child," she says. "He was very delicate. He would not do anything without asking me. To take such a step, he must have been broken inside. How much my son must have cried all night..." Deepak's cousin, U. Jayaprakash, and his wife Sini are in a state of disbelief. "Nobody who knew Deepak would ever believe that he could sexually harass someone," says Jayaprakash. "He was very attached to his mother. He must have worried about how such an allegation would affect her." The family accused Musthafa of using the video to gain fame and followers. Public anger swelled rapidly. Soon, Deepak's death was no longer a private tragedy; it became a public flashpoint. While several women's rights activists urged people to stay calm and not lose sight of the complexity of the issue, many men were angry. A series of videos showed men travelling in buses with cardboard boxes covering their bodies. One of the most widely shared clips featured a bus conductor wearing a cardboard box over his upper body, bearing a message demanding the formation of a men's commission.

Complaints and inquiries On January 19, Kanyaka filed a complaint against Musthafa with the Kozhikode City Police Commissioner. The Kozhikode Medical College police registered a case and invoked Section 109 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. This is a non-bailable offence relating to abetment to suicide. The police arrested Musthafa from her relative's house in Vadakara and remanded her to judicial custody for 14 days. The State Human Rights Commission directed the police to submit a report within a week. In its remand report before the Judicial First Class Magistrate Court, Kunnammangalam, the police stated that Deepak had died by suicide due to the humiliation caused by the videos filmed and shared by Musthafa.

The investigation, the police said, included a review of CCTV footage from the bus in which Musthafa and Deepak had travelled. "There was nothing abnormal or objectionable [in it]," they wrote in the remand report. "The footage does not show any inappropriate or unusual behaviour." Statements from the bus staff and fellow passengers also reportedly confirmed that no incident of harassment or misconduct took place during the journey, the remand report said. The police also said that Musthafa recorded multiple videos of the alleged sexual harassment in the bus and deleted some of them. Her phone has been sent for forensic analysis. "We have sought police custody of the accused for further questioning," says a police source. The police added in the report that Musthafa, who holds a postgraduate degree and is former ward member of the Areacode Grama Panchayat, was aware of the legal requirement to approach the police if she had experienced

harassment. Meanwhile, from Manjeri jail, Musthafa filed a complaint through her brother with the Payyannur police, reiterating that she was sexually harassed on the bus on January 16. The Payyannur police have initiated a preliminary inquiry. A battleground

As legal processes unfolded, public discourse exploded. Almost overnight, the public perception of Musthafa shifted. Initially seen as a victim of sexual harassment, she came to be seen as an abettor of suicide. Social media turned into a battleground. Many people questioned the authenticity of the video, arguing that the contact between Deepak and her could have been accidental as the bus was crowded. Some influencers and YouTubers branded the video "fake." Deepak's death altered the narrative entirely. What was once a conversation about women's safety in public transport turned into a bitter debate on false allegations, public shaming, and the destructive power of social media. The case raised uncomfortable questions about accountability, justice, and empathy in the digital age. Feminists themselves appeared divided. "When a woman says she was sexually harassed and shows video evidence of it, how does that automatically become abetment to suicide," someone wondered. Some women argued that suicide cannot invalidate an allegation, especially when the woman continues to stand by her claim even after the man's death. Others asked whether the video should have been made public before an investigation. Should social media influencers assume the role of arbiters of justice? Should public opinion be allowed to determine guilt? Cyber crime investigator Pattathil Dhanya Menon points to legal grey zones. "Technically speaking, in a public space, you cannot shoot another person without consent," she says. "If it was recorded as evidence against violence, it should have been submitted to the police. It should not have been edited or tampered with." She stresses the urgent need for awareness about the use of social media.

As the debate raged on, Musthafa became the target of vicious online abuse. She received rape and murder threats. Ajay Unni, from the Bharatiya Janata Party, who contested the recent Thodupuzha Municipality elections, said women who create such videos should be raped first. Seeing the firestorm, many women came out in support of Musthafa. They said that there are barely any women who have not experienced harassment in crowded buses or public spaces in India. Detailing their own experiences, women also spoke of how they are routinely shamed and isolated when they speak up. Data from the National Crime Records Bureau show that India's crime rate against women increased in 2022 by 4% points compared to 2021. The national average stood at 66.4 cases per lakh women, driven by high rates in Delhi (144.4), Haryana (118.7), and Telangana (117.6). States such as Kerala (82) and Madhya Pradesh (78.8) were closer to the national average. "School and college students are the most frequent victims," says Radhika P., a 53-year-old sales staff member in Kozhikode. "My daughter often complains to me. Even at my age, I'm not spared. Women always travel with fear. We have to remain alert in crowded buses." Musthafa's supporters also pointed to the apathy of the police and the judicial system in handling harassment complaints. This, they argued, pushes women to post videos online as a form of self-defence, a way of reclaiming agency and deterring potential perpetrators. They cited the 2023 case of Savad Sha, who was arrested for masturbating inside a Kerala State transport bus while sitting next to a woman. She uploaded a video of the act online. The woman, an actor and model, faced severe attacks online from men's groups. Some of them even received the accused after he obtained bail. In 2025, Savad Sha was booked again for molesting another woman in another bus, validating the earlier complaint.

"If the promptness shown in arresting Musthafa had been shown in acting on complaints of harassment in buses, things would be different," says screenwriter and feminist activist Didi Damodharan. "There is hardly a woman who has not had a bad experience in public transport. That is what Musthafa tried to say through her video. Whether this specific case is true or not should be decided by the police and courts." She adds, "Mobile phones can be effective tools of self defence. The very awareness that one might be under watch can make public spaces safer for women." At the same time, she cautions against the oversimplification of Deepak's suicide. "There may be many reasons behind this death. The video could be one factor, but it may not be the sole reason." Damodharan is blunt about how the narrative has been weaponised. "The tears of the mother are being used to attack the women's liberation movement. Instead of emphasising that suicide is never a solution, all anger has been directed at the woman and the video. There appears to be a deliberate effort to crush even the smallest possibility of women's empowerment," she says. She also points to deeper anxieties at play. "The accessibility of social media and phones for women disrupts power equations in a patriarchal society. That is why the issue is framed as a problem of women using social media," she says.

Drawing lines As Musthafa was brought to the Medical College police station, people blocked traffic and shouted abuses. Similar scenes were reported outside Manjeri jail. People posted videos on social media, attacking women and feminist activists. Political parties and their cyber warriors jumped in, each pushing their own agenda. In the 2017 case involving the abduction and sexual assault of a Malayalam actor, the court took the ages of the accused into account while determining the sentence. In another instance of sexual misconduct, the court showed consideration to the accused, filmmaker P.T. Kunju Muhammed, because of his age. "What, then, is the 'right' age for a man to be punished adequately in a case of harassment," asks Damodharan. Women activists also point out that the gravity of the allegation against Musthafa is far less severe than crimes such as rape and gang rape. They question the disproportionate response and the intensity of the punitive action in her case. On the other hand, men's rights activists claim that Deepak's death is not an isolated incident. They argue that men are increasingly victims of public humiliation and reputational damage without evidence. Activist Rahul Easwar announced a 24x7 helpline for men facing mental harassment and declared January 17 as 'Men's Rights Day'. He gave Deepak's parents "initial aid" of ₹3.17 lakh.

Psychiatrist Dr. Shaju George, who is from Thrissur and works in Dubai, says, "Ending one's life is almost normalised as a response to mental trauma. What is tragic is that neither he nor his friends or family sought professional psychological or legal help." Deepak's death has left behind grieving parents, a woman in jail, and a society deeply divided. It is the story not just of one man and one video, but of a social contract stretched thin by technology, patriarchy, fear, and grief. It forces Kerala, a State that has just declared itself 100% digitally literate, to confront an uncomfortable truth: in the age of social media, justice is seen as everyone's business, delivered in quick, reckless shorts. And the cost is often paid in lives.

## ‘Sell if you are overweight on equities and buy if underweight, follow the Dharma of asset allocation,’ says Nilesh Shah



the lessons we have accumulated over the years based on similar scenarios. Will that work? Well, this is what we will have to hold on to. There will be volatility, there will be pain, the market anticipates the impact of higher oil prices on rupee, interest rate, inflation, GDP growth, jobs, employment and the situation of remittances from the Middle East.

So, the market will consider all these factors and which is why it is coming down. But, at some point of time, the world will get adjusted to prolonged war, alternate supply chains will emerge and human entrepreneurship will take over which will create a bottom for the market. Now, the market is down by 10% and we don't know where the bottom lies or how the war will evolve. In that case, how do you think investors should behave? Should they hold on to equities and invest further or should they be moving to safer instruments? Please follow the dharma of asset allocation. In a market like today, you need to understand your investment time horizon and risk-taking ability. If you are overweight (on) equity based on your investment objective or risk profile, please redeem (your holdings). This is the time to be neutral with equity and not overweight. On the other hand if you are equal weight — meaning your allocation to equity is in line with your risk profile and investment objective — then continue your SIP but don't put lump sum money. However, if you are underweight (on) equity, then look to invest in a calibrated manner. Markets are likely to remain volatile till such time that clarity emerges on the geopolitical front. How about investment within equities and physical assets? Within equity, investors can put slightly overweight positions on large and mid caps because they will be less volatile. You can also add to domestic-focused sectors which are not directly impacted by higher oil prices, such as banking and financial services and consumer durables. Outside equity, you need to focus on debt. In debt, interest rates are likely to go up because of higher fiscal deficit. So, in that scenario you can invest at the shorter end of the debt yield curve — arbitrage fund, short term bond fund, money market fund — so that you don't carry duration risk in a rising interest rate environment. In precious metals, one can look to invest in both gold and silver as they normally benefit from global uncertainty. Right now, they have fallen a bit because of the rise in interest rates in the US. Gold does well when US interest rates fall and there is global uncertainty. The US interest rates will eventually come down and that will support precious metal prices. So, one can look to add in the portfolio. But one should remember that there is no intrinsic value in precious metal but emotional value, so one should invest but only a certain percentage of your portfolio.

As markets have taken a beating amid the rising global uncertainty following the war between US-Israel and Iran, investors have once again witnessed a severe impact on their equity investments. As there is no clarity right now as to how long this may continue, Nilesh Shah, managing director, Kotak Mahindra AMC, said in an interview with Sandeep Singh that these are times to remain equity neutral and not overweight, and even called for investors who are overweight equity to redeem. Shah advised that investors can look at domestic focused sectors such as banking and financial services and consumer durables as they do not get directly impacted by rising oil prices. Edited Excerpts:

After a period of six years, investors are once again dealing with uncertainty and with no clarity of an end to that in sight. How do you see it and how is it different from the uncertainty during Covid times? During Covid, it was a rational and unpredictable uncertainty. We knew there is a virus, there will be medicine, and there will be a vaccine. Today, we are dealing with irrational and unpredictable uncertainty. In Covid, we were dealing with a virus for which there was a vaccine and medicine, a cure — and that confidence came because for generations, mankind has dealt with viruses and found solutions.

Now, we are dealing with human minds that can either be driven by rationality or emotions and we have to go back in history to see how things may evolve, such as during the times of Iraq invasion of Kuwait or US-Iraq war, etc, that led to spike in oil prices. In most of the cases in the past, it could be seen that the market bottomed out way ahead of the closure of the war. Even when war prolongs such as in the case of Russia-Ukraine war, the markets get adjusted, supply chain evolves, economy finds ways and market corrects and then finds a balance from where it can start to move up. Also, in the Covid crisis, people who panicked converted notional loss into real loss and people who stayed invested, eventually ended up making money, so these are

## As panic bookings surge further, Govt reiterates appeal for only need-based LPG bookings; steps up action against hoarding

Despite repeated assurances from the government about requisite liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) stock availability for meeting requirement of households, cylinder bookings have shot up further, reflecting a spurt in panic booking. According to a senior Petroleum Ministry official, LPG bookings by household consumers jumped nearly 60% on Friday over the average daily booking levels for the April-February period of the current financial year. On Thursday, it was over 35% higher than the 11-month average of daily bookings.

The government again appealed to consumers to avoid panic and book cylinders only when required given the constrained and difficult LPG supply situation, which has arisen due to the massive disruption in vessel movements through the chokepoint of the Strait of Hormuz. It also said that action against hoarding and black marketing of LPG has also been intensified all over the country.

As per data shared by Petroleum Ministry Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma in a media briefing on Saturday, average LPG bookings by households—which averaged at 55.7 lakh cylinders a day in April-February—surged to 88.8 lakh on Friday; Thursday's figure was 75.7 lakh. Sharma said that despite the constraints in LPG imports, the government is prioritising supplies to households over commercial and industrial consumers, even as the government is closely monitoring the supply situation in view of West Asia conflict that has hit India's energy imports, with LPG supplies impacted the most due to the crisis.

“The situation is a matter of concern for all of us, but we are ensuring that household consumers do not face inconvenience. Domestic consumers have been prioritised, and LPG cylinder supply is being ensured for them,” Sharma said Saturday, adding that none of the 25,000-odd LPG distributorships across the country have reported a “dry-out”—running out of stock—yet. She has also been saying that public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) are maintaining their earlier average of over 50 lakh cylinder deliveries per day.

The effective halt in maritime traffic through the crucial chokepoint of the Strait of Hormuz due to the West Asia conflict has significantly impacted India's LPG imports. The country depends on imports to meet around 60% of its LPG requirement, and 90% of the LPG imports come from West Asia through the Strait. This effectively means that roughly 55% of India's LPG consumption volumes are currently unavailable.

Given the crisis, the government has prioritised LPG supplies to households over commercial and industrial consumers, ordered refiners to maximise LPG production, and directed them to divert propane, butane, and other streams from petrochemical manufacturing to LPG production. Sharma said that these measures have led to an increase of 31% in domestic LPG production vis-à-vis pre-West Asia conflict levels, and a further increase is likely over the next few days. The government has also increased waiting times between cylinder bookings by households from 21 days to 25 days in urban areas and 45 days in rural areas to check hoarding behaviour and manage demand and supply.

Sharma informed reporters that commercial LPG cylinder distribution has begun in 29 states and Union Territories. After initially deciding to divert all LPG supplies for consumption by households, which led to massive shortage of the fuel for commercial consumers like restaurants, hotels, and some other units, the government on Thursday announced that it will allocate for commercial use 20% of the average monthly commercial LPG requirement in coordination with state governments. The government has also activated alternative fuel streams like kerosene, fuel oil, bio-mass, and even coal for commercial consumers to help



them cover their LPG shortfall. Moreover, state-owned gas major GAIL has asked city gas distributors to provide piped natural gas (PNG) connections to commercial LPG consumers wherever feasible.

Regarding action against hoarding and black marketing of LPG, authorities have stepped up raids and surprise checks, Sharma said. State governments and local administrations have intensified enforcement, with states conducting raids and surprise inspections jointly with the OMCs in various parts of the country. The OMCs have also activated their inspection teams, conducting around 1,300 surprise inspections at LPG distributorships and retail outlets in one day. Sharma added that specific action against cylinder theft and hoarding have already led to recoveries and arrests in various states. “In Uttar Pradesh, enforcement teams inspected 1,483 locations; 24 FIRs were registered (4 against LPG distributors and 20 against individuals), 6 persons were arrested and prosecution initiated against 19 individuals,” the government said in a release. Raids have also been conducted in states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, and Bihar. It added that state governments and district administrations have been asked to closely monitor the LPG supply situation and ensure smooth cylinder distribution. Chief ministers and senior officials have already held review meetings in various states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Goa, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. “Citizens are advised not to panic. The Government is committed to maintaining LPG availability for households and essential sectors. LPG cylinders can be booked easily through digital platforms such as IVRS calls, SMS, WhatsApp and mobile applications of the Oil Marketing Companies. Consumers are advised to book cylinders from home and avoid visiting LPG distributors unnecessarily. Citizens are requested to avoid panic bookings and use digital modes for booking to prevent crowding at LPG agencies,” the government said.

## Tempers flare in Assembly as BRS, Congress clash over allegations

Hyderabad: Tempers ran high in the Assembly on Tuesday as BRS and Congress legislators clashed over allegations of personal defamation during the Motion of Thanks on the Governor's Address. The confrontation began when BRS working president KT Rama Rao said the ruling Congress was targeting Opposition leaders. BRS MLAs and leaders were being attacked in broad daylight, he said, and referred to an incident during the Sarpanch elections in Kamareddy, where a Congress leader allegedly drove a tractor over a BRS-backed candidate. Reacting immediately, Congress MLA from Yellareddy K Madan Mohan Rao denied the allegations and said the BRS working president was making false claims. He maintained that he had no role in the incident and attributed it to personal issues.

## Supreme Court appoints ex-CJI UU Lalit as mediator in Rs 500 crore RAKIA dispute



New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday appointed former Chief Justice of India U U Lalit as the sole mediator to amicably resolve the dispute over the execution of a money decree of Rs 500 crore passed by a UAE court in favour of Ras Al Khaimah Investment Authority (RAKIA) and against Hyderabad-based industrialist Nimmagadda Prasad. RAKIA is seeking to enforce a UAE civil judgment for AED 267,941,374 (approximately Rs 543 crore principal and Rs 643 crore with interest). The case stems from the ‘Vanpich Project’, a failed 2008 joint venture to develop ports and an airport in Andhra Pradesh.

RAKIA alleges that Prasad, in collusion with former RAKIA CEO Khater Massaad, misappropriated USD 120 million intended for the project. On Monday, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was informed by senior advocate Gopal Subramaniam, appearing for Prasad, that the industrialist has deposited Rs 125 crore as cash security as directed earlier. The senior lawyer also said that the original title deeds of a 37-acre land parcel in Telangana have been submitted in the court. He also added that the land parcel is free from encumbrances. Subramaniam said his client was willing to undergo mediation for an amicable settlement of the case.

Senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for the foreign firm, said they were agreeable to time-bound mediation to resolve the dispute with a condition that the status quo with regard to the assets of Prasad be maintained and no third party rights be created till the conclusion of mediation. Taking note of the consent of both parties, the CJ appointed Justice Lalit as the sole mediator and requested him to undertake the mediation for expeditious disposal of the case. The bench asked Justice Lalit to undertake the mediation exercise in hybrid mode to enable the representatives of RAKIA to appear through video conferencing, keeping in mind the security situation in the Gulf region. Clarifying its earlier order, the CJ said the Hyderabad-based businessman can use the funds for running “day-to-day affairs” of his firms, including payment of salaries, and will not alienate immovable properties without prior nod of the court.

The bench said that Justice Lalit may consider hearing related parties while undertaking the mediation exercise. It said Justice Lalit will decide his professional fees and other ancillary expenses in consultation with the parties to the litigation. Earlier, the top court directed Nimmagadda Prasad to deposit Rs 125 crore as cash security and submit the original title deeds of a 37-acre land parcel in Telangana in a case stemming from a failed 2008 joint venture to develop ports and an airport in Andhra Pradesh. It had granted time to the industrialist to propose an alternative arrangement for the remaining security. The bench had asked Prasad to furnish a security of Rs 600 crore for hearing his plea against the UAE decree.

The court took note of the affidavit filed by Prasad in compliance with its February 12 order and analysed the proposal to deposit security worth Rs 600 crore. “In a purported attempt to honour the observations which this court proposed to issue on the previous date regarding furnishing security comprising Rs 600 crore with the Registry of this Court, the deponent respondent no.5 has offered the following three assets,” the bench noted in the order. The businessman offered shares and assets allegedly valued at Rs 212 crore, presently attached by commercial courts under orders passed on September 5 and October 6, 2023. Besides additional cash security of Rs 125 crore, he also offered a 37-acre land parcel at Devarayamjal village in Medchal-Malkajigiri district, claimed to be worth Rs 408 crore.

“As regards the first component of the security, namely shares and other assets attached by the Commercial Courts, we are not inclined to accept the same. Faced with this, Shri Gopal Subramaniam, learned Senior Counsel, representing respondent no.5, seeks more time to submit an alternative proposal. The request is accepted,” the bench said. On the issue of the 37-acre property, known as Medchal Land, the bench said the original title deeds should be deposited with the registrar of the top court along with an affidavit of undertaking that the land is free from all encumbrances except that it was earlier attached by the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) and was released subject to furnishing of an indemnity bond. “In this vein, respondent no.5 shall be obligated to furnish an affidavit along with an undertaking to the effect that the requisite indemnity bond has been furnished, thereby complying with the release order passed by the Appellate Tribunal under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act,” it said. On the issue of additional cash security of Rs 125 crore, the bench took note of the statement of Subramaniam that the amount shall be deposited within one week. “On doing so, the registry is directed to keep that amount in the UCO Bank of the Supreme Court in a high-interest-bearing FDR initially for a period of six months with an auto-renewal facility,” the bench had directed. It said the interim arrangement regarding the security shall be without prejudice to the rights of the parties.

## Why your metabolism slows down after 30: Orthopaedic experts warn of ‘silent’ muscle and bone loss you can’t feel yet

Many people assume that muscle loss and weaker bones are concerns that only appear much later in life. However, these changes can begin earlier than most people realise. Recently, Mumbai-based orthopaedic surgeon Dr Manan Vora highlighted this issue in an Instagram video. According to him, declining muscle mass, known medically as sarcopenia, remains one of the most overlooked health concerns in India. He mentioned in the caption: “After 30, muscle and bone loss begin quietly. If you don't challenge your body, it slowly gets weaker (sic).”

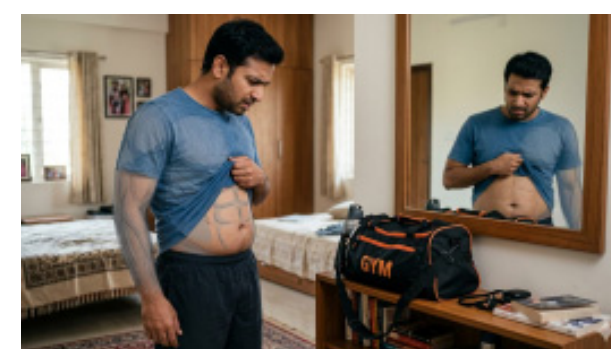
In the video, he said, “Every doctor will tell you to eat well and sleep well, but almost nobody talks about this. After the age of 30, your body starts losing muscle. You cannot feel it happening, but it is happening right now. This is called sarcopenia, and it is one of the most ignored health problems in India. And this muscle loss does not just make you look weaker. It slows down your metabolism. So suddenly you are eating the same food you always ate, but your body is storing it differently. The weight creeps up, and nobody connects it back to muscle loss.”

Alongside muscle decline, he also drew attention to another gradual process that often goes unnoticed: bone loss. Over time, bones can lose density and strength, making them more fragile. Dr Vora warned that this may only become apparent when a fracture occurs after what appears to be a minor fall or injury. “Now add bone density to this. As you age, your bones quietly become thinner and more fragile. Osteoporosis does not announce itself. It shows up one day as a fracture from a fall that should have been nothing,” he explained.

To address both muscle and bone loss, Dr Vora emphasised the role of strength training, particularly lifting weights. According to him, building and maintaining muscle through resistance exercise can play a key role in protecting metabolism, bone density, and long-term physical function. “The single most powerful thing you can do to fight both of these is pick up heavy weights and lift them. Strength training isn't just for aesthetics — it's one of the most powerful ways to protect your metabolism, bones, and long-term health. And I want to be very clear, if the weight in your hand is not making you work, it is not doing anything for you. Your body only adapts to challenges it has not faced before,” he said.

At the same time, Dr Vora stressed that strength training is not limited to athletes or highly fit individuals. People of different ages and fitness levels can gradually build muscle and improve physical resilience through regular exercise. “Start at any age. Start at any fitness level, but start. Strength training is not about looking good. It is about making sure your body works for you at 50, 60, 70, and beyond,” he concluded.

But why does muscle mass begin to decline after the age of 30? Dr (Prof.) Raju Vaishya, senior consultant orthopaedic and joint replacement surgeon at Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi, tells indianexpress.com, “Muscle mass naturally begins to decline after about age 30 due to a process known as age-related sarcopenia. This occurs because of reduced muscle protein synthesis, gradual loss of muscle fibres, hormonal changes (decline in testosterone, estrogen, and growth hormone), lower physical activity, and sometimes inadequate protein intake. On average, Dr Vaishya notes, “adults lose around 3-5% of muscle mass per decade after 30,” and the decline accelerates after midlife. Since muscle is a metabolically active tissue, he says, losing muscle slows the basal metabolic rate, making fat gain and metabolic disorders such as insulin resistance more likely. Over time, reduced muscle mass leads to declining strength, poorer balance, and reduced



physical function. This increases the risk of falls, fractures, frailty, and loss of independence with ageing.

How are muscle loss and bone density connected?

Muscle and bone function as a biological unit. Dr Vaishya states, “Muscles generate forces that stimulate bones to maintain or increase their density. When muscle mass declines, the mechanical load on bones decreases, which contributes to progressive bone loss and increases the risk of osteoporosis and fractures.”

The safest and most effective way to start building muscle and protecting bone health For beginners, Dr Vaishya notes, the safest approach is to start gradually with structured resistance training and focus on correct technique rather than heavy weights. Body-weight exercises (such as squats, wall push-ups, and lunges), resistance bands, or light weights are ideal starting points. A practical strategy is 2-3 sessions per week, targeting all major muscle groups. Intensity can be increased progressively as strength improves. “Beginners should also combine training with adequate protein intake, vitamin D, and regular physical activity, which support muscle repair and bone health,” concludes Dr Vaishya.

## Govt to relaunch Stand-Up India scheme with wider benefits: Sitharaman

New Delhi: The government will soon come out with a modified Stand-Up India scheme to provide better benefits to SC/ST and women entrepreneurs looking to set up new projects, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday.

Launched in 2016, the Stand-Up India scheme aimed to empower Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and women entrepreneurs by facilitating bank loans for setting up new enterprises. The scheme expired on March 31, 2025. Replying to a supplementary question in the Lok Sabha, the Minister said the modified scheme will incorporate lessons learnt in implementation of the original Stand-Up India scheme.

“With studies done by Niti Aayog and others, this scheme is being redrafted and sooner the Cabinet will be given a proposal with which we will launch a new scheme to continue with this Stand-Up which benefitted SC/ST and women all over the country,” Sitharaman said. The scheme provided loans between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore at the lowest applicable rate of the bank for that category, with a repayment period of 7 years with a maximum moratorium of up to 18 months.

## Ambati Rayudu recalls when MS Dhoni called him 'Tin roof' for losing his temper easily but ended up going on field angrily to argue with umpires in the same season



GNS News Agency, March 17

It was during the 2019 Indian Premier League when the calm captain MS Dhoni lost his cool against the umpires during the game between Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals in Jaipur. In a thrilling game of cricket, MS Dhoni scored 57 runs before being bowled by Ben Stokes for a yorker. The skipper had to walk back, but he returned to the field of play again when upset with a decision.

The next delivery after Dhoni's wicket was a clear waist-high no-ball to Santner, which was ruled out by umpire

Ullas Gandhe after trying to raise his arm. This prompted an angry Dhoni to enter the ground and argue animatedly with Gandhe, before leg umpire Bruce Oxenford calmed him and sent him back. Then Santner finished it off in style. MS Dhoni was later docked 50 per cent of his match fees for the offence at the time. CSK player Ambati Rayudu, recalling the incident on StarSports, revealed how Dhoni used to call him a tin roof and how the batter loses his temper easily, but on that occasion, it was a bit of role reversal. "Sometimes he would call me tin roof. At that time, there was no DRS for wide and no-ball, so we would tell that umpire that it was a wide or no-ball. He would only tell me one thing, focus on batting and don't spread your hands, we will lose fairplay points. But that year itself, he went onto the field. So we did not lose because of me," he says laughing on 'Cheeky Singles'.

The dramatic incident began when umpire Gandhe signalled a no-ball off a full toss. It was not Gandhe's call to make (being a no-ball for height) and it was overruled by square leg umpire Bruce Oxenford. However, Dhoni, had spotted the umpire raising his arm and stormed on to the ground in protest with the match hanging in the balance. Quite a few of the Rajasthan players got involved in the heated argument, but ultimately Oxenford diffused the situation.

## FIDE's Candidates gambit in Cyprus comes with a deja vu from the COVID-interrupted 2020 Candidates

In 10 days, 16 of the top chess players in the world will assemble at the luxury resort of Cap St Georges Hotel and Resort in Cyprus for one of the most cut-throat tournaments on the chess calendar, the Candidates. Only, one of the top contenders in the women's Candidates tournament, Koneru Humpy, may not be there despite qualifying. Why? Because Cyprus, the island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, is within missile's length of Lebanon, which houses Hezbollah, which is a proxy for the Iranian regime that is currently at war with Israel and the USA. While so far the idyllic island has largely escaped the excesses of war, there was a drone strike at an airforce base that the British have in Cyprus at the start of the month.

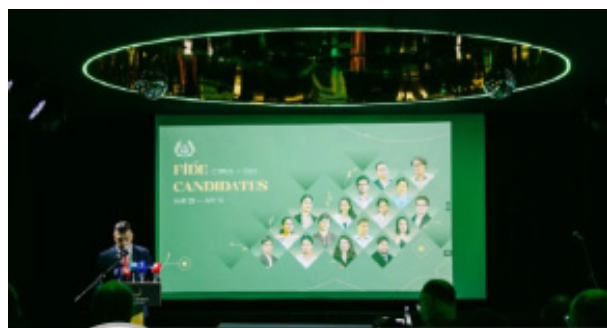
Humpy's contention is simple: if things in the war do not improve, she is likely to skip the tournament rather than risk her life to play in the event. The global governing body of chess, FIDE, on its part has said that it's monitoring the situation on a daily basis and the tournament will go on.

Humpy's stance and FIDE's refusal to move the tournament's venue will mean that the organisers might end up extending an invite to the tournament to Anna Muzychuk at the last minute. This is not the first time that FIDE has had to extend an invite to a player for the Candidates at the last minute. At the 2020 Candidates too, FIDE had to scramble for a last-minute replacement after Teimour Radjabov pulled out with FIDE refusing to postpone the tournament from Yekaterinburg in March of 2020 even though the rest of the world was shutting down for the pandemic. Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave was called in, and the tournament began, only to be stopped after seven rounds when Russia stopped all air traffic from the rest of the world to stem the flow of the COVID-19 virus. The remaining seven rounds were eventually played one whole year later with Radjabov grumbling that he should be given a spot into the event because the reason for his withdrawal had been proved correct with the tournament's postponement.

Of course, this is not to suggest that a global pandemic and the current war in the Middle East are comparable. But as opposed to the 2020 edition, the current Candidates could have been easier to relocate.

If Humpy eventually pulls out, the situation will end up leaving everyone unhappy. Humpy, who will turn 39 on the day the third round of the Candidates will be played, is understandably displeased. The rest of the seven players too will not be happy at the situation considering how much planning goes into drawing up war plans for every opponent at the event only to find out that a new wildcard challenger has been introduced in the mix.

Since only finishing first matters at a Candidates, players hunker down with their teams, preparing in gruelling training camps for months at a stretch. Each of the eight players in the women's event would have drawn up detailed war plans for each of the seven opponents they will face



twice at the event. Everything, right down from the openings they play against an opponent, and which game to push to a draw and which opponent to fight for a full point would have been on the players' strategy boards. In the middle of all this, players might find a new wildcard contestant to face.

Ian Nepomniachtchi, who ended up winning the 2020 Candidates after playing the second half of the event a year later had told FIDE about the issues with having a last-ditch replacement. "Usually, any last-minute replacement is always like a dark horse that can win the whole thing," said Nepomniachtchi before pointing out how Maxime Vachier-Lagrave was joint leader in the standings with himself when the tournament was stopped.

"No one prepared for Maxime (Vachier-Lagrave). Everyone was getting ready for Teimour Radjabov, so they analyzed, let's say, the Berlin Defence or the Queen's Gambit. At the end of the day, Vachier-Lagrave is a completely different player with a completely different style and openings, he came as a replacement, so no one was ready to pose problems for him, and I guess this helped him a lot in the first phase," Nepomniachtchi told FIDE in an interview. Had the tournament gone ahead without being interrupted due to COVID and players did not have a full year to prepare for Vachier-Lagrave in the second half, the Frenchman might have even won the whole thing, a scenario which would have inevitably led to more protests from all the eight original players since Vachier-Lagrave had never even qualified for the event and was thrown in as an out-of-syllabus question.

In an interview with Russian agency TASS back in 2020, FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich spoke about the "tough call" to postpone the Candidates. "The situation in Russia is quite difficult right now. We could provide safe conditions for the tournament, but from a psychological standpoint, the players are under the pressure. Unfortunately, we can't eliminate this negative factor," Dvorkovich had said. Five years later, Humpy is speaking about exactly this psychological pressure on players that exists while playing in the backyard of a raging war. As she articulated: "You should be in a position to play the game in a peaceful and a good atmosphere. Not surrounded by bomb or missile sirens."

## Pratika Rawal calls for more women Tests, terms format 'most beautiful'



GNS News Agency, March 17

India batter Pratika Rawal has advocated for more women's Test matches, calling the longest format the 'most beautiful' and the ultimate examination of a cricketer's character. After a composed half-century on her Test debut in Australia, the 25-year-old highlighted how the red-ball format continues to shape her game and mindset. "Test cricket is the most beautiful format. Since childhood my father and coach have told me that performing well in this format is very important. When you are groomed in that manner, it naturally becomes your favourite format," Pratika told PTI.

While participating in the one-off day-night Test match in Australia earlier this month with the Indian women's team, Pratika played an important role in helping India avoid being beaten by an innings, scoring a well-composed 63 runs from 137 balls in second-innings. Pratika also revealed how she got inspired for the format by closely watching some of the greatest batters in the game. "I have watched many videos of great batters like Viv Richards, Sachin Tendulkar, Brian

Lara and Ricky Ponting. The way they used to play in Test cricket has always inspired me," she told PTI. Calling for more opportunities in the longest format, she stressed its impact beyond just cricketering skills. "The more Test matches we play, the better it will be. The experience of playing Test cricket not only improves you as a cricketer but also helps you grow as an individual."

Pratika had already scored 308 runs in just six innings to begin the ICC Women's World Cup, before injury cut her campaign short. However, she has one of the best ODI records of 1,189 runs in 27 ODIs including two centuries and eight half-centuries and certainly continues to grow as a player competing at the highest level in women's cricket.

## ICC announces Kettle Chips as supporter for Women's T20 World Cup 2026

Hyderabad: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday announced Kettle Chips (KETTLE® Chips) as an Official Supporter of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026, to be held in England and Wales from 12 June to 5 July. The association adds the premium FMCG brand to the tournament's partner portfolio, strengthening the ICC's commercial framework while reinforcing its commitment to building a strong ecosystem around its women's events and engaging strong local brand partners to expand the tournament's reach and impact.

## 30 years later: When Arjuna Ranatunga got the Australians in the 1996 World Cup final and Aravinda de Silva did the rest



GNS News Agency, March 17

The recently-concluded 2026 T20 World Cup was noteworthy for the kind of performances that countries that were deemed underdogs put in. Sri Lanka in 1996 may have been a Test-playing nation for 14 years but were yet to be taken as serious contenders in the World Cup. The fact that they reached the final itself was seen as an achievement but it was almost exactly what their pugnacious captain, the legendary Arjuna Ranatunga, had wished for earlier in the tournament, right down to who they would face once they get there.

Australia had refused to play a match in Colombo earlier in the tournament due to security concerns after which Ranatunga had said: "We want the Australians in the final." He got exactly that and then, when he won the toss on March 17, 1996, Ranatunga bowled first, hoping that his pacers get some early wickets in the cool conditions at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. It was the first day-night match to be played in Pakistan.

In the opening exchanges, it had looked like the match would go as was expected. Mark Waugh fell early to Chaminda Vaas but his opening partner and captain Mark Taylor and Ricky Ponting blazed 72 runs in the first 13 overs. Ranatunga's plan of getting some early wickets via pace, had failed. But as it turned out, that was the only period in which Australia looked clearly on top of the game. Ranatunga brought in his spinners, Muttiah Muralitharan and Aravinda de Silva and later mixed in Kumar Dharmasena and Sanath Jayasuriya. Muralitharan may have gone on to be recognised among the greatest bowlers of all time but this was to be Aravinda's day all the way.

He first dismissed Taylor on 74 off 83 balls and then Ponting on 45 off 73. De Silva later went on to dismiss Ian Healy and finished the Australian innings with figures of 3/42. Jayasuriya, Dharmasena and Muralitharan all finished with a wicket each and Australia had compiled a score of

241/7 in their 50 overs. Sanath Jayasuriya and Romesh Kaluwitharana's approach to opening the batting in this tournament has in the years since come to be recognised as a significant milestone in the history of the sport. Gone were the days when openers would blunt the early salvo from the bowling side, Jayasuriya and Kaluwitharana made full use of the 15-over fielding restrictions that had been introduced in 1996 and made it a policy to smash the living day-lights off the white ball in the early overs. Interestingly, though, the pair fell flat on the final, the biggest game of them all. Jayasuriya was run out by the barest of margins while Kaluwitharana was caught at square leg off Damien Fleming.

Aravinda De Silva's all-round show is still regarded among the greatest ever individual performances in a World Cup final. (Reuters File Photo) Aravinda De Silva's all-round show is still regarded among the greatest ever individual performances in a World Cup final. From there, though, it was all Sri Lanka with Australia being guilty of some very un-Australian fielding lapses. This was the first day-night match in Pakistan and the effect of dew may have been a factor, something that cricketers at the time weren't too used to dealing with. The Australians kept fumbling the ball and dropped four catches that came to them for the rest of the evening.

The Sri Lankans made full use of it. De Silva had led the way with the ball, he now led with the bat, first with a strong stand with Asanka Gurusinha (65 off 99 balls) and then with an unbeaten one with captain Ranatunga (47 off 37). De Silva, meanwhile, finished with 107 off 124 balls. He was just the third player to score a century in a men's World Cup final after West Indies greats Clive Lloyd and Viv Richards. The victory started a period in which Sri Lanka, while not dominant, were always among the tougher teams in the world to beat. They would go on to reach the finals in back-to-back World Cups in 2007 and 2011 but ended on the wrong side of the result on both occasions. It was Australia led by Ricky Ponting who beat them in the 2007 final by 53 runs and in 2011, they were beaten by MS Dhoni's India. Since 2014, however, Sri Lanka haven't quite managed to maintain those lofty standards. Australia, on the other hand, would go on to reach the final of the next three World Cups as well – and they won the title on occasion. The 2011 title clash between India and Sri Lanka was the first in nearly two decades to not feature Australia. However, they were back in 2015 to win their fifth title and they then beat the much favoured Indian side in 2023 to lift the World Cup a sixth time.

## 'Rishabh Pant's gone out of favour in India's white-ball teams': IPL 2026 season key for LSG captain's comeback, says ex-CSK batter



I)GNS News Agency, March 17

India wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant will need an extraordinary IPL 2026 season to revive his chances in the ODI and T20I set-ups, according to former India batter S Badrinath. Pant has been away from competitive action for more than two months since captaining Delhi in the domestic circuit, and is now gearing up for his second IPL season as captain with Lucknow Super Giants.

"There will be a lot of focus on Rishabh Pant. Let's not forget, he was the most expensive player in the auction two years back. So there will be massive expectations on him. It is clear that he has gone out of favor within the Indian

white-ball setup. They are seeing him only as a red-ball player," said Badrinath on his YouTube channel. Pant was signed up by LSG for a record-shattering Rs 27.50 crore last season. The weight of expectations did not sit well with Pant, who managed only 269 runs at a 24.45 average, his lowest ever in an edition of the tournament. Badrinath observed that captaincy had bogged down Pant last season, affecting his consistency. Pant last featured for India in the white-ball formats in mid-2024. He has lost his status as the first-choice wicket-keeper in ODIs to KL Rahul in this period and was not in the reckoning for the T20 World Cup this year. "If he has to create headlines in white-ball cricket, the upcoming IPL season in huge for Pant. Captaincy has seemingly diminished his free-flowing batting. He has not been very consistent in the last two IPL seasons. He hasn't delivered much in white-ball cricket. Except that one century at the end, he didn't do anything last season. It was just a face-saving hundred," the former CSK batter remarked. Pant has undergone a tremendous makeover in his bid to revive his white-ball credentials. The Indian Express recently reported on how a chiseled Pant is gearing up for a fresh season. The work he has put in over the last five months speaks for itself. Ahead of what promises to be a defining IPL season, the LSG captain looked remarkably fit as the franchise began its preparations in Chennai.

## Mohammad Kaif says KL Rahul 'should open only' for Delhi Capitals in IPL 2026



GNS News Agency, March 17

KL Rahul is talented enough to bat in all positions, which brings its own challenges. He is constantly pushed up and down the order to fix the batting issue in that particular team. And the same was the case with the Delhi Capitals last season: They constantly played musical chairs with their batting order. Although Rahul could adjust and give decent returns, the rest of the batting around him got destabilised. Former Indian cricketer Mohammad Kaif said Delhi should continue with Rahul as an opener and should not get confused.

"I think he will open, and he should open only. He has a fabulous record as an opener. If we talk about the last three or four years, his graph, when it comes to strike rate, has gone up a lot. I feel they shouldn't get confused," Kaif said on his YouTube channel. "The problem is that they ask KL Rahul to bat at No. 4 or do the finishing role. He should go and play his game, and as an opener. They have David Miller and Tristan Stubbs as well this time. You open, and back your shots and game. A massive change was seen in his batting last year. He improved his game in the power play, and he alone won a few matches," Kaif observed. Kaif also lauded Miller's buy by Delhi for the upcoming season, he said it will further add balance. "The biggest thing is David Miller. He will bat at No. 5 or No. 6 on that Delhi pitch, and

he is in great form. So they have done two things. They have filled their squad with a lot of openers and brought in Miller. Spinners were their strength from earlier, and they have a few fast bowlers as well. It's looking like a more balanced team compared to last year," Kaif observed.

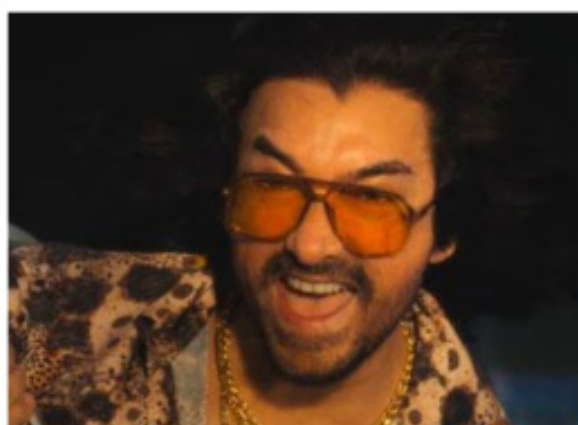
## Milind Soman on working in South vs Hindi industry: It's more relaxed, faster & seamless

Mumbai: Actor Milind Soman, who has worked across multiple industries including Hindi and South cinema, recently in an exclusive conversation with IANS, spoke about the differences he experienced while working in both the film industries. The former supermodel who has also been part of a few projects down South, is now gearing up for his latest Tamil web series Kaataan.

In an exclusive conversation with IANS, Milind spoke about how working environments often differ between both the industries and also shared his observations from working on South Indian projects. "I think in the South they are much more relaxed. That's what I feel. There are not many things that you have to navigate or negotiate. Not that I personally have to do any of that, but I can see how everybody works," he said.

He further explained that work tends to move faster and more efficiently on South film sets. "It is much easier to get things done and get them done on time. Things move quickly and people are able to negotiate any kind of obstacles that come up, because shooting is otherwise and generally never easy," he elaborated. Sharing his experience working particularly in Tamil projects, the actor said the teamwork on set stood out for him. "

## ‘Aamir Khan shut everyone up by playing my father’: Mona Singh on Happy Patel, Laal Singh Chaddha, and playing ‘female Gabbar’



because I haven't gotten any call yet. The call should come. My son should be a footballer by now (laughs).

You reunited with Aamir in 3 Idiots, where you played his mother. How did you evade the typecasting after that?

I was offered a lot of mom roles. But I just don't want to be a mom. I look for what my character is doing in the film, besides being a mom. That's why I said yes to Laal Singh Chaddha because she was the hero of the film. She did so much! I'm a big fan of the original film, Forrest Gump (1994), so I had to be a part of its Indian remake. But I'm here only because I said no to all the other mom roles.

You and Aamir are connected via the umbilical chord, right? He helped you deliver a baby in 3 Idiots. You played his mom in Laal Singh Chaddha. And then he played your dad in Happy Patel! Did that strike you?

Ya, we did not have scenes together. Vir hadn't cast anyone at that point of time. I remember he and Kavi called me later and asked, "Guess who's playing your dad?" I said, "Who?" They said, "Aamir!" (Laughs). It's only an actor like Aamir who can think out of the box and do something so quirky. He shut everyone up! He's a very smart and intelligent actor.

You were the best part about Happy Patel. I love your dialogue, "Kitne men the men," which is such a Goan tribute to Sholay (1975). Right?

Yes, she's a female Gabbar from Goa (laughs). That's what I loved the most about Vir's writing — creating a character who's a villain who has her whole world where she's celebrating femininity. She's dressed up in all-pink, has her pink castle, her goons are dressed in pink, she loves cooking, and has a crush on Sanjeev Kapoor. Wow, that's so different and unpredictable! Vir used to keep telling me, "Less is more." He said just perform it straight as it is because the character itself is so quirky. He said, "Don't imitate a man just because you're playing a don." Nobody would've imagined me playing a character like Mama.

Another line of yours that I loved was when she smacks Sanjeev Kapoor and says, "I loved you!" How was it doing that scene with him?

I was just cracking up! I took some five takes because I just couldn't fathom the crazy writing (laughs). He was having a ball. I love that about him. People who don't take themselves seriously are the best kind of people I vibe with. It's just one life! Stop taking yourself seriously. I remember Vir and Kavi were a little apprehensive of telling him he's going to get a punch in his face. I told them, "Go, tell him. I've done Jhalak Dikha Jaa with him in 2006. I know him. He's a very funny man. I'm sure he'll be okay with it." And he jumped at it! In fact, when I said yes to the film, Vir and Kavi sent me a thank you note. With that, they sent me a picture of Sanjeev Kapoor, which said, "The love of your life! Swaadanusaar!" They're just inherently funny.

When 2026 kicked off, Mona Singh's last theatrical release was four years ago — Advait Chandan's Laal Singh Chaddha. Two months into 2026, she's had two theatrical releases in January — Vir Das and Kavi Shastri's directorial debut Happy Patel; Khatarnak Jasoo and Anurag Singh's hit period war drama Border 2. Last month, she headlined season 2 of Sudip Sharma's Netflix India crime drama Kohrra. And this month, she played the gangster Babli in Suresh Triveni's action thriller Subedar on Prime Video India.

In an exclusive interview with SCREEN, Mona opens up on how 2026 is already shaping up to be the year of Mona Singh, her enduring equation with Aamir Khan, and the film journey that started with Rajkumar Hirani's 2009 blockbuster 3 Idiots. It's the first time in your career that you've had two theatrical releases in the same month. Does that hit differently from streaming releases? It hits you differently. 70 mm screen is a different ballgame. People actually invest in taking a cab, going to the theatre, and watching the film there. If they like it, great! If they don't, it's okay. We'll try harder next time. I had such different theatrical releases back-to-back — I played a don in Happy Patel and a soldier's wife in Border 2 (laughs).

Did you not expect more film offers after starring in 3 Idiots, one of the biggest Indian hits of all time?

Honestly, no. I was happy doing TV at that time. I was trying out new things, participating in and hosting reality shows. I was just celebrating the fact that I was getting to work with the biggest director of the country and the biggest ensemble cast. I was such a fan of Aamir sir, Madhavan, Sharman Joshi, Kareena Kapoor, and Boman Irani. I get to do my first film with them? I was just celebrating that. I didn't think ahead. Kareena Kapoor, Mona Singh, and Aamir Khan in 3 Idiots. Kareena Kapoor, Mona Singh, and Aamir Khan in 3 Idiots.

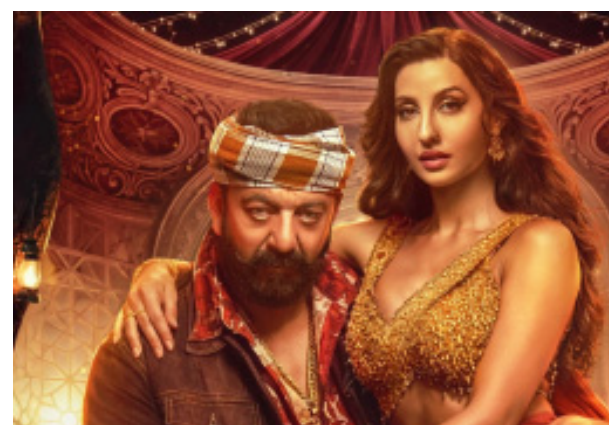
Is the rumour true that there's a sequel in the works? I also heard that, but I thought it must be a rumour

## ‘Vulgar’ Nora Fatehi-Sanjay Dutt song ‘Sarke Chunar’ gets pulled after NHRC notice; Kangana Ranaut blames Bollywood: ‘Crossed all limits’

Nora Fatehi and Sanjay Dutt-starrer song "Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke" from the Kannada film KD – The Devil faced massive backlash from the audience due to its lewd lyrics and suggestive choreography. In the latest development, as per The Times of India, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a legal notice regarding the same, following which the song has been taken down from YouTube and other platforms.

The backlash against the song intensified after advocate Vineet Jindal filed a formal complaint with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, as per ANI. The advocate urgently requested the authorities to take legal action against the song. The advocate called out the song for being "highly vulgar, sexually suggestive, and obscene expressions". He also showed discontent over the fact that it is being widely circulated on social media.

The complaint also highlighted how the song is highly inappropriate, especially for minors, due to its lyrics that are explicitly objectionable and unsuitable for public consumption. The complaint names key contributors to the song, including lyricist Raqeeb Alam, director Prem, composer Arjun Janya, and singer Mangli. As per reports, a separate criminal complaint has already been filed with the Delhi Police Cyber Cell regarding the song. The song was uploaded by Anand Audio in multiple languages—Hindi, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada—on YouTube on Monday. However, after the complaint, the song has been taken down from the platform. However, copied lyrical videos of the song remain online, and some visuals continue



to circulate in short-form videos. In an interaction with ANI, Kangana blamed Bollywood for the Kannada film's song. She said, "Bollywood has crossed all limits with vulgarity, tactics, and attention-seeking. The entire country is condemning and reprimanding them. But I don't think they have any shame... There needs to be even more strictness about the display of such vulgarity and obscenity. It is difficult to even watch TV with family. I think some strict rein will have to be put on Bollywood." Onir also reacted to the controversy and blamed the CBFC for clearing the song. He wrote, "And the Censor board is busy with The naming of a film #GhooskorPandat. Strange country we are becoming... opposing Valentine's day celebration, interfaith marriage/celebration while ok with this rubbish."

## ‘Aishwarya Rai didn't sit for 7 hours to avoid creasing outfit’: Ponniyin Selvan jeweller recalls actor's ‘extreme professionalism’

Two years ago, when Sobhita Dhulipala tied the knot with Naga Chaitanya, her bridal look quickly went viral. It captured widespread attention for its dreamy yet deeply rooted approach to tradition. Recently, Pratiksha Prashant from a legacy jewellery house from Hyderabad, spoke about the very same jewellery that Sobhita had worn earlier in Ponniyin Selvan. Pratiksha had worked on those pieces, which Sobhita later chose to wear again for her wedding, adding a layer of personal significance to her bridal ensemble.

'Sobhita Dhulipala has her own style' "Shobhita, she wore our jewellery in the film. And then at her wedding. She was very clear from the beginning, while we were doing the film, that whenever she gets married, she told me, "Pratiksha, I'm going to wear your jewellery," said Pratiksha in a chat with Fashionably Pernia.

She further added, "Even in the film, she looked incredible. She has something about her own style. She's very stylish and has a very good taste." Aishwarya Rai is a thorough professional! In the same conversation,

Pratiksha also spoke at length about the professionalism of Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, who also wore her jewellery in Ponniyin Selvan. She said, "She is not Aishwarya Rai, just like that. I have seen the amount of precision she needs, with her dress, her style, her costume. Even a single pin, she would not want it to be seen in the hairdo."

She then added, "She's not only particular about how she looks from here or there but from every angle. A thorough professional. I remember one scene where she was given an organza dupatta. On the set, she didn't sit for six to seven hours because she didn't want it to crease. I've seen it with my own eyes." Recently even celebrity stylist Ashley Rebello recalled styling Aishwarya during her early years, when she was preparing for the Miss World pageant. He said in a podcast Beyond the Frame with Avinash Tripathi, "When she went for Miss World, I gave her at least 20 sarees. I made chiffon sarees in different colours: rani pink, yellow, turquoise blue, black, white, and red. I also gave her lots of bangles and matching bindis and told her that when you go for breakfast every day, you must wear a new saree."

## Nora Fatehi's ‘Sarke Chunar’ lyricist Raqeeb Alam says he refused to write the song, only translated the Kannada version written by director: ‘I feel humiliated’



Nora Fatehi and Sanjay Dutt's song "Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke" from the Kannada pan-India film KD: The Devil has sparked widespread backlash over its double entendre lyrics, which many viewers have criticised as vulgar and inappropriate. Amid the growing outrage, lyricist Raqeeb Alam has now responded, claiming that the controversial lines are not originally his work. "These lyrics were not written by me"

In a conversation with HT City, Raqeeb clarified that the song was first written in Kannada by director Prem, and he was only asked to translate it. "These lyrics were not written by me; they were originally written by director Prem in Kannada. When I was asked to write this, I refused, saying such songs won't work and would be censored. But they told me to simply translate the Kannada version and give it to them, and they would set it to the song's meter," he said. Acknowledging that the lyrics carry double meanings, Raqeeb admitted he was uncomfortable with the content from the start. "In the end, they reveal that the song is about an alcohol bottle, but before that, everything feels very vulgar. I had refused to write it. Why would I need to write such songs? When I write good songs, people don't notice. I have written 'Chikri

Chikri' in Hindi for Ram Charan's upcoming film Peddi, and all the Hindi songs of Pushpa were written by me. I feel humiliated because of Sarke Chunar," he added.

'He further revealed that the makers have already approached him to fix the issue. "They called me on Monday night and requested a fresh version with clean lyrics. I sent it on Tuesday morning, and it was recorded the same day. They are planning to release the new version along with an apology note," he said. Following the controversy, the official version of the song has been removed from YouTube and other platforms. According to The Times of India, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has also issued a notice over the use of objectionable content. Advocate Vineet Jindal filed a complaint with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), urging authorities to take legal action against the track. The complaint describes the song as containing "highly vulgar, sexually suggestive, and obscene expressions" and raises concerns over its widespread circulation on social media. The complaint names key contributors, including Raqeeb Alam, director Prem, composer Arjun Janya and singer Mangli. Reports also suggest that a separate criminal complaint has been filed with the Delhi Police Cyber Cell. Although the original video has been removed, copies of the song and visuals continue to circulate online in various forms. The controversy has also drawn sharp reactions from within the industry. Singer Armaan Malik wrote on social media, "Sad to see commercial songwriting hit a new low." Filmmaker Onir criticised the situation, saying, "And the Censor board is busy with the naming of a film #GhooskorPandat. Strange country we are becoming... opposing Valentine's Day celebration, interfaith marriage/celebration while ok with this rubbish." Actor Kangana Ranaut blamed Bollywood for promoting such content. Speaking to ANI, she said, "Bollywood has crossed all limits with vulgarity, tactics, and attention-seeking. The entire country is condemning them. But I don't think they have any shame... There needs to be stricter control over such obscenity. It is difficult to even watch TV with family."

## ‘Hawa Hawa’: The iconic Sanjay Dutt entry song for which Dhurandhar makers paid \$50,000 to a Pakistani singer

As Aditya Dhar's spy thriller Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge, starring Ranveer Singh, is on the verge of release, fans have been revisiting the first part, which released in cinemas this past December. Shashwat Sachdev's music was one of the key highlights of that film, particularly his recreation of memorable tracks like Roshan's "Na To Caravan Ki Talash Hai", Usha Uthup's "Ramba Ho", and Panjabi MC's "Jogi". But there were some songs that were just used as they are, one of them being Pakistani pop icon Hassan Jahangir's seminal 1987 track "Hawa Hawa", which is invoked for the entry of Sanjay Dutt's character SP Chaudhary Aslam. Now, the singer has confirmed that the makers of Dhurandhar indeed sought permission from him and even paid him \$50,000 to use the song in the movie.

"This wasn't the case earlier. But now, I get paid for all my songs. There was no copyright system earlier," said Jahangir in an interview with a Pakistani portal. The only exception he made was the Pakistani reality show, Pakistan Idol, because it's the country's pride. The singer also recalled how warmly he was welcomed in India when he visited after the release of "Hawa Hawa", which became as popular in the neighbouring nation: "I didn't know people there are so crazy for music. When I landed at the Mumbai airport, I got to know the customs officer were on the duty to escort me. There were so many big actors there to receive me. There were no smartphones then, but I got so many visiting cards from everyone," said Jahangir. "Hawa Hawa", written, composed, and sung by Jahangir, has been inspired by "Havar Havar", a 1970s Persian song created by Iranian rock legend Kourosh Yaghmaei. While "Havar Havar" translates to "Shout Shout", Jahangir turned it into "Hawa Hawa" in Urdu, which translates to "Wind, wind". Yaghmaei was best known for fusing Persian lyrics with Western psychedelic rock music.

"Havar Havar" was a part of Yaghmaei's 1973 debut album Gol-e-Yakh. While the titular hit was a bigger hit in Iran and around the world back then, "Havar Havar" turned out to be a global rage only after Jahangir turned it into "Hawa Hawa". The track sold over 15 million cassettes in India alone, a massive landmark for pre-digital music era. "Hawa Hawa" has been invoked numerous times in Hindi films over the years. While sometimes, official permission has been sought from Jahangir, at other times, its lyrics have been changed to suit the commercial Hindi palate while retaining the music that has an instant recall value. It took only a couple of years after the release of "Hawa Hawa" for its tune to get imitated across the border.

The first such instance was "Jawan Jawan Ishq Jawan" in Sisir Misra's Billoo Badshah (1989). The club song was featured on Govinda, who also lent his vocals to the track. While it was an unofficial rehashing of the song, Govinda was one of the actors who warmly welcomed Jahangir at the Mumbai airport when he visited India. Another unofficial adaptation was "Aaya Aaya Pyar Aaya", repurposed by Bappi Lahiri, in David Dhawan's 1989 action film Aag Ka Gola, which was featured on Sunny Deol, Archana Puran Singh, and Prem Chopra, which the director and Archana even discussed on the season 4 finale of The Great Indian Kapil Show on Netflix India last Saturday. "Hawa Hawa" was used largely as it is as "Hawa Hawa Ye Hawa" in Latif Khan's 1994 action film Insaaf Apne Laaho Se. While Sanjay Dutt was a part of the star cast, the song wasn't featured on him. In Dhurandhar, it's used as his entry song also because the film is set largely in Pakistan, where he plays a corrupt police officer. The first time the rights to "Hawa Hawa" was officially secured by Indian filmmakers was with Hriday Shetty's 2012 crime comedy Chaalis Chauraasi. That film used both the original track and a remixed version, sung by Neeraj Shridhar. The video featured the lead cast — Naseeruddin Shah, Ravi Kishan, Kay Kay Menon, and Atul Kulkarni.

The most recent reiteration of "Hawa Hawa" was in Anees Bazmee's 2017 romantic comedy Mubarakan. With



additional music by Gaurav Roshin, vocals by Mika Singh and Prakriti Kakkur, and additional lyrics by Kumaar, the song just retains the hook line while the rest of the song has entirely new lyrics. It's filmed on Arjun Kapoor and Ileana D'Cruz. Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge, mostly set in Pakistan like its first part, is co-produced by Aditya and Lokesh Dhar's B62 Studios and Jyoti Deshpande-led Jio Studios. Ranveer, Sanjay, Arjun Rampal, R Madhavan, Sara Arjun, and Rakesh Bedi will reprise their roles from the first part. The sequel is all set to release in cinemas this Thursday on March 19 in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada, on the occasion of Eid, Ugadi, and Gudi Padwa.

## Dharmendra missing from Oscars 'In Memoriam'; Priyanka Chopra returns to stage

Los Angeles: India had a brief, starry moment at the Oscar stage when Priyanka Chopra Jonas presented the award for best international feature film alongside Javier Bardem who grabbed attention with his declaration "No to war, free Palestine". But those seeking more of India at the 98th Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre here on Sunday were in for a disappointment. Bollywood legend Dharmendra was conspicuously absent from the In Memoriam segment and Indian American filmmaker Geeta Gandbhir didn't win either of her two nominations. "The Devil Is Busy" was nominated in the best documentary short category and "

The Perfect Neighbor" in the best documentary feature segment. And then there was Isha Ambani, daughter of industrialist Mukesh Ambani attended Hollywood's biggest night with her husband Anand Piramal. While she wore a vintage strapless column gown from Valentino's Fall 2006 couture collection, featuring floral embroidery in pastel shades of lilac, pink, blue and green, Piramal opted for a Dolce and Gabbana suit. For Chopra Jonas, it was a return to the Oscars stage after a decade. Dressed in a white feathered Dior gown, the 43-year-old actor said global stories "remind us that international is never truly far away... because every story sends a ripple far beyond where it begins," she said. Her on stage moment with Bardem, who opened with the words "No to war, free Palestine" while wearing a patch bearing the slogan "No a la Guerra", the same anti-war slogan he sported more than two decades ago to protest the Iraq war in 2003, made sure she was splashed across social media platforms and elsewhere. The winner in the category was "Sentimental Value", directed by Norway's Joachim Trier. And Dharmendra, India's loved Hindi movie star who passed away in November 2025 at the age of 89.