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## Hyderabad woman arrested in AQIS link case

Hyderabad: The Counter Intelligence cell of AP Police detained a woman Sayeeda Begum from Chanchalguda for allegedly indulging in anti-national activities. She stays near Zaikha Hotel, Chanchalguda Road. A team of the CI cell and Vijayawada police reached the residence of Sayeeda Begum (35) and took her into custody and shifted to Vijayawada. The AP Police had unearthed a criminal conspiracy and arrested Andhra Pradesh residents Mohammad Rehmatulla Sharif, Mohammad Danish and Mirza Sohail Baig. Rehmatulla Sharif had allegedly come into contact with a foreign handler, namely Al-Hakim Shukoor, through social media.

## Apollo Hospitals Jubilee Hills completes 2,000 robotic surgeries

Hyderabad: Apollo Hospitals Jubilee Hills on Wednesday announced crossing 2,000 robotic procedures using the advanced Xi robotic surgical system. High-end Xi robotic technology has been widely utilised across multiple specialties, including Gynaecology, Surgical Oncology, Urology, Cardiac Thoracic Surgery and Surgical Gastroenterology, a statement from the hospital said. Dr Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Group, said: "Our expert teams of surgeons across departments have successfully adopted this minimally invasive platform, enabling complex procedures with greater accuracy, reduced pain and faster recovery time for patients".

## CPI (ML) Mass urges Supreme Court to review caste status verdict

GNS News Agency, March 25

Khammam: CPI (M-L) Mass Line state secretary Potu Ranga Rao has urged the Supreme Court to review its recent verdict that SC, ST caste status does not apply to those who convert to Christianity and other religions. In a statement here on Wednesday he stated that the Supreme Court's ruling was a serious loss to the individuals who were oppressed and marginalised based on caste and class in society. This verdict was nothing but a vindication of the Manuvada (Manusmriti) doctrine. Indian society has witnessed caste discrimination and oppression for thousands of years. The people of productive and working castes were seen as untouchables in society. For thousands of years, they were kept away from education and economic empowerment, Ranga Rao said.

SC/STs were subjected to political, economic and social oppression. Caste oppression took place in a rung-by-rung manner. In this context, many political and social movements were carried out for their rightful place in society. On the other hand, seeing this oppression created by Manusmriti, they joined Christianity and Islam for relief. However, caste discrimination continued. In this context, the framers of the Constitution decided to provide reser-



ervations in the Constitution, he noted. The reservations have given them some opportunities in society. The affected communities could be reverted to their previous state in the society with the Supreme Court's verdict. It supports the political policies of religious fanatics. Moreover, the verdict could take away the religious freedom of individuals. Hence the Supreme Court should consider the Indian social conditions and appropriately reverse the decision, Ranga Rao added.

## No electricity tariff hike in Andhra Pradesh for 2026-27

Amaravati: In a major relief to electricity consumers across Andhra Pradesh, the Andhra Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (APERC), on Wednesday, approved no increase in electricity tariffs for 2026-27.

The state government said that the APERC's deci-

sion reaffirms its commitment to protecting households, farmers, and small businesses from rising power costs.

Commercial tariffs have been reduced from Rs 12.25/unit to Rs 9.95/unit, benefiting about 2 lakh consumers.

Cottage industry load limit has been doubled from 10 HP to 20 HP, aiding 18,000 small enterprises.

The Commission's order also includes the true-up/down and performance review of DISCOMs for 2024-25, following an extensive public consultation process.

While DISCOMs projected a revenue gap of Rs 17,508 crore, APERC approved a lower gap of Rs 15,790 crore, which will be fully supported by the state government.

This intervention ensures no tariff hike across all consumer categories, no additional burden through true-up charges and continued affordability and financial stability for consumers

According to an official statement, the order delivers wide-ranging benefits across sectors.

This has protected 1.13 crore domestic consumers from tariff increases while 22 lakh farmers will continue receiving free power supply.

As many as 22 lakh SC/ST and economically weaker households will receive free or subsidised electricity through direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme.

To boost industrial activity and align with emerging sectors, APERC has introduced key structural changes, including new tariff subcategory for solar module manufacturing, promoting clean energy investments, reclassification of water purification plants and printing presses as industrial units, rationalisation of tariffs for utilities such as national highway street lighting and special provisions for poultry and seasonal processing industries.

The Commission rejected several proposals that would have increased consumer burden, including changes in time-of-day tariff structure, shift to non-telescopic billing for certain consumers and removal of green power category.

APERC has issued critical directions to DISCOMs to improve operational efficiency: They have been told to accelerate clearance of subsidy dues and government department arrears, implement strategies to minimise private arrears, enhance electrical safety measures, including public reporting systems via websites and WhatsApp and ensure compliance with national standards and The Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme targets.

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## Parliament passes Transgender Rights Amendment Bill, 2026

GNS News Agency, March 25

Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh conducts the proceedings of the House during the Budget Session of Parliament on March 25, 2026. The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday (March 25, 2026) takes up the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, for consideration and passing. The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on Tuesday (March 24, 2026) by a voice vote amid an Opposition-led walkout. Following Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman reply to the discussion, the Lok Sabha on Wednesday (March 25, 2026), passed the Finance Bill, 2026 by a voice vote. With the passage of the Finance Bill 2026 with 32 government amendments, the Lok Sabha completed its part of the Budgetary approval process. The Upper House, Rajya Sabha, will now consider the Bill. The Central Armed Police Force (General Administration) Bill, 2026 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday (March 25). The bill to amend the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act was introduced in the Lower House. After a brief debate, Krishna Prasad Tenneti, who was in the chair, called for a vote on the motion, which was



accepted by voice vote. The Parliament, which was earlier expected to sit over March 28-29 in lieu of holidays last week, will not be convening on the weekend, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju informed the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday (March 25, 2026). He said the call has been taken in view of the "ongoing situation". The second part of the Budget session, which started on March 9, is scheduled to end on April 2.

## No refund for last minute cancellation: Railways introduces new ticketing reforms for passengers



GNS News Agency, March 25

In a significant development, the government has announced a revised ticket cancellation system. Union Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw, speaking at Kartavya Bhavan in New Delhi on Tuesday (March 24, 2026), said the changes introduced under the "Reform Express" initiative are aimed at curbing misuse of the ticketing system and improving access for genuine passengers. Mr. Vaishnaw said ticket black marketing and misuse of the Tatkal scheme had been a long-standing concern. To address this, the Railways has deployed technology to detect bots and fraudulent software. Further technological interventions have also been introduced to restrict the ability of agents and touts to book tickets immediately after the Tatkal booking window opens, along with Aadhaar-based OTP verification. A detailed data analysis led to the identification and removal of nearly three crore fake accounts from the IRCTC system. This has resulted in a significant improvement in ticket availability, he said. Advance preparation of reservation charts. The ticket cancellation time windows of 48, 12 and 4 hours before departure have been revised to 72, 24 and 8 hours. This change aligns with the advance preparation of reservation charts, which will now be done 9 to 18 hours before departure instead of the earlier four hours. The revised system will not involve any additional cost to passengers. Advance preparation of reservation charts

is expected to improve passenger convenience by reducing uncertainty, enabling better planning for waitlisted passengers and supporting travellers from remote locations. Early charting also allows for alternative travel arrangements, optimises the use of vacant berths and enhances transparency. The changes are aimed at discouraging last-minute speculative bookings and ensuring tickets are available to genuine passengers. Under the new system, passengers cancelling tickets more than 72 hours before departure will receive the maximum refund, with only a flat cancellation charge per passenger levied. For cancellations made between 72 hours and 24 hours before departure, 25% of the fare will be deducted, subject to the minimum charge. The penalty increases for late cancellations. If a ticket is cancelled between 24 hours and 8 hours before departure, 50% of the fare will be deducted, subject to the minimum charge. No refund will be permitted for cancellations made less than eight hours before departure. Cancellations made easier. The Minister also announced that counter tickets will soon be permitted to be cancelled at any railway station across the country, removing the earlier restriction that required cancellation only at the originating station. He said the requirement of filing a Ticket Deposit Receipt for e-tickets has been done away with, and refunds will now be processed automatically upon cancellation. In another passenger-friendly measure, passengers will be allowed to upgrade their travel class up to 30 minutes before departure, whereas earlier such changes were permitted only before the preparation of the reservation chart. Mr. Vaishnaw said the reforms are expected to further improve transparency, reduce misuse and enhance the overall passenger experience in railway ticketing. In another reform, the Union Minister said passengers will be allowed to change their boarding station digitally up to 30 minutes before the departure of the train from its originating station. He noted that earlier, passengers could modify the boarding point only before the preparation of the reservation chart. Under the revised provision, passengers who are unable to board the train from the original station can select the next convenient station and board the train without losing their confirmed seat.

## Trump's use of Pakistan as possible mediator with Iran sparks memories of Nixon's China talks and Bangladesh liberation

GNS News Agency, March 25

Pakistan's emergence as Washington's choice as a mediator in talks with Iran can be explained in a number of ways. Since Operation Sindoor in May 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump has been flattered by Pakistan's description of him as a "peacemaker", and he has reportedly built a personal rapport with Pakistan's Field Marshal General Asim Munir and Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif, meeting them a number of times. In particular, Mr. Trump hosted General Munir to lunch at the White House in June last year, amidst the last U.S.-Israeli strikes in June 2025, in an effort reportedly to ensure that Pakistan would not support Iran militarily. Pakistan's offer of a critical minerals deal to the U.S. and decision to join the Gaza Board of Peace (BoP) have also helped forge the relationship. For Iran, Pakistan's advantage over many other possible mediators is not only its proximity but also the fact that it does not recognise Israel, and thus is not amenable to concerns or inputs from the Netanyahu government. This may suit Mr. Trump as well, who has reportedly conveyed a 15-point proposal to the government in Tehran which it hopes would

lead to a ceasefire. However, Washington's decision to engage Pakistan as a facilitator for talks may also be rooted in history, given Islamabad, and a different General's role in facilitating U.S. talks with China 55 years ago, at the height of the Cold War. At that time, U.S. President Richard Nixon had begun to work on his plan to open up relations with Beijing (U.S. still formally recognised Taiwan as the Republic of China (ROC)), but direct Sino-U.S. Ambassadorial talks had floundered. Pakistan was not the first option, as he and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger considered others, including Poland, France and Romania. Mao Zedong, Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party and leader of the People's Republic of China (PRC), turned down the idea of France as he wanted a "non-Western" channel. The Warsaw track fell apart after two rounds of talks between U.S. and Chinese officials, as Mao Zedong protested U.S. attacks on Cambodia, which were part of a U.S. Army effort to cut off supplies to Vietnamese troops. While Mr. Nixon's need for partners in Asia, as the Vietnam war drained the U.S., drove him to seek China, Sino-Soviet tensions gave Mr. Mao a reason to engage with Washington.

## Amaravati secretariat towers construction progressing rapidly: Minister Narayana

P. Narayana, Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development, has announced that construction of five iconic towers at the Secretariat in Amaravati is progressing at a rapid pace. The towers are being designed to accommodate all state-level officials.

Speaking on Wednesday after performing special rituals and inaugurating the installation of a corner node for HOD Tower-3, the Minister said the structures are being built using advanced diagrid technology. He noted that work had been delayed for four months last year due to heavy rainfall.

Narayana stated that construction of iconic buildings, residential quarters for public representatives and officials, and key infrastructure projects is now moving swiftly. He highlighted that N. Chandrababu Naidu has introduced a unique financial model for the development of Amaravati.

Emphasising the funding approach, the Minister said that not a single rupee of public tax revenue is being spent on the capital city, reiterating that Amaravati is being developed as a self-financing city. He also criticised what he described as "malicious propaganda" being



spread against the project.

Referring to a recent fire incident in Amaravati on Monday night, Narayana said the Chief Minister has reviewed the situation and an inquiry is underway. He added that strict action would be taken if any deliberate wrongdoing is established.

Officials, including AGICL Managing Director Srinivas and several engineers, were present at the event.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Critical digital stack made in India is need of the hour

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has recently emphasised on using Indian-made products. Seen as a push to 'Swadeshi' products and services, the Prime Minister has urged every Indian citizen to promote domestic products in our bid to reduce dependence on foreign ones.

While such call can be seen as part of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' push of the Government of India, present timing points towards a bigger scheme of things. And these are related to shifting geopolitical environment. As the US under Trump administration turns towards trade protectionism, established alliances are witnessing a shift. Old assumptions are being revisited. Global analysts have started talking about a new world order.

It is a known fact that India-US relations are not in best of health at this point of time. From punitive tariff of 50 per cent imposed on India by the US to increasing H1B visa fee, recent US actions can be seen as outrightly hostile to India. With new dynamics emerging in Indo-US relations, vulnerability of India as an economy has come to the fore. For instance, dependence of India as country on American technology giants is huge. Google, Microsoft, Meta to Apple, Indian users are completely dependent on American tech companies for doing their daily work. Enterprises' dependence on hyperscalers like AWS, Microsoft Azure & Google Cloud is very high. In a way, from enterprises to consumers, Indian system is wholly dependent on American technology firms. Such dependency exposes Indian economy to American whims in the future. Ironically, this phenomenon has been playing out for years though India is considered to be power house in IT services space.

## On day IP Awareness Program was successfully conducted in Vaagdevi College of Engineering, bollikunta warangal



Warangal, march 25(Indian Chronicle). In collaboration with the Ministry of MSME and the Intellectual Property Facilitation Centre (IPFC), a one-day IP Awareness Workshop was successfully conducted on 24th March 2026 at the West Block Auditorium, Vaagdevi College of Engineering, Bollikunta, Warangal. The program was organized in association with the IIC Cell and funded by the Ministry of MSME, Government of India. The workshop witnessed active participation from around 100+ attendees, including students, researchers, local entrepreneurs, MSMEs, and startups from various regions. The primary objective of the workshop was to demystify the legal aspects of innovation and to provide practical insights into the filing and commercialization of intellectual property. Mr. Srinivas Maddipati served as the resource person for the workshop. He is also the President of the Educational Society for Intellectual Property Rights

(ESIPR). He delivered an insightful session on intellectual property rights and their importance in innovation and business growth. The event was convened by Dr. K. Prakash, Principal, along with Dr. K. Thirupathi Rao, Vice Principal, and Dr. M. Shahsidhar, Principal of Vaagdevi Engineering College. The workshop was successfully co-ordinated by Dr. Pankaj Rangaree and Dr. B. Sateesh, along with the support of senior faculty members. The program was graced by the presence of distinguished guests, including Dr. Ch. Devender Reddy, Dr. C. Satyapal Reddy, Dr. Ch. Vani Devi, Dr. Ch. Vahini Devi, and Mr. Ch. Vishwambara Reddy. They appreciated the efforts of the organizers and encouraged the participants for their active involvement in the workshop. The workshop concluded on a positive note, leaving participants with valuable knowledge and awareness about intellectual property rights.

## Mass Protest Led by Khairatabad District Congress Committee President Motha Rohit Mudiraj on LPG Crisis



Today, under the leadership of Motha Rohit Mudhiraj, President of the Khairatabad (Hyderabad Central) District Congress Committee, a large-scale protest was organized

Condemning the central government's negligent attitude toward the rising LPG cylinder prices, protesters carried placards with slogans such as "Mr. Narendra - Where is my Cylinder?" and "Episten Puri - Where is my Cylinder?" while laying siege to Lok Bhavan (Raj Bhavan). During the 12 years of the Modi government's rule, India's energy security has been completely neglected. While massive publicity campaigns were carried out under the leadership of Narendra Modi, there has been a clear and serious failure in addressing basic needs. India depends on imports for nearly 60% of its LPG, while strategic reserves are limited to just 10-20 days, which is extremely dangerous. There appears to be no basic contingency plan on how the country would cope if international tensions disrupt supply. This clearly reflects the lack of foresight on the part of the government. The protest rally began at the Indira Gandhi statue and continued up to Lok Bhavan. Around 800 women and party workers participated, holding plates and spoons and creating loud sounds to awaken the central government. After the protest, a delegation visited the Governor's office and submitted a memorandum regarding the issue. The Congress party has demanded that the central government immediately reduce the burden of rising LPG cylinder prices on the public. Motha Rohit Mudhiraj, President of Khairatabad (Hyderabad Central) District Congress Committee

## Daughter Kills Mother, Buries Body Under Cement Floor in House

### Murder plotted over love affair Jawaharnagar case cracked by police

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 25, (Indian chronicle). Jawaharnagar: In a shocking incident, a teenage girl, along with her lover, murdered her own mother for opposing their relationship and buried the body inside their house, covering it with cement to avoid suspicion. The gruesome crime came to light under the Jawaharnagar police station limits, and was disclosed by Malkajgiri Zone DCP Sridhar on Wednesday. Love Affair and POCSO Cases: According to police, Anju (40), a domestic worker from Kaukuru Bharat Nagar, had a 17-year-old daughter who developed a relationship with Monty Kumar Singh, a driver from Bihar, while she was studying Intermediate. As the girl was a minor, Anju strongly opposed the relationship. Earlier, two POCSO cases had been registered against Monty, and despite serving jail time, there was no change in their behavior. Murder Planned and Executed: Seeing the mother as an obstacle, the accused planned the murder.



On May 12 last year, Monty hid inside the house and attacked Anju when the girl signaled him. While the daughter held her mother tightly, Monty stabbed her in the chest, killing her on the spot. They initially hid the body under a bed, cleaned the bloodstains, and later dug a pit inside the house, buried the body, and covered it with cement and sand. To avoid suspicion, they claimed the floor was damaged by rats and even got repair work done. Missing Case Leads to Breakthrough: The crime surfaced after Anju's elder daughter, Roshini, filed a missing complaint in October 2025. During investigation, Monty was questioned, leading to the revelation of the murder. After committing the crime, the accused continued living together, got married in January this year, and now have a two-month-old baby, police said. Accused Arrested: Based on Monty's confession, the body was exhumed in the presence of the Tahsildar and sent for post-mortem. Both Monty Kumar Singh and the minor girl were arrested and remanded. The DCP appreciated the police team for cracking the case.

## Land Mafia Racket Busted in Keesara Police ASI Among 9 Arrested for Forgery and Illegal Land Registrations

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 25, (Indian chronicle). Keesara: Keesara police on Wednesday busted a land grabbing racket involved in fraudulent property registrations using forged documents. A police Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) is among the nine accused arrested in the case. The gang created fake documents, including death certificates and fabricated family records, to illegally transfer ownership of lands without the knowledge of the original owners. The case came to light after two complainants, Keshaboyina Ramadevi and Madanu Madhuri, approached police on March 16 and 17. They alleged that their lands had been fraudulently registered in the names of unknown persons using forged documents.



Police formed special teams and launched a detailed investigation, which led to the arrest of the accused. The gang mainly targeted vacant plots and lands whose owners were not residing locally. They collected details of landowners, created fake death certificates declaring them deceased, and produced fake legal heirs. Using these forged identities, they executed gift settlement deeds and sale deeds. The lands were then registered in the names of associates linked to the gang. In two separate cases (Crime No. 241/2026 and 248/2026), police arrested nine persons. The accused include Kanakanti Lingayya Goud (ASI), Praveen Reddy, Modem Sampath, Kamble Deepa, Uppala Venu, Donapati Venkat Reddy, Gundiga Jyothi, and Madanu Innayya. Police seized forged documents and mobile phones from the accused. Police officials advised the public to thoroughly verify land documents before entering into any transactions. The accused have been remanded, and efforts are ongoing to trace other suspects involved in the racket.

## Government Backs Rehabilitation of Former Maoist Families

### We will support Maoist families – District Collector Haritha



Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 25, District Collector Haritha stated that the government will extend all necessary assistance and support to families of former Maoists. On Wednesday, a district-level committee meeting was held under the chairmanship of the Collector at the Conference Hall of the Integrated Collectorate Complex. Superintendent of Police Nitika Panth, ITDA Utnoor Project Officer Yuvaraj Marmat, Asifabad RDO Lokeshwar Rao, and other officials participated in the review meeting. The Collector announced that the government will support the family of former Maoist Boyini Nagesh from Sandeep Nagar, Asifabad town. She stated that steps will be taken to sanction an Indiramma house. Reports will be sent to the government for granting land ownership (patta) for the government land currently being cultivated by Nagesh. She further added that Nagesh's wife will be enrolled as a member of a women's self-help group and facilitated to receive a bank loan. Additionally, arrangements will be made to support higher education for Nagesh's daughter, who discontinued her studies after the 10th grade. DRDO Dattarao, Collectorate Supervisor Jitender, and other officials attended the meeting.

## Harish Rao dares Revanth Reddy to contest from Siddipet, predicts BRS return to power

GNS News Agency, March 25

Hyderabad: BRSLP deputy leader and former Minister T Harish Rao threw down the gauntlet at Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to contest from Siddipet, in response to the latter's offer of a ministerial berth to any Congress leader winning Siddipet constituency. He predicted that the Congress government would not return to power in the next Assembly elections. Why send someone else? Revanth Reddy himself should come and contest against me in Siddipet. Let the people decide, he said, adding that the present term would be Revanth Reddy's last. During an informal interaction with reporters at the Assembly on Wednesday, Harish Rao said the BRS would form the next government and party president K Chandrashekar Rao would once again become the Chief Minister. Even if Revanth Reddy stands on his head in penance, he will not become the Chief Minister again. The next government will be formed by the BRS, he declared.

The BRSLP deputy leader accused the Congress government of deceiving all sections of society, particularly BCs, SCs, STs and minorities, by failing to implement its election guarantees. Citing replies given by the government in the Assembly, he said less than two per cent of the funds allocated for community welfare corporations were actually spent, calling it proof of neglect towards weaker sections. In the last two years, the Congress government spent Rs 6 crore of Rs 1,370 crore allocated to BC Corporation, Rs 52 crore of Rs 2,730 crore allocated to ST Corporation and Rs 74 crore of Rs 5,403 crore allocated to SC Corporation. Similar is the case of funds allocated to various communities in the State, he said, adding that the Budget disappointed every section of society, prompting BRS legislators to protest in the House.

Harish Rao also said the government misled unemployed youth by taking credit for job appointments based on posts sanctioned during the previous BRS regime. Citing reply to question raised by BRS working president and Sircilla MLA KT Rama Rao, he said the government admitted to have issued 16 notifications and filling 16,978 jobs since the Congress came to power. This government only handed over appointment letters to 50,785 people and taking credit for work done by the previous BRS government, he said. Criticising the conduct of Assembly proceedings, the BRSLP deputy leader said discussions were being curtailed and key questions were not being taken up. He said even Zero Hour was not being conducted regularly. He demanded that the Budget session be extended by a week to allow proper debate on public issues. Welcoming delimitation and women's reservation, Harish Rao felt that an increase in Assembly seats would ultimately benefit the BRS, while cautioning that Southern States could face disadvantages due to population-based delimitation for effectively implementing population control norms.

## HC issues notices to seven MLAs, Speaker in defection case

GNS News Agency, March 25

Hyderabad: The Telangana High Court on Wednesday issued notices to seven MLAs facing defection allegations and to Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar in petitions challenging the Speaker's recent ruling dismissing disqualification petitions filed against 10 BRS MLAs who switched to the ruling Congress.

## Congress Party Office Inaugurated in Habsiguda



— Office set up under the leadership of former Medchal–Malkajgiri District Youth Congress President Kandi Shraavan Kumar Reddy— Inaugurated by DCC President Totakura Vajresh Yadav and Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Parameshwar Reddy—KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 25 (Indian Chronicle):—The inauguration of the Congress Party office in Habsiguda division was held in a grand manner. The office, established under the leadership of former Medchal–Malkajgiri District Youth Congress President Kandi Shraavan Kumar Reddy, witnessed the presence of DCC President Totakura Vajresh Yadav and Uppal Constituency In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy. They hoisted the party flag and formally inaugurated the new office by cutting the ribbon. —“Victory should be the goal” — Vajresh Yadav—Speaking on the occasion, Totakura Vajresh Yadav called upon party leaders and workers to strive collectively for the victory of the Congress Party in the upcoming corporation elections.

He emphasized unity among leaders and cadres, urging them to actively fight on public issues and strengthen the party at the grassroots level. He also stated that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is giving special attention to Uppal constituency, which is progressing rapidly in terms of development. —“We will establish dominance in all divisions” — Parameshwar Reddy—Parameshwar Reddy stated that efforts will be intensified to strengthen the Congress Party across the Uppal constituency and ensure victory in all divisions. He expressed confidence that not only Habsiguda but all divisions in the constituency will come under Congress control in the upcoming corporation elections. A large number of Congress leaders and party workers from Habsiguda, Venkat Reddy Nagar, Ramanthapur, Nacharam, Mallapur, and Housing Board divisions attended the event. Several senior leaders, former corporators, and division-level office bearers were present and reiterated their commitment to work towards the party's victory.

## City Municipal Commissioner Mr. Abhishek Agastya IAS toured various parts of the city today.



INDIAN CHRONICLE KHAMMAM As part of this visit, he participated in social awareness programs along with inspection of development works. “Inspection of Drainage Works in 46th Division” The Commissioner visited the 46th Division and inspected the ongoing drainage construction works there at the field level. The officials were directed not to compromise on the quality of work. “Important instructions: In view of the rainy season, it has been clarified that the works should be completed in a timely manner in coordination with the engineering department so that the people do not face any difficulties. “A call for a drug-free society” Later, the commissioner participated in the “Drugs Free Campaign” organized at St. Mary’s School. Addressing the students on this occasion, he said: “It is advised to stay away from drugs and build a bright future.” He asked the students to have social responsibility along with studies and to increase awareness about the dangers caused by drugs.

## Paramaswar Reddy Stands in Support of Uppal Street Vendors..!

— Ensures vendors can continue business without disrupting traffic— Resolves issue through coordination with traffic police—Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, March 25 (Indian Chronicle):—Congress Constituency In-charge of Uppal, Mandumula Paramaswar Reddy, extended his support to street vendors in the Uppal area. He coordinated with traffic police to ensure that vendors are not displaced from their livelihoods and can continue their businesses without causing obstruction to traffic. “In Uppal, construction works for the elevated corridor on the Warangal National Highway are set to begin soon. In this context, the Warangal bus stop located at Uppal Ring Road is being shifted to the Nallacheruvu area. As a result, traffic police recently instructed the street vendors in Nallacheruvu to relocate to another place. The vendors brought this issue to the attention of Paramaswar Reddy, expressing their concerns that they have been running small businesses in the same area for many years for their livelihood. Responding to this, Paramaswar Reddy on Wednesday held discussions with Uppal Traffic ACP Sampath Kumar and Inspectors Ramalinga Reddy and Nagaraju. Along with the officials, he



visited the Nallacheruvu area and inspected the location where the vendors operate. Based on the suggestions of the traffic authorities, an alternative space was identified in the same area where vendors can continue their businesses without causing traffic disruption. The vendors expressed their happiness over the resolution. Street vendors participated in the program.

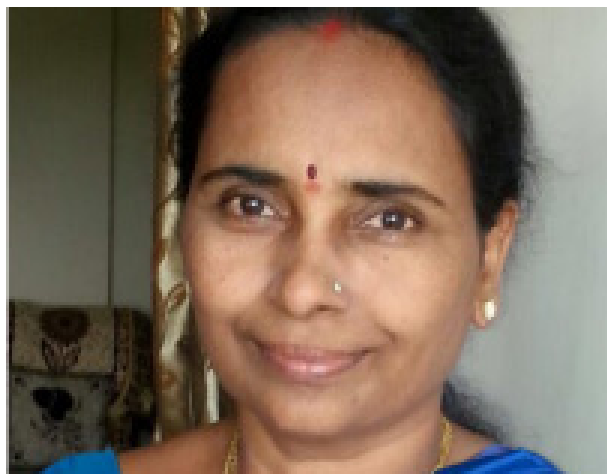
## Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Distributes CM Relief Fund Cheques



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 25 (Indian Chronicle):—Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy stated that the Chief Minister’s Relief Fund has been a great support and a boon for the poor. He handed over CM Relief Fund cheques to Guduru Kumar and Guduru Harish, residents of Uppal Division. “Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said that the government should ensure that applicants receive their cheques promptly after applying for the CM Relief Fund. He also mentioned that he is making every effort from his side to ensure that all those who approach him receive the fund. “The beneficiaries expressed their gratitude to the MLA for his efforts in securing the relief fund for them.” Swarup Reddy Colony Welfare Association President Panga Mahender Reddy, Kale Nursing, Rani, and BRS leaders also participated in the program.

## Shobharni has resigned Congress party

Jagtial Town, March 25 (Indian Chronicle):—Shobha Rani Tatiparthi has resigned from the post of General Secretary of Mahila Congress and primary membership of the Congress party. After the resignation of former minister Jeevan Reddy, Shobha Rani announced her resignation, saying “Me Vente Memantu” (we are with you).—Shobha Rani served as ZPTC member of Pegadapalli in Jagtial district in 1995 and as Sarpanch of Bathikepalli in Pegadapalli mandal in 2019. She worked tirelessly to provide drinking water to the villages by constructing water tanks. As the General Secretary of Mahila Congress, she played a key role in enrolling more members in the party and strengthening it.—Shobha Rani, who worked with dedication in the Congress party, has now resigned and severed ties with the party.



## Plans for roads and infrastructure development in the acquired lands

—Sangareddy Collector P. Pravinya reviews with NIMS, Revenue, Survey and TGIC officials.—Sangareddy, March 25 Indian Chronicle Correspondent Sunil: Zaheerabad NIMS, District Collector Pravinya said that the survey is key to preparing an infrastructure plan by connecting the lands required for the establishment of industries. District SP Paritosh Pankaj held a comprehensive review meeting on Wednesday with NIMS, TGIC, Survey and Revenue officials on the development and survey processes of TGIC lands in the district, as well as lands under NIMS/NICDC.—“Speaking on the occasion, the Collector ... instructed the officials to complete the survey at the earliest for the development of the layout for the establishment of industries. He suggested that steps be taken to create roads and other infrastructure according to the layout. The officials said that advance arrangements should be made to ensure that the survey process is carried out without any hindrance and in a peaceful environment.—“He ordered that a survey be conducted and a comprehensive report be submitted in accordance with the creation of infrastructure such as electricity, water, and roads, which are necessary for the establishment of industries. He once again clarified that the survey is crucial in preparing a land connection and infrastructure plan within the Zaheerabad NIMS area.—“To expedite the survey work, it was suggested that special teams be formed in coordination with the Revenue, Survey, and Police departments and the survey should be com-



pleted with measurements. Similarly, the current status of the acquired lands, pending issues, and issues in the land acquisition process were reviewed. It was decided to speed up the registration processes by discussing the issues of advance possession and land transfer. The Collector ordered that the officers of all departments should work in coordination without hindrance to the development of industries and resolve the pending issues expeditiously.—District SP Paritosh Pankaj, Additional Collector Madhuri, TGIC Zonal Manager Vitthal, Zaheerabad RDO Devuja, NIMZ Special Deputy Collector Visalakshi, tehsildars and officials participated in this meeting.

## Huge Revenue for Wankidi Weekly Market... But Development Remains Neglected

—Indian Chronicle. (Jade Srinivas) March, 25.—The weekly market held every Thursday at Wankidi mandal headquarters generates significant revenue, yet it continues to struggle due to lack of basic infrastructure and development. Traders from nearby villages and surrounding areas actively participate in the market, making it an important commercial hub in the region.—“However, the absence of proper sheds has forced traders to set up temporary tents and conduct business under harsh weather conditions. During summer and rainy seasons, the situation becomes even more difficult, leading to damage of goods and financial losses. Traders have expressed serious concern over these ongoing issues.—“Moreover, the market lacks essential facilities such as toilets, causing inconvenience especially to women, elderly people, and visitors. Basic amenities like drinking water and proper waste management are also inadequate, further adding to the difficulties faced by both traders and customers. In the recent auction held on Tuesday, the weekly market generated a revenue of ₹9.51 lakh. Despite such a substantial income every year, there is little visible progress in terms of infrastructure development. Traders have questioned whether these funds are being effectively utilized for improving the market

conditions. They are now urging the Gram Panchayat authorities to take immediate steps to construct permanent sheds, provide toilet facilities, ensure clean drinking water, and improve sanitation in the market area. Traders believe that with proper development, the weekly market can grow further and generate even higher revenue for the village. Local traders and residents have appealed to the authorities to focus on the development of the weekly market and address the long-pending issues at the earliest.—“End.—“Immediate Response to Venkat Reddy Nagar Colony Issues by Uppal Youth Congress President Akarapu Arun Patel—KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 25 (Indian Chronicle):—Akarapu Arun Patel, President of the Uppal Constituency Youth Congress, promptly responded to the long-pending issues in Venkat Reddy Nagar Colony. Acting on the request of the residents, he initiated repair works on a war footing on Wednesday.—“For the past year, drinking water pipelines in the colony had been leaking, resulting in wastage of water for nearly three kilometers. The residents brought this issue to the attention of Arun Patel, who immediately responded by summoning officials, including Water Board AE Tirupati and lineman Vijay, to the site and ensured that repair works began with...

## I'll fight against Revanth Reddy.. “Who is Vem Narendra Reddy? -

Angry Jeevan Reddy—Criticizes Pocharam, Danam—Jagtial Correspondent, March 25 (Indian Chronicle):—Former Minister Tatiparthi Jeevan Reddy burst out saying he will fight against Revanth Reddy from now on. Jeevan Reddy announced his resignation at a meeting organized with Congress party workers.—“Speaking on the occasion, Jeevan Reddy questioned why Danam Nagender, who is a BRS MLA, is contesting as an MP on a Congress ticket. He said it’s because of this that Congress lost the Secunderabad MP seat. He alleged that Congress lost in Mahabubnagar, Revanth Reddy’s own parliamentary constituency, due to his decisions.—“He recalled that initially, Sunitha Mahender Reddy was decided as the candidate for Chevella MP seat, but later Ranjit Reddy from BRS was brought in and given the ticket, which affected the party’s performance.—“Who is Vem Narendra Reddy? What service has he done for the Congress party?” Jeevan Reddy questioned, criticizing Revanth Reddy’s decisions. He also slammed Pocharam Srinivas Reddy, asking what relation he has with the Congress party.—“You are saying you’ll crush anyone who comes in your way, but I’ll tell you, Revanth Reddy, no one can stop me in Jagtial,” Jeevan Reddy warned, saying he didn’t join Congress to become a Chief Minister like some others.



## Immediate Response to Venkat Reddy Nagar Colony Issues by Uppal Youth Congress President Akarapu Arun Patel



—KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 25 (Indian Chronicle):—Akarapu Arun Patel, President of the Uppal Constituency Youth Congress, promptly responded to the long-pending issues in Venkat Reddy Nagar Colony. Acting on the request of the residents, he initiated repair works on a war footing on Wednesday.—“For the past year, drinking water pipelines in the colony had been leaking, resulting in wastage of water for nearly three kilometers. The residents brought this issue to the attention of Arun Patel, who immediately responded by summoning officials, including Water Board AE Tirupati and lineman Vijay, to the site and ensured that repair works began without delay.—“Residents also



expressed concern over drainage leakages in Anjaiah Shop Lane and Bhoomayya Lane. Recognizing the severity of the problem, Arun Patel instructed the officials to prepare proposals for laying a new pipeline. He assured the residents that he would bring the matter to the notice of Uppal Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy and facilitate necessary approvals at the earliest. The colony residents expressed their gratitude to Arun Patel for his swift response and prompt action in addressing local issues. Women President Lakshmi, along with Srinivas, Mallesh, Srinu, Rajesh, Yashwanth, Prashanthi, Sandhya, Praveen, Padmavathi, Rambai, and other residents participated in the program.

# Resolve Summer Water Issues; Install High-Mast Lights and Streetlights: Representation to Municipal Commissioner —



Ward 23 Councilor Barre Pujitha-Jahangir (Mandava Srisaillam | Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau | Indian Chronicle | March 23):— Barre Pujitha-Jahangir (Councilor, Ward 23) and Jaligam Vignesh (Councilor, Ward 22) submitted a memorandum to the Municipal Commissioner,

Rajalingam, addressing the issues faced by the residents of Wards 22 and 23 within the Bhuvanagiri municipal town. Speaking on the occasion, the councilors expressed deep concern regarding the severe water scarcity anticipated during the upcoming summer season. They highlighted the plight of daily-wage laborers residing in Wards 22 and 23—families whose very survival depends on their daily earnings. They noted with distress that the drinking water supply, which is scheduled to reach the colonies at 6:00 AM, is instead arriving at 11:00 AM—a time when most residents are away at work—leaving them unable to collect water. They urged Municipal Commissioner Rajalingam to focus his attention on the residents of these two wards and take necessary measures to ensure a consistent water supply every morning. Furthermore, citing the lack of adequate high-mast lighting in both wards, they requested that a council meeting be convened immediately to initiate steps for the installation of high-mast lights and street lighting infrastructure. Ward leaders Ailapuram Babu, Barre Narendra, Karkala Ramesh, Barre Kranthi, Barre Babu, and others participated in this program.

# "This is a People's Government... Resolving Public Issues is Our Sole Objective... Drainage Works Commence in Ward No. 12"



— Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairperson Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar (Mandava Srisaillam – Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau – Indian Chronicle – March 25): Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairperson Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar stated that she would always undertake initiatives to resolve public grievances. She emphasized that the Congress government is truly a "people's government" and pledged to work tirelessly for the development of the town with the cooperation of local MLA Anil Kumar Reddy.



In Ward No. 12 of Bhuvanagiri town, drainage issues that had remained unresolved for several years were finally addressed; with the active support of Municipal Chairperson Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar—who held discussions with National Highway authorities—the necessary works were initiated immediately. On this occasion, Ward Councilor Thotakuri Vijayalakshmi Venkatesh Yadav expressed her gratitude to Municipal Chairperson Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar and the municipal officials for their efforts.

# Oil Crisis Hits Tandur Amid West Asia War Fears



"Indian Chronicle Babar Tandur (March 25)" "An oil crisis has erupted in Tandur town of Vikarabad district today, amid the ongoing joint military offensive by the United States and Israel against Iran. On Wednesday, all petrol pumps in Tandur town were shut. With not a drop of petrol or diesel available at any fuel station, motorists are facing severe hardship, and there is a risk of vehicles getting stranded



wherever they are. Traders in Tandur are deeply worried. Yesterday, after word spread that diesel and petrol shortages were imminent, people lined up in large numbers at petrol bunks across Tandur. Similarly, rumors of an LPG shortage led to queues at gas godowns as well. As a result, the atmosphere of the West Asia conflict is clearly visible in Tandur.

# Resignation wave starts in Jagithyal district

District Women's Congress President vijayalaxmi "Bathikepalli Sarpanch Maheshwari resigns "Velgatoor Market Committee Chairman resigns" Jagithyal Correspondent, March 25 (Indian Chronicle ): The wave of resignations from the Congress party has begun in Jagithyal district. Following the resignation of former minister Jeevan Reddy, District Women's Congress President and former Municipal Chairperson Tatiparti Vijayalakshmi Devender Reddy has resigned and sent a letter to State President Errabelli Swarna and PCC President. "Gundati Gopika-Jitender Reddy, Chairman of Velgatoor Agricultural Market Committee, Jagithyal district, resigned from the post and from the Congress party on Wednesday. They stated that the decision was taken in favor of former minister Jeevan Reddy. "Munja Maheshwari-Madhu, Sarpanch of Bathikepalli, Pegadapalli Mandal, Jagithyal district, along with former Sarpanches Tatiparti Shobha Rani, Tatiparti



Prabhakar Reddy, and former Sarpanch of Nancharla village, Goli Mahender Reddy, have submitted their resignations from the Congress party.

# SRI SITA RAMA KALYANAM TO BE HELD ON MARCH 27

"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 25, (Indian chronicle): "Residents of Sri Kanaka Durga Nagar Colony (1, 2, 3, 4 & 5), Anushakti Nagar, and Sri Hari Enclave have been informed that the Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam will be held on Friday, March 27, 2026, at 11:30 AM. The event will take place at the Kanaka Durga Nagar Colony Welfare Association 1 & 2 Community Hall. Residents are invited to attend in large numbers and make the event a success. Following the ceremony, Annaprasadam (free meal) will be distributed to all attendees. Devotees can also receive teertham and prasadam. A ceremonial procession will be conducted at 5:30 PM on the same day. All residents are encouraged to participate." Organized by: Kanaka Durga Nagar Colony Welfare Association



# On March 3, S.B.I.T Arohan 2026 in



"Chairman of the college Gundala Krishna unveiled the program poster "New Telangana\_Khammam Regional Representative "Khammam S.B.I.T.Arohan\_2026 program will be held in IT college on March 3 to bring out the hidden skills of the students along with games and songs." He said that Arohan will be organized with project expo, technical events and cultural programs this year as well, continuing the tradition of organizing it every year. He said that his college organizes such programs on a regular basis to bring out the hidden leadership qualities of the students while reducing the stress and physical and mental development of the students. College Secretary and Correspondent Dr. G.

Dhatri, Vice Chairman Dr. G. Sri Chaitanya, Principal Dr. G. Rajkumar said that on April 3 and 4, Arohan will be among the stars. - 2026 has been announced.

He said that technical events will be organized along with project expo on 3rd and college anniversary with cultural programs on 4th. On this occasion, various competitions will be organized from each department and prizes will be given to the winners. In this program, academic directors of the college, Gundala Praveen Kumar, Gandham Srinivasa Rao, Dr. A.V.V. Shiva Prasad, heads of various departments, teachers, students and others participated.

# Two-Day International Conference on "Synergy in Science" Begins at Little Flower Degree College, Uppal

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 25 (Indian Chronicle): "A two-day international conference on the theme "Synergy in Science – Integrating Diverse Disciplines for Sustainable Technological Evolution" was grandly inaugurated at Little Flower Degree College, Uppal. The conference is being organized by the Department of Life Sciences of the college, in collaboration with INTI International University, Malaysia, and the Progressive Biochar Society, Hyderabad. The event commenced on Wednesday. Professor Ling Shing Wang attended the conference as the chief guest. Dr. Sai Bhaskar Reddy, President of the Progressive Biochar Society, presided over the program and impressed the audience with his address. College Director Rev. Bro. John Kalarkal welcomed the guests, while Correspondent Rev. Bro. Arun Prakash explained the significance of the conference. Jayanti Reddy delivered the vote of thanks. Researchers from various parts of India, representing different scientific disciplines, submit-



ted their abstracts for the conference. The event serves as a platform for integrating diverse scientific fields to achieve sustainable technological development.

# Congress Party Shock: Jeevan Reddy Resigns



Jagtil Correspondent, March 25 (Indian Chronicle ): "Telangana Congress Party witnessed a major shock as senior leader and former minister, T Jeevan Reddy, resigned

from the party. In a dramatic move, Jeevan Reddy announced his resignation in front of party workers and submitted his resignation letter to AICC President, Mallikarjun Kharge. "The resignation marks the end of a 42-year association with the Congress Party. Jeevan Reddy expressed his anguish, stating that despite his best efforts, the party had failed to address the concerns of workers and leaders like him. "In his resignation letter, Jeevan Reddy criticized the party's decision-making process, alleging that his warnings and suggestions were ignored. He specifically mentioned the Jagtil incident, where he had advised against admitting an MLA into the party, but was overruled. "Jeevan Reddy expressed his disappointment with the party's leadership, stating that despite his contributions, he was not given due recognition or respect. He also criticized Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's decisions, saying they had led to the party's defeat in Mahabubnagar. "The resignation has sent shockwaves through the Congress Party, with many workers and leaders expressing their support for Jeevan Reddy. The move is seen as a significant blow to the party's prospects in the region.

# A key meeting of the Telangana region of the All India Reddy Welfare Association was held at Pindi Pullareddy Function Hall in LB Nagar under the leadership of the current General Secretary, Thodeti Narasimha Reddy.



"During the meeting, several important decisions were taken on behalf of the Telangana region in view of the executive committee elections scheduled to be held in Tirupati on the 29th of this month. Sama Mohan Reddy was unanimously elected as Treasurer, while Kotta Kapu Srinivas Reddy was chosen as Vice President. "The meeting was attended by General Secretary Thodeti Narasimha Reddy, former President Jangam Srinivas Reddy, Aliabad Reddy Welfare Association President Nanavala Ram Reddy, committee members Ramidi Ram Reddy, Greater Hyderabad Reddy Association President Bhujanga Reddy, Singireddy Boosi Reddy, Jangam Arjun Reddy, Mallikarjun Reddy, Jitta Suresnder Reddy, Bobbili Damodar Reddy, Ponnala Gopal Reddy, Donthula Sudhakar Reddy, Surrender Reddy, Baddam Samarasimha Reddy, along with donors and members. "The meeting was successfully organized under

the leadership of General Secretary Thodeti Narasimha Reddy. "End" On day IP Awareness Program was successfully conducted in Vaagdevi College of Engineering, bollikunta warangal. "Warangal, march 25 (indian chronicle): "In collaboration with the Ministry of MSME and the Intellectual Property Facilitation Centre (IPFC), a one-day IP Awareness Workshop was successfully conducted on 24th March 2026 at the West Block Auditorium, Vaagdevi College of Engineering, Bollikunta, Warangal. The program was organized in association with the IIC Cell and funded by the Ministry of MSME, Government of India. The workshop witnessed active participation from around 100+ attendees, including students, researchers, local entrepreneurs, MSMEs, and startups from various regions. The primary objective of the workshop was to demystify the legal ...

## Haryana rights panel issues notices over Gurgaon wall collapse that killed 7, says workers' safety key to Article 21



GNS News Agency, March 25

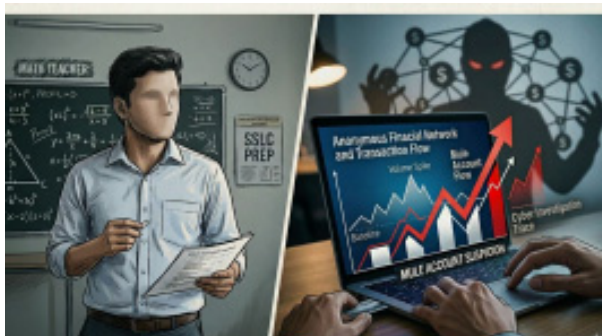
The Haryana Human Rights Commission (HHRC) has taken suo motu cognisance of media reports about the death of seven workers in a wall collapse in Gurgaon on March 9 and sought from the Government details of the incident, including on-site safety measures, action taken, proposed monitoring or enforcement measures, and compensation and rehabilitation for affected workers and families. On the evening of March 9, a concrete retention wall collapsed at an under-construction sewage treatment plant site at Signature Global Society in Sidhrawali near the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway in the Bilaspur area, triggering a soil cave-in in the basement and burying several labourers under debris. At least seven workers reportedly lost their lives, several others sustained serious injuries, and some workers were feared trapped under the debris at the time rescue operations were initiated. "The reports further indicate that 15-20 labourers were working at the site when the wall suddenly collapsed and survivors described that the area turned pitch dark before iron rods and debris fell upon them, leaving many workers trapped beneath the rubble," read the HHRC order issued by Chairperson Justice Lalit Batra and members Kuldeep Jain and Deep Bhatia on March 12 and made public on Monday.

The order noted that a criminal case was registered and that certain site officials connected with the project were arrested. "The complaint reportedly alleges that adequate protective and safety arrangements were not in place at the construction site, raising serious concerns regarding the safety of labourers engaged in such hazardous work," the order added. The project manager and the site's structure-in-charge have been arrested in the case.

"The Commission is of the considered view that the right to life, safety and dignity of workers forms an integral part of Article 21 of the Constitution of India. When labourers are compelled to work in unsafe environments without adequate safeguards, their fundamental human rights are placed in serious jeopardy. The tragic loss of life and injuries suffered by workers in such incidents cannot be viewed merely as workplace accidents. Rather, they represent serious violations of human rights arising from negligence and failure to protect the safety and dignity of workers," the order further said.

The commission said it was necessary to examine the matter from a broader perspective concerning the protection of the human rights of labourers engaged in construction activities across the state. "Accordingly, notice is issued to the following authorities to submit their respective detailed reports to the Commission, at least one week prior to the next date of hearing: Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Haryana, Town & Country Planning and Urban Estates Department; Principal Secretary to Government, Haryana, Labour Department; Director General, Town and Country Planning Department, Haryana, Chandigarh; Labour Commissioner, Haryana, Chandigarh; Commissioner of Police, Gurugram; Deputy Commissioner, Gurugram; Commissioner, Municipal Corporation, Gurugram; Additional Labour Commissioner, Gurugram; Joint Director, Industrial Safety and Health, Gurugram; Senior Town Planner, Town and Country Planning Department, Gurugram; District Town Planner (Enforcement), Town and Country Planning Department Gurugram; and Executive Engineer-II, Public Works Department (Building & Roads), Gurugram," the order read. The commission further directed that officials' reports must contain the factual status of the incident, including the number of casualties; whether the construction site had obtained permissions and clearances; whether the contractors had complied with labour safety laws and whether the workers were registered with welfare boards; details of safety measures provided at the site; action taken against responsible persons; steps proposed to strengthen monitoring and enforcement of safety standards at construction sites; relief and compensation paid or sanctioned to victims' families; and proposed measures for rehabilitating dependents of the deceased and supporting the recovery of the injured workers.

## Mule account suspicion: Karnataka school teacher denied anticipatory bail in Rs 3.6-crore cyber fraud case



GNS News Agency, March 25

A Bengaluru sessions court last week denied anticipatory bail to a government school teacher in a Rs 3.62-crore cyber fraud case, citing suspicious transactions in his bank account that far exceeded his salary. Indudhar Mallikarjun Kataraki, 25, a resident of Shigli in the Gadag district and a mathematics teacher in Gokak, sought pre-arrest bail under Section 482 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) 2023.

The case originates from a complaint filed by K K Belliyappa, a senior citizen from Kodagu, who alleged that he was lured into investing in an online trading scheme and

subsequently defrauded of over Rs 3.62 crore. According to investigating officials, the funds were transferred to mule accounts. The case, originally registered by the Kodagu CEN Police, was later transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Bengaluru for further investigation. The investigating team found that Kataraki's State Bank of India (SBI) bank account had a dramatic spike in transactions. While his account recorded transactions of only around Rs 5 lakh in 2021, the figure allegedly jumped to Rs 30.52 lakh in 2025, excluding his salary credits, raising red flags about unexplained deposits and withdrawals.

The police issued a notice to Kataraki in January 2026, directing him to appear for questioning by February 2. He failed to comply, citing professional commitments. His counsel argued that February 2 was the last date for students to apply to government residential schools, and that Kataraki had been tasked with assisting students in filing online applications. He also said that he was occupied with preparing question papers and conducting extra classes for SSLC students. Prosecutors opposed the bail plea, arguing that Kataraki's police custody was essential to unravelling what they described as a well-organised, interstate cybercrime network. They contended that Rs 3.58 crore remained unrecovered and that the identities of the kingpins behind the fraud were yet to be established.

## 'Treated like criminals': Maharashtra Council orders suspension of Satara SP after Minister Shambhuraj Desai allegedly beaten during ZP polls

GNS News Agency, March 25

Days after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) defeated the Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) alliance in the Satara Zilla Parishad elections, amid allegations that two councillors were prevented from voting using police force, Legislative Council Deputy Chairperson Neelam Gorhe Monday ordered the suspension of Satara Superintendent of Police Tushar Doshi. Part of the ruling alliance, the Shiv Sena and NCP attacked the BJP-led Home Department in the Legislative Council during the special sitting called Monday morning. The Home Department is held by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

The confrontation between the ruling parties stemmed from the Satara Zilla Parishad chairperson election held last Friday. Although the Shiv Sena and NCP secured a majority, the BJP won the post. The BJP is alleged to have poached Shiv Sena corporators in Satara and prevented two councillors from voting to secure the victory. During the polling, Satara Guardian Minister and Sena leader Shambhuraj Desai was allegedly attacked by police personnel in plain clothes. "This has happened for the first time in my 40 years of political career... I was with NCP minister Makarand Patil and NCP (SP) MLC Shashikant Shinde. I was beaten by the police when I was going into the ZP building. I was bleeding. Minister Patil's brother, Rajya Sabha MP Nitin Patil, was dragged from the staircase. This is unprecedented. And in this confrontation, two of our members were kidnapped by the police," Desai said in the Council. Desai said BJP workers were allowed inside the ZP building, but not them. "The Satara SP has worked like a maid. He should be suspended along with other subordinates," he demanded and sought a judicial probe.

NCP minister Makarand Patil, who was with Desai, said that the Satara police department behaved in an atrocious manner by registering false complaints against their members. "Despite being ministers, we were treated like criminals. Even an accused person cannot be prevented from voting. But here, elected members were stopped from voting in Satara district," he alleged. Shiv Sena MLC Hemant Patil raised the issue, alleging that Satara SP Doshi ordered an attack on Desai prior to the election. NCP MLC Vikram



Kale, too, demanded Doshi's suspension. Gorhe said the House trusts Desai's statement. "I order the government to suspend the Satara SP right away. No inquiry into the incident has yet been ordered, which should have been done yesterday itself," she said. Gorhe said the Satara district collector and the Satara ZP CEO should ensure that CCTV footage of the incident is preserved, and that the Pune divisional commissioner supervises it. Shiv Sena minister Uday Samant said the government will comply with the orders of the Council's deputy chairperson. Countering the Sena and NCP, BJP minister Jaikumar Gore, who was leading the party "Operation Lotus" in Satara, opposed Doshi's suspension. "Before giving an order, reality should also be heard. During the election for the ZP chairperson, nobody other than ZP councillors should be inside the building. There are no separate rules for ministers or MLAs," said Gore. "Around 3,000 to 4,000 workers barged inside the ZP building. The police are responsible for maintaining law and order. The suspension of an IPS officer without taking factual reports on the allegations against him is not right," the minister said. When Gore questioned why the BJP was being blamed, Sena minister Samant said Doshi's suspension had been ordered, and nobody had blamed the saffron party. With Desai demanding a judicial probe against Doshi and others, and noting that the IPS officer had been the superintendent of police in Jalna during the lathicharge on Maratha quota protesters three years ago, Council Chairman Ram Shinde adjourned the House until 12 pm.

## Two chiefs, two committees: Govt to decide who probes khair trees theft



GNS News Agency, March

A 1989-batch officer, Vineet Kumar Garg, who is the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Head of Forest Force (HoFF) in the state, had on March 17 constituted a probe panel headed by IFS officer R Anand to assess wildlife habitat degradation, including the illegal felling of khair trees in protected areas such as the Kalesar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary. The committee was asked to submit its report within 15 days.

However, on March 19, Vivek Saxena, a 1991-batch IFS officer serving as the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and the Chief Wildlife Warden, issued an order quashing Garg's committee on jurisdictional grounds. Saxena directed officers to "ensure strict adherence to jurisdictional boundaries and prescribed administrative procedures in future. Violation of this order may lead to action under relevant sections of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 till an appropriate order is issued by the government in this regard."

Saxena argued that "PCCF (HoFF) can constitute a committee to inquire in respect of offences in forest areas only at his own level or with government approval" and

emphasised that "PCCF (wildlife)-cum-cum Chief Wild Life Warden is responsible to inquire into any offences in protected areas (national parks, sanctuaries etc.) only or offences related to Wild Life Act and can constitute a committee at his own level or with government approval." He then formed a new inquiry committee headed by IFS officer Subhash Chander to probe the illegal felling in Kalesar National Park, Yamunanagar, with directions to submit a report within 15 days.

The controversy stems from illegal felling and theft of over 1,000 Khair trees (Acacia catechu) in Asarewali Protected Forest, part of a wildlife sanctuary in Panchkula district. The incident has already led to the suspension of four forest officials, including two state forest service officers, while police have arrested several persons, including a forest department staffer. Saxena's order also criticised past practices where forest offence reports were compounded under the Indian Forest Act, 1927, rather than invoking the stricter Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. He noted that "...officials of forest department in the past have been issuing forest offence reports (damage reports) in respect of illicit tree felling of Khair trees in respect of national parks/sanctuaries also under Indian Forest Act, 1927 and have compounded offences rather than initiating action under the provisions of Wild Life Act, 1972, which has stringent penal provisions of imprisonment up to 3 years under Section 51. This has encouraged forest and wildlife area offenders, resulting in increasing incidents of such offences, as such offenders got relief through compounding of offences under the Indian Forest Act, 1927, from time to time." Saxena also sent a copy of his communication to Forest Minister Rao Narbir Singh, requesting "issue an appropriate order so that such incidents do not happen in future and a fair and impartial inquiry may be conducted by the government for the matter of illicit felling of Khair trees in wildlife and non-wildlife areas."

## From pleasant spell to rapid rise in temperatures: What to expect in Lucknow, Varanasi, and Kanpur this week



GNS News Agency, March 25

As the recent western disturbance weakens, Uttar Pradesh is expected to see a sharp rise in temperatures. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), maximum temperatures across the state may increase by 7-10°Celsius over the next week. IMD data shows that temperatures across Uttar Pradesh, including in the state capital Lucknow, remained below normal till late Sunday. Lucknow recorded a maximum temperature of 30.3°C, which is 4°C below normal. Similar departures were ob-

served across districts, including Gorakhpur (-7.0°C), Ballia (-7.4°C), Varanasi (-5.7°C), Prayagraj (-3.6°C), and Kanpur (-3.4°C), indicating a widespread below-normal temperature trend across the state. Similarly, parts of Eastern Uttar Pradesh witnessed cloudy conditions and light rainfall, leading to a drop of up to 7°C in daytime temperatures Sunday.

However, as the weather clears across the rest of the state, temperatures have begun to rise sharply. While Western districts recorded increases of up to 7°C, central regions saw a rise of 2-4°C. With the weather system's influence ending completely after March 22, a steady and widespread rise in temperatures is expected over the next 5-6 days. A weak western disturbance may cause partial cloud cover at isolated places in western Uttar Pradesh, but it is unlikely to significantly affect the rising temperature trend. Over the next 3-4 days, maximum temperatures are expected to increase by 4-7°C. Additionally, due to below-normal minimum temperatures, high moisture, and atmospheric stability, light morning haze may occur in some areas, which will clear soon after sunrise, said experts. The changing weather pattern indicates a gradual intensification of heat, with warmer daytime conditions expected in the coming days.

## 'Summer flooding' at Pune township: Canal breach submerges roads behind Magarpatta City; check traffic diversions

GNS News Agency, March 25

Residents of Hadapsar and the vicinity of Magarpatta City township in Pune woke up to an unusual summer crisis Monday as a major breach in the retaining wall of the Khadakwasla canal inundated several arterial roads and residential basements. The incident led to the closure of Magarpatta Road during the morning rush hour, causing significant disruption for commuters. The incident was first reported at 2.30 am, with residents calling the civic disaster management department to report sudden flooding on roads behind Magarpatta City. "The road was flooded with water, and the water also entered the basements of buildings in the vicinity," said a disaster management officer.

Hadapsar resident Sagar Avhad said he was shocked when he stepped out for a morning walk, as the road behind Magarpatta township was flooded. "I joined a few other citizens to divert the traffic using the road. We were unaware how it happened, but it had caused a lot of inconvenience to citizens who started their day early for work," he said. IT professional Dinesh Jagtap said, "The flooding on the road caused me inconvenience, as I had to rush to the office on Monday, the first day of the week, but got delayed because I had to take another route. The traffic diversion increased traffic on other roads, and it further added to the delay." Water release from dam stopped

Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) Disaster Management Officer Ganesh Sonune said it took time to identify the exact cause of the flooding, as there were doubts that it might be due to damage to the area's water pipeline, but it was later confirmed that it was caused by damage to the irrigation department's canal. "The PMC informed the state irrigation department about the damage to the canal, which flooded the area behind Magarpatta City township. It has stopped releasing water from the dam, and the water will subside in four hours," said the civic officer. The PMC administration has begun draining water from roads via stormwater drains to reopen streets that were previously closed. Officials said they will also remove water that has accumulated in the basements of several buildings. Pune canal breach flooding The canal breach is almost 200 meters from the submerged road. The district irrigation office said it is undertaking repairs to the damaged canal on a war footing. A public safety announcement has been issued regarding the canal water leak on the rear road between Heliconia and Vibgyor School. The water level has reached 2 feet, affecting the road and spreading into the West Gate at Mulberry Gardens and towards the South Gate of Magarpatta Township. It asked residents to avoid using the Irani Cafe Road, the stretch from Kumar Paradise towards Irani. Mundhwa-Magarpatta Road is also blocked due to diverted traffic. In an advisory issued Monday morning, Himmat Jadhav, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic), said, "Due to a canal breach in the back side of Magarpatta



Hadapsar resident Sagar Avhad said he was shocked when he stepped out for a morning walk, as the road behind Magarpatta township was flooded. "I joined a few other citizens to divert the traffic using the road. We were unaware how it happened, but it had caused a lot of inconvenience to citizens who started their day early for work," he said.

of Hadapsar, water has accumulated on the road. As a result, traffic on the Magarpatta to Mundhwa Road has been severely affected and is nearly at a standstill. Heavy congestion has been reported at Mundhwa Chowk. Waterlogging is expected to persist on this stretch for approximately the next 10 to 12 hours. We are appealing to citizens to use alternate routes."

Alternate routes are:

- 1) Vaiduwadi Chowk - Shinde Vasti - Shirke Road - Jahangir Nagar Chowk - via Tadi Gutta - Mundhwa Chowk
- 2) 93 Avenue Mall/Kalubai Chowk - B.T. Kawade Road - Ghorpadi - Flower - Pingale Vasti - Tadi Gutta Chowk - Mundhwa Chowk
- 3) For those coming from Kharadi: Mundhwa Chowk - Tadi Gutta Chowk - Pingale Vasti - Ghorpadi Railway Flyover - B.T. Kawade Road - left turn to Hadapsar
- 4) Mundhwa Chowk - Tadi Gutta Chowk - Jahangir Nagar - B.G. Shirke Road - Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Chowk - left turn to Shinde Vasti - Hadapsar Industrial Area - Vaiduwadi Chowk - Solapur Highway
- 5) For those coming from Solapur Road: 15 Number - Manjari - Z Corner - Lonkar Vasti - Keshavnagar - Mundhwa Chowk.

## 'Extreme harassment, mental agony,' SDM accuses Moga DC, seeks transfer post-Baghapurana poll row



GNS News Agency, March 25

Baghapurana Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Babandeep Singh Walia lodged a written complaint to Punjab Chief Secretary KAP Sinha on Sunday, alleging that the Moga Deputy Commissioner Sagar Setia subjected him to "extreme harassment" and "mental agony" during the recent Block Samiti chairman elections. The SDM requested Sinha to "transfer him out of Moga", according to a copy of the complaint. The development took place five days after a political drama unfolded over the Baghapurana Block Samiti chairman election, with the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) alleging that the ruling AAP had "looted the election despite not having the required majority". Walia, a PCS officer, was the returning officer for the election.

On March 17, the SAD alleged that in the 25-member block samiti it had 13 elected members, whereas the AAP had just eight; even then, local MLA Amritpal Singh Sukhanand declared AAP members winners for both posts. The SAD alleged that it had the support of 15 members, including 13 of its own and two others, but the AAP resorted to "open loot of the election". SAD further alleged that nine of its women members were "locked in a room" and not allowed to vote, following which they lodged a complaint with the deputy commissioner, demanding "re-election". The party said they would move the high court if re-election wasn't held.

Walia, in his complaint, stated that the election process "could not be completed on March 17 due to a serious law and order situation". He alleged that "after the said incident, I have been subjected to continuous harassment"

through "persistent phone calls, creating an atmosphere of pressure and intimidation". He wrote that he had to "switch off my phone to cope up with the stress and pressure imposed on me". "Such actions appear to be influenced by extraneous considerations, with an intent to compel declaration of election results in favour of a particular candidate(s), which is contrary to principles of free and fair elections," Walia stated in the complaint. Walia demanded "a free and impartial inquiry into the sequence of events, provision of adequate protection to my life, one month leave in view of extreme mental stress and transfer out of Moga to ensure a free environment and any influence during the inquiry period".

Walia could not be reached for comments as his phone was switched off.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Setia said, "A day after the election, we received a complaint from SAD on March 18 that 15 of their elected members could not participate in the election process. The SDM did not even inform me the same day (March 17) that the election process could not be completed, but instead sent a report the next day, which, too, was very vague, and the necessary details were missing. We have already marked an inquiry into the entire sequence of events that happened on March 17, and it is being conducted by the additional deputy commissioner (ADC)." Meanwhile, addressing a rally in Moga on Sunday, SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal alleged that the "mental harassment and torture" being meted out to the Baghapurana SDM proved that "the AAP does not believe in the rule of law and can do anything to secure bogus poll victories". "It was shocking the way Baghapurana SDM disclosed how Moga deputy commissioner was forcing him to elect AAP candidates to the offices of chairperson and vice-chairperson of the Baghapurana Block Samiti, even though the AAP lacked a majority," Badal said. The SAD chief added, "The ruling AAP has now started forcing government employees to obey its illegal dictates by indulging in physical and mental harassment and even threats of elimination to their family members." Meanwhile, the SAD said that the party had filed a petition in the high court, demanding re-election, and the matter would come up for a hearing on Monday. AAP MLA Sukhanand said on Sunday: "The matter is now sub-judice in High Court. The SDM has complained against DC, not me or party."

## Queer community, activists protest proposed Transgender Amendment Bill

GNS News Agency, March 25

The NALSA judgment (National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, 2014) is a landmark decision by the Supreme Court that formally recognised transgender persons as the "third gender". Terming the bill "regressive" and "harmful to gender minorities", protesters argued that the bill undermines the landmark NALSA judgment, which had earlier recognised an individual's right to self-identify their gender. (File Photo)

Around 200 members of the queer community and activists held a protest against the recently introduced Transgender Amendment Bill, presented in the Lok Sabha, at Sambhaji Udayan on JM Road in Pune on Sunday.

Terming the bill "regressive" and "harmful to gender minorities", protesters argued that the bill undermines the landmark NALSA judgment, which had earlier recognised an individual's right to self-identify their gender. The proposed amendment, however, mandates medical verification for gender-affirming procedures, a move many see as an infringement on bodily autonomy. "Gender cannot be decided by the government or a medical report. My body, my choice," said transgender activist Manasvi Goikar. "Earlier, we had the right to self-identify, but now we are being forced to prove who we are. One's identity should be their own choice—there is nothing to prove." Concerns were also raised about the bill's alleged bias in criminal justice. Goikar added, "The government claims trans people are criminals, yet crimes against us receive lighter punishments. This



leaves us without protection."

Pritee, founder of Rainbow Roots Foundation, criticised the lack of consultation with the queer community. "This decision has been taken without including us. Earlier, we were at least coming into visibility, but now it feels like an attempt to erase our existence," she said. Identifying as a non-binary cross-dresser, she urged the government to withdraw the bill, adding, "Our identities are natural, but this law restricts our right to exist." Smriti Girish, who works closely with trans men in Pune, highlighted how the bill narrows the definition of transgender identities. "It limits recognition, excludes socio-cultural identities, and forces individuals to face a medical board that decides who they are. This is not protection, it is control," she said.

## 'People happy with AAP's work, will win 100 seats': Mann in Jalalabad



GNS News Agency, March 25

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said people were "extremely satisfied with the AAP's politics of work" and predicted that the party will get at least 100 seats in the 2027 Assembly elections, in Fazilka on Sunday. Mann was addressing a rally in the border town, Jalalabad. The CM said, "With the active support of the common man, the AAP will form government in 2027. Owing to the pro-people and development-oriented policies of the state government, we will again win more than 100 seats in the Vidhan Sabha polls. The support shown by the people is a testimony that people are waiting to teach traditional parties a lesson by again showing them the door." Mann said the state government has done more work than others did in 70 years. The state is moving forward, and in 2027, the state will take this development to the next level.

Taking a dig at the Akali Dal, he said, "The real name of the gimmick of Akali Dal is 'parivar bachao yatra'. After looting the state for 15 years, from whom are they trying to save Punjab? Akalis have plundered the state mercilessly, bruised the psyche of Punjabis emotionally and patronised several mafias." He also said, "People are well aware of the dubious character of the Akalis and Badal family due to which their theatricals won't work now." The AAP leader also targeted the Congress and said, "Congress leaders are daydreaming to assume power in Punjab. The Congress is a divided house that will collapse due to their infighting." He said this border area also needs medical and educational facilities. "This is a border area where professionals like doctors and teachers hesitate to serve, which is why the state has made it mandatory for them to serve at least two years in border areas."

He laid the foundation stone for 300 km meant for new roads, and initiated repair work for 350 km in Jalalabad. Positioning this as part of a 43,000-km-road network being built across Punjab, he underlined that accountability will ensure durability. He also announced plans to eliminate electricity poles through underground wiring. The CM also said, "Earlier, leaders like Sukhbir Badal were MLAs and even Deputy Chief Ministers from this region (Jalalabad) but no real work was done. They deliberately kept people poor so that voters would ask only for small favors during elections. They called this region 'tail end', but I consider it the 'front-line'."

## Chennaiyin FC hold FC Goa to 1-1 draw in ISL 2025-26

Chennai: Back in front of the home crowd, Chennaiyin FC delivered an assured and enterprising performance to hold FC Goa to a 1-1 draw in the Indian Super League 2026, earning a deserved point in their first home outing of the campaign on Sunday. Head coach Clifford Rayes Miranda handed Eduardo Kau his first start of the season in place of the injured Mohammed Ali Bemammer, while Maheson Singh and Daniel Chima Chukwu were also drafted into the XI. The Marina Machans had to stay alert early on, with goalkeeper Mohammad Nawaz producing a sharp low stop in the eighth minute, before Laldinliana Renthlei followed it up with solid defending to clear the danger.

CFC soon settled into a rhythm and began to threaten. A flowing move in the 11th minute saw Imran Khan find Chima, whose deft flick set up Maheson, only for his first-time effort to hit the outside of the post. Farukh Choudhary then tested the goalkeeper with a curling strike from range, as Chennaiyin grew into the contest. An early setback followed when Chima was forced off due to injury, with Irfan Yadwad coming on and making an immediate impact. The forward linked up well, won a corner, and later forced a save with a sharp effort, while Maheson continued to deliver dangerous balls into the area. At the other end, Nawaz remained composed, making a couple of routine stops to ensure the sides went into the break level.

## AI in policing – a formidable challenge and a powerful ally



GNS News Agency, March 25

On one hand, artificial intelligence (AI)-generated deepfake videos are being used to distort reality, scam individuals, and for harassment and fearmongering through manipulated visuals. On the other hand, the AI tools are helping reconstruct incidents – piece by piece – like in the case of the Porsche crash, while also enabling smarter, more efficient traffic enforcement. In the evolving landscape of modern policing, AI has become both a formidable challenge and a powerful ally. Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad Cyber investigators have come across dozens of examples in which deepfake videos of industry leaders, politicians and stock market experts are being used to manipulate unsuspecting individuals into investing in particular fraudulent platforms.

In cases reported in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad, deepfake videos of Infosys founder Narayana Murthy and Infosys Foundation's Sudha Murthy, Mukesh Ambani of Reliance and late Ratan Tata, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and share trading experts like Rachana Ranade have been used. These videos falsely promoted fraudulent stock trading tools, and were used by cybercriminals to swindle common citizens looking to earn profits out of the stock market. After falling prey to these videos cybercriminals posing as executives from a brokerage firm, use pressure tactics to coerce victims into repeatedly transferring money to hule accounts. Investigators have advised practicing Cyber hygiene etiquettes that can be useful in prevention such scams and need to be applied rigorously before every online transaction. Officials said that one can identify deepfake by checking audio visual mismatch, inconsistencies in facial expressions, background and issues with lip sync etc. One of the best ways is to only trust the posts on the verified and official handles. Officials have said that deepfake videos can also be used for impersonation in phishing attacks, identity theft, blackmail and extortion, spreading misinformation, communal, social or political propaganda.

Morphed images for abuse, online threats In September last year, a 20-year-old woman was targeted on social media with her fake Instagram profile and her morphed photos created using Artificial Intelligence tools followed by a threat message. The Pimpri Chinchwad police arrested 25-year-old who works in the same firm as that of the victim.

Morphed images are often used to harass individuals by placing their faces onto explicit or compromising content, spreading them online to shame, intimidate, or damage reputations. Such images can also be circulated within peer groups or on social media to enable bullying, coercion, or extortion. Prevention includes limiting the sharing of personal photos online, using strong privacy settings, and being cautious about granting apps access to images. If

targeted, victims should preserve evidence, report the platform, and file a complaint with cybercrime authorities such as the Indian Cyber Crime Portal or local police.

MahaCrimeOS AI is an artificial intelligence-powered investigation platform launched in December last year by Microsoft in collaboration with the Government of Maharashtra to help police fight cybercrime. The platform has been developed by cybersecurity firm CyberEye in partnership with Maharashtra's Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) called MARVEL (Maharashtra Advanced Research and Vigilance for Enhanced Law Enforcement) and the Microsoft India Development Center, using Microsoft's Azure OpenAI Service and Foundry technologies. The tool works by accepting complaints and evidence in various formats like PDFs, audio, handwritten notes, images — extracting key information with AI, automatically organising it, suggesting investigation steps, linking related cases, and generating draft legal notices — all in multiple languages including Marathi. By automating repetitive tasks and providing intelligent assistance, MahaCrimeOS AI speeds up investigations, helps standardise workflows across police stations, and allows officers to focus more on solving cases and assisting victims, significantly improving investigation turnaround times. The tool is being made available to more than 1100 police stations across Maharashtra.

Porsche crash: Forensic reconstruction using AIPune city police who investigated the May 2024 accident in which the two young software engineers were killed after a speeding Porsche car, driven by an allegedly inebriated 17-and-a-half-year-old minor, rammed into their motorcycle, have used a simulated model recreating the accident scenario using AI and have used it as technical evidence in the court for the trial. A simulated model of the entire accident scenario has been prepared. Police with inputs including the footage from the CCTV cameras along the route, various photographs of the crime scene, some video clips from the crime scene and other data pertaining to the accident. This reconstruction included the sequence of events leading up to the incident. AI-based technologies facilitate pattern recognition, analysis of visuals, increasing the accuracy of the crime scene reconstruction and help prepare a simulated model of the crime. As per the procedure, a panchnama of this model has been prepared and submitted along with the technical evidence.

Traffic management and enforcement Last year in August, the Pune City Police launched a pilot project featuring an Artificial Intelligence-based, vehicle-mounted traffic enforcement system. The performance of this pilot was closely evaluated, and based on its effectiveness, multiple patrol vehicles equipped with AI-powered cameras are planned to be deployed across the city to automatically detect and issue challans for traffic violations. In February earlier this year, the Pune City Traffic Police launched an online traffic management system in collaboration with Google. The app uses Google Maps to identify real-time traffic congestion, traffic snarls, and other traffic related issues in the city and provides real-time updates to the police. A High Power Committee of the Maharashtra State Government has approved an AI enabled CCTV surveillance project for the entire jurisdiction of Pimpri-Chinchwad police commissionerate. The project will focus on surveillance in industrial and IT clusters and key pilgrimage centres among sensitive locations and will aid in real-time crime detection, investigation, traffic enforcement, crowd monitoring, and emergency response.

## Revenge attack in Chandigarh: Youth escapes bullet fire in Sector 38; juvenile involved apprehended

GNS News Agency, March 25

Police have apprehended a juvenile and linked the case to an earlier murder. A youth escaped unhurt in a firing incident in Chandigarh's Sector 38, suspected to be a revenge attack. A youth narrowly escaped a firing attack in Sector 38 on Sunday afternoon, allegedly carried out to avenge a murder that took place three months ago.

According to police sources, the attack is linked to the murder of Sumit, alias Golu, a resident of Mauli Jagran, who was stabbed to death near a petrol pump in Sector 37 earlier this year. In a retaliatory move, Sumit's minor brother allegedly opened fire at the brother of the main accused in that murder case.

Police said that the incident occurred in broad daylight when the accused, a minor, fired at Sagar, who is said to be the brother of Krish, one of the key accused in Sumit's murder and currently lodged in jail. Sagar had come to Sector 38A to meet his uncle, Ricky, alias Chinu. As he was leaving the area on his Activa, the assailant, who had reportedly been tracking his movements, opened fire. Fortunately, Sagar managed to escape unhurt. The accused fled the scene immediately after the firing. The entire incident was captured on a nearby CCTV camera, and the police have seized the footage as part of the investigation. A fired cartridge has also been recovered from the spot. Police from Sector 39 Police Station reached the scene soon after receiving information and initiated an investigation. Sources said that a youth has been taken into

custody for questioning after he was seen interacting with the attacker in the CCTV footage. Preliminary inquiry revealed that a single round was fired at a 16-year-old juvenile, who had come to visit his uncle in Sector 38A. The victim escaped without serious injury.

Acting swiftly on CCTV footage and local intelligence inputs, a team of the Crime Branch identified and apprehended the assailant, who is a juvenile. The weapon used in the crime has been recovered. Old enmity behind attack Sources said that the root of the attack lies in an old rivalry. Three months ago, Sumit, alias Golu, was murdered following a dispute at Mauli Jagran. He was attacked with knives near the Sector 37 petrol pump. In that case, the police had arrested Krish and another youth. The latest firing is believed to be a continuation of that feud. Third firing incident in week raises alarm The incident has raised serious concerns over deteriorating law and order in the city. This marks the third firing-related incident in Chandigarh within a week. On March 17, a student leader, Jashan Singh Jawanda, was targeted in a firing incident inside the Panjab University campus. Four armed assailants opened fire at him in the Botany Department parking area, but he escaped unharmed. The very next day, property dealer Chamanpreet Singh Nagra, alias Chinni Kubaheri, was shot dead in broad daylight in Sector 9. Two motorcycle-borne assailants fired multiple shots at him while he was inside his Fortuner, leading to his death on the spot. The Punjab Police and Haryana Police later arrested both accused after an encounter in Kaithal in a joint operation.

## Kurukshetra rally to oppose India-US trade deal today: Haryana BKU chief

GNS News Agency, March 25

Senior farmer leader from Haryana Gurnam Singh Chaduni on Sunday announced a rally in Kurukshetra on Monday warning that the India-US trade deal "could prove dangerous for small farmers and the agricultural sector in India".

Haryana Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) chief Chaduni said, "If the agricultural sector is included in this free trade agreement, the consequences will be extremely dangerous for Indian farmers." He also said, "Small farmers will not be able to compete with large American farmers, which could push Indian agriculture into a severe crisis." The union leader also said, "This trade agreement will not only affect agriculture but will have a deep impact on the overall economy of the country."

Chaduni also said, "Multinational companies may gain greater control over agriculture, compelling Indian farmers to buy expensive seeds, pesticides, and technology. There is also the possibility of international pressure for legal

changes, particularly in food security and MSP (Minimum Support Price) policies, which could force the government to alter its stance." He also cautioned, "Cheap imports could affect local markets since American farmers receive large subsidies, making their products such as wheat, maize, soybean and dairy items cheaper in India. This would force Indian farmers to sell their produce at lower prices, adversely impacting local markets. The dairy sector, which is linked to nearly 80 million families in India, could face heavy competition from US imports, affecting livelihoods."

The BKU leader claimed that this deal is "even more dangerous than the three farm laws which were repealed following protests from the farmers in 2021". "If agriculture is opened up under this trade deal, it will not be easy to roll it back, since international trade agreements, once signed, are difficult to change," he warned.

BKU spokesperson Rakesh Bains said: "Rally in Kurukshetra is expected to mobilise farmers and activists, with a strong appeal to the government for immediate intervention against the proposed agreement."

## Slovenia's liberals and populists neck and neck, preliminary results show



GNS News Agency, March 25

Slovenia's governing liberals and opposition right-wing populists were neck and neck after a highly contested parliamentary election on Sunday (March 22, 2026), near-complete preliminary results showed, heralding a period of political uncertainty in the small European Union country. Prime Minister Robert Golob's centre-left Freedom Movement won 28.5% of the votes while the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party, or SDS, led by ex-premier Janez Jansa — an admirer of U.S. President Donald Trump — had 28.1%, the State Election Commission said after counting some 99% of the ballots. The practically equal result means that none of the main parties will have a majority in the 90-member parliament and that whoever will form a future government will depend on smaller parties that will act as kingmakers. It was not immediately clear what shape possible future alliances might take.

Speaking after the results were released, Mr. Golob expressed confidence his party will form the next government though he acknowledged that "tough negotiations lie ahead." "In the next term, we will do everything we can to ensure a better future," Mr. Golob said. "We can look forward to moving ahead, into the future, under a free sun." Mr. Jansa predicted that "there will not be much (political) stability" after the ballot. The vote on Sunday (March 22, 2026) was seen as a key test of whether the EU member nation stays on its liberal course or sways toward the right. The undecided outcome also reflects deep divisions among Slovenia's 1.7 million eligible voters.

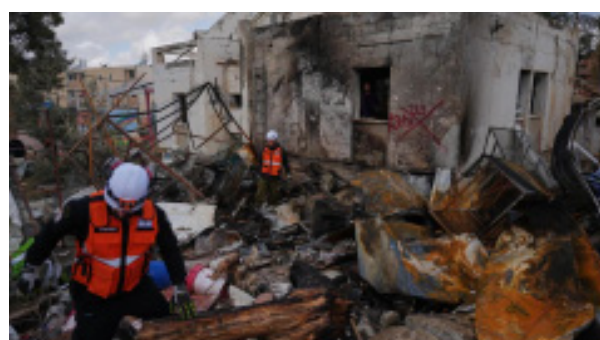
Mr. Golob's government has been a strong liberal voice in the 27-nation EU. SDS leader Mr. Jansa is a populist-style politician and a close ally of nationalist Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, whose return to power would be a boost to Europe's right-wing blocs. Upon voting on Sunday (March 22, 2026), Mr. Golob warned that the "democracy and sovereignty" of Slovenia can no longer be taken for granted. He urged voters to "not let others decide instead of you, go out and vote." Mr. Jansa said the election amounted to a "referendum on whether the people can take back the state." The vote came after an election campaign marred by claims, first made by a group of activists and journalists, that a string of secret video recordings showing alleged government-tied corruption, aimed to sway the voters.

Authorities have opened a probe into the allegations that Mr. Jansa's party and a private, foreign agency were linked to the recordings. Mr. Jansa has acknowledged having contacts with a Black Cube agency adviser but denied the allegations of election interference.

The company, run by two former Israeli intelligence agents, has been involved in a number of controversies over the years, including an undercover operation on behalf of the film mogul Harvey Weinstein to discredit his accusers. It has said that all of its activities are legal and ethical. Mr. Jansa, 67, a veteran politician and a former disident during communism, has faced accusations of clamping down on media freedoms and undermining the rule of law in Slovenia during his latest term in office in 2020-22, which he has denied.

A former energy company manager, 59-year-old Mr. Golob and his party were seen in 2022 as a new hope for disillusioned voters. The government, however, has since been shaken by a series of reshuffles, problems with health care reform and frequent changes in tax policy that reflected an air of inconsistency. Internationally, Mr. Golob's government has taken a strongly pro-Palestinian stance, recognising a Palestinian state in 2024 and banning top Israeli officials from entry. Mr. Jansa, on the other hand, is pro-Israel and has strongly criticised Palestinian recognition. Slovenia routinely has switched between the two blocks since it broke away from the former Yugoslavia in 1991. The Alpine nation of 2 million people became a member of NATO and the EU in 2004.

## Scores hurt after Iranian missiles hit Israeli desert towns



GNS News Agency, March 25

Southern Israeli towns woke to widespread damage on Sunday after air defences failed to intercept two Iranian missiles overnight that injured scores of civilians in one of the worst attacks of the war so far on Israeli soil. As daylight broke, the scale of the damage in the desert town of Arad, where one of the strikes hit a multi-story apartment block, came into clearer view, with entire floors blown open by the blast.

Uri Shacham, the chief of staff of Israel's ambulance service, said at least eight buildings were damaged by the missile, which left a crater not far from the apartment blocks. Footage verified by Reuters showed flames engulfing the top floor of an apartment building shortly after the strike. Search and rescue teams moved from floor to floor inside the damaged buildings. Israeli military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani said both strikes had been carried out with conventional ballistic missiles. He declined to comment when asked about the initial findings of a military investigation into the failure to intercept the missiles. Netanyahu says miracle no one killed

Most Israelis receive alerts on their mobile phone when launches from Iran are identified. An air raid siren sounds and they then have a few minutes to go to safe rooms or public bomb shelters. "It is a miracle that no-one was killed," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday (March 22, 2026), standing in the crater at the impact site in Arad. Pointing at the blown out walls of the apartment block and then at the enforced undamaged wall leading to a shelter below ground, Netanyahu urged Israelis not to be complacent. No one would have been hurt, he said, had all sought shelter in time. In Arad, 31 people, including 18 children, were hospitalised, at least 9 of them in serious condition, according to the hospital. Dozens more were lightly injured. Israel said Iran was targeting civilian population areas. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they targeted military and security-related sites in retaliation for Israeli strikes against Iranian sites. Arad and Dimona, another city that was hit, are located close to Israel's secretive nuclear reactor and several military bases, including Nevatim Air Base, one of the country's largest.

In Dimona, 5 people were hospitalised, including a 12-year-old boy in serious condition, the hospital said. Since joint U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28, Israel has come under daily missile fire from Iran. At least 20 civilians have been killed in Israel and the Palestinian territories, including one Israeli killed in an attack by Iran-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah on Sunday (March 22, 2026). Israeli and U.S. strikes have killed at least 1,300 people in Iran so far, according to the Iranian government. The U.S.-based rights group HRANA, which tracks human rights violations in Iran, has recorded 3,320 people killed, including 1,406 civilians and 1,167 military personnel, with the remainder not yet determined. Reuters could not independently verify the data.

## Wangchuk returns to Ladakh after NSA revocation, calls for relief to detainees

GNS News Agency, March 25

Returning to Leh after his release from detention, climate activist Sonam Wangchuk on Sunday (March 22, 2026) said the Ladakh movement would remain peaceful and expressed hope for constructive engagement between all stakeholders. Noting that "a lot went wrong" in Ladakh, Mr. Wangchuk said the focus should now be on correcting past mistakes rather than dwelling on them and called for relief to those still facing legal action in connection with the Ladakh agitation. Mr. Wangchuk was accorded a grand reception at Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport on Sunday (March 22, 2026). Members of the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), and a large number of well-wishers gathered to welcome him at the airport. "A new step has been taken, and we are seeing it as a positive one. Although some people say it is about defeat or victory, we do not want to see it that way," he told reporters. Mr. Wangchuk said that the situation should not be viewed in terms of victory or defeat but as an opportunity to move forward through mutual cooperation. He also expressed hope that both sides would respond with greater openness to build confidence and resolve pending concerns. "If they take one step there, we take two here; if we take two, they take four — that is our expectation from those involved," the climate activist said.

He reiterated his call for dialogue and a collaborative approach to address the aspirations of the people of Ladakh. Mr. Wangchuk said he hoped the emerging "new atmosphere" would bring relief to those in jail and ensure fair handling of pending cases. "I hope that as these dark clouds clear, a new dawn comes for them as well. Their treatment should be ensured as soon as possible, and the cases against them should be properly handled," he said. He also called for remembering those who lost their lives during the agitation and supporting the injured by helping them return to work, describing such steps as meaningful recognition of their sacrifices.

"It feels right, because I believe that not only after coming out of jail, but also from the overall atmosphere I am seeing, I hope things will come together positively. I have witnessed the love of the people of Ladakh, especially from the way the reception was given today, and the efforts made by the Apex body and KDA," he said. Noting that "a lot went wrong" in Ladakh, Mr. Wangchuk said the focus should now be on correcting past mistakes rather than dwelling on them.

"Even if the whole day goes wrong, we should still try to make it better knowingly. With that hope, I want to remain positive," he said. On the possibility of fresh protests,



Mr. Wangchuk said he hopes such a situation would not arise and asserted that any future movement would remain peaceful. "If it does, we will walk on the path of righteousness, truth and peace. We will not deviate from peace or truth," he said. He emphasised that his struggle was not personal but aimed at addressing broader issues facing Ladakh. "It is important that the issue wins, even if I appear to lose. I will continue to try, because otherwise it becomes a cycle that teaches no one anything." Wangchuk maintained that future talks on issues concerning Ladakh should be conducted in a positive "give-and-take" spirit, urging all sides to avoid rigid positions. He also expressed hope that the prevailing atmosphere would lead to constructive outcomes, saying the overwhelming public support reflected the people's aspirations for unity and progress.

"Our message has always been to understand the emotions of all sides through struggle and dialogue. I hope the recent developments will be satisfactory for everyone," he said. Mr. Wangchuk stressed the need to learn from past events. "Learning is more important than revenge or retaliation. We should remember, learn and move ahead." The activist said that he plans to meet the families of those who died during the protests to salute and thank them for their sacrifices. Responding to slogans hailing him as a "lion", Mr. Wangchuk said he preferred to compare himself to a donkey, symbolising patience, endurance and service, and added that he was inspired by ants for their spirit of collective work and sacrifice for the community. Calling recent decisions a significant turning point, Mr. Wangchuk said that they reflected a growing realisation of earlier mistakes and expressed hope that Ladakh would now move towards a more positive future. The activist was released from Jodhpur Central Jail after the government revoked his detention under the NSA. He had been in custody since September 26, 2025.

## SC internal reservation: Religious heads spearheading campaign of their communities

GNS News Agency, March 25

As the State government attempts to address challenges in the reservation matrix, communities — led by their religious heads — will be flexing their strength in Bengaluru this week. A special meeting of the State Cabinet on Friday is set to consider internal reservation within 15% quota for Scheduled Castes even as it has reduced the overall reservation quota to 50% from 56% in view of cases pending in Karnataka High Court.

The Cabinet is divided over the issue with Dalit Left and Dalit Right Ministers taking divergent views, and efforts are on to bring a consensus among the factions to agree to a reasonable sub-classification matrix. Sources said that the special Cabinet meeting is likely to discuss on a reservation ratio of 5.3% each to Dalit Left and Dalit Right, and 4.4% to the touchable castes within 15% quota.

Chitradurga-based Adijambava Mutt seer Shadakshari Muni Swami, the religious head for Madigas, is on his way to Bengaluru on a padayatra seeking implementation of internal reservation within the 15% reservation quota in one of the largest recruitments drive of the State in recent history. According to his aides in the padayatra, which started on March 11 from Harihara in Davangere, the seer will halt in Sira on Sunday night, and will reach just before the special Cabinet meeting. Meanwhile, Madiga leaders have been meeting Cabinet Ministers to explain their stand and seeking their support in the Cabinet. The reservation quota has come under intense pressure as the government announced initiating recruitment process to fill 56,432 posts with the 50% overall reservation quota prevailing before 2022 and also without internal reservation within the 15% quota for Scheduled Castes. The Dalit Left (Madigas) faction is insisting on the internal reservation even as the Dalit Right (Holeyas) and the touchable castes of Banjaras/Lambanis,

Bhovi, Koramas, and Korachas are opposed to internal reservation ahead of Friday's special Cabinet meeting. On Tuesday, Immadi Siddarameshwara Swami of Bhovi Gurupeetha and Sardar Sevalal Swami, head of Banjara Peetha, are set to lead a protest in Bengaluru against the internal reservation, while welcoming the government's decision to proceed with the 50% reservation matrix.

"The internal reservation should not be implemented till the Census 2027 report comes out. It is unfair to our communities and decisions should not be taken under pressure and unilaterally," Karnataka Reservation Protection Federation general secretary Ravi K. Pujar said on Sunday, adding that the two seers will be participating in the rally. Adijambava Mutt seer Shadakshari Muni Swami during a padayatra near Sira. The seer is on a padayatra from Harihara to Bengaluru seeking internal reservation.

Adijambava Mutt seer Shadakshari Muni Swami during a padayatra near Sira. The seer is on a padayatra from Harihara to Bengaluru seeking internal reservation. | Photo Credit: special arrangement Dalit Right (Holeyas) communities led by seer of Urilingi Peddi Mutt's Mysuru branch Jnanaprakash Swami on Wednesday will stage a protest rally in Freedom Park seeking rejection of the H.N. Nagamohan Das Commission's report based on which the government sliced up the internal reservation matrix. The seer, who heads the Karnataka State Right Community's Castes Federation, has sought rejection of the Das Commission's report, and has urged the government not to introduce internal reservation within 15% reservation quota for SCs. Meanwhile, the BJP, which a fortnight ago announced a padayatra to Bengaluru from Chitradurga in protest against reducing reservation matrix from Sunday, deferred the padayatra awaiting the government's decision on Friday.

## Donald Trump's changing course on Strait of Hormuz strategy raises questions about U.S. war preparation

GNS News Agency, March 25

Trump and his allies insist they were always prepared for Iran to block the strait, yet the Republican president's erratic strategy has fueled criticism that he is grasping for answers after going to war without a clear exit plan. On Saturday (March 21, 2026) came his latest attempt, via an ultimatum to Iran: Open the strait within 48 hours or the United States will "obliterate" the country's power plants. Trump's aides defended the threat as a hard-edged tactic to press Iran into submission. Opponents framed it as the failure of a president who miscalculated what it would take to get out of a geopolitical mire. "Trump has no plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, so he is threatening to attack Iran's civil power plants," said Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass, adding: "This would be a war crime." "He's lost control of the war and he is panicking," said Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., responding to Trump's post.

Over the course of about a week, Trump has repeatedly shifted his approach on the crucial waterway for global oil and gas transport. There is growing urgency for Trump as soaring oil prices rattle global markets and pinch American consumers months before pivotal midterm elections. Trump and diplomacy Trump tried his hand at a diplomatic solution last weekend when he called for a new international coalition to send warships to the strait.

Allies turned him down. Trump then said the US could manage on its own. On Friday (March 20, 2026) he suggested other countries would have to take over as the US eyes an exit. Hours later he indicated the waterway would somehow "open itself." "You can't all of a sudden walk away after you've kind of created the event and expect other people to pick it up," Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C. told ABC's "This Week." Trump's Treasury Department on Friday made its latest attempt to get a handle on soaring gas prices, by lifting sanctions on some Iranian oil for the first time in decades. That relieved some of the pressure that Washington traditionally has used as leverage against Tehran. The goal was to send millions more barrels of oil into the global market. It is not clear, however, how much of a dent that would make in lowering pump prices or how the administration could prevent Iran from cashing in on the renewed sales.

The administration earlier temporarily lifted sanctions on some Russian oil. "An ultimatum to Iran Trump's ultimatum, conveyed while he spent the weekend in Florida, carries a threat of remarkable aggression. His previous messaging mostly focused on US success in hitting Iran's air force, navy and missile production. This time, the threatened target is the energy infrastructure that powers hospitals, homes and more. His social media post — 51 words, much of it in capital letters — did not have the appearance of a message that underwent the careful legal scrutiny needed to justify an attack on civilian infrastructure, said Geoffrey Corn, a law professor at Texas Tech University and a retired lieutenant colonel in the Army who served as a military lawyer.

"It certainly has a feeling of ready, fire, aim," Corn said of Trump's moving strategy. "He overestimated his ability to control the events once he unleashed this torrent of violence." That type of widespread attack would probably be a war crime, Corn said. For military leaders, it could force a choice between obeying an order to carry out a war crime or refusing and facing criminal sanction for willful disobedience, he said. Laws governing warfare do not explicitly forbid attacks on power plants, but the tactic is allowed only if an analysis finds that the military advantages outweigh the civilian harm, legal scholars say. It is seen as a high bar to clear because the rules of war are, at their core, designed to separate civilian and military targets. Iran's UN ambassador, in a letter to the Security Council, warned that the deliberate targeting of power plants would be inherently indiscriminate and a war crime, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

The White House has already faced intense backlash after the US was blamed for a missile strike on an Iranian elementary school that killed more than 165 people. "Trump aides justify latest attempt to rein in the crisis Trump provided scant detail on which plants might be targeted and



how. He gave Iran until Monday to reopen the strait or else the US will strike "various POWER PLANTS, STARTING WITH THE BIGGEST ONE FIRST!" Trump's team came to his defense Sunday, offering justification for striking Iran's energy grid.

Mike Waltz, the US ambassador to the United Nations, said Iran's Revolutionary Guard controls much of the country's infrastructure and is using it to power the war effort. He said potential targets include "gas-fired thermal power plants and other types of plants." Speaking on Fox News, Waltz said he wanted to get ahead of "hand-wringing" from the global community, calling the Revolutionary Guard a terrorist organisation. "The president is not messing around," he said. NATO's secretary-general, Mark Rutte, who has allied himself closely to Trump, tried to calm tensions. He said he understood Trump's anger and stressed that more than 20 countries are "coming together to implement his vision" of making the strait navigable as soon as possible. Israel's ambassador to Washington, Yechiel Leiter, cautioned against an all-out attack like the one Trump threatened. "We want to leave everything in the country intact, so that the people who come after this regime are going to be able to rebuild and reconstitute," he told CNN's "State of the Union." Trump's threat could prove counterproductive: If it's carried out, Iranian leaders said they would completely close the strait and retaliate against US and Israeli infrastructure. (AP)

## Jana Sena party aims for one lakh memberships in Srikakulam

Srikakulam Urban Development Authority chairman and Jana Sena Party Srikakulam Parliamentary wing in-charge Korikana Ravikumar on Sunday (March 22, 2026) said that the party has laid a strong foundation in all villages and mandals of the Srikakulam Lok Sabha segment. This was evident with the response the party received during the membership drive in the district in the last one month, he added.

He said that the party enrolled around 40,000 new members in 2025 and is all set to cross one lakh within a few days. Speaking to the media in Vizianagaram, he said that the villagers were happy with the speedy development of rural areas and were coming forward to enrol their names in "Udyami" membership drive.

"The Jana Sena Party president and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan's clean image is encouraging people to take the membership of the party. Mr. Pawan Kalyan, who handles Panchayat Raj and Rural Development portfolios, has been putting special focus on the development of villages," said Mr. Ravi Kumar.

The membership drive evoked a good response among the youngsters and women in villages as well as urban areas of the Lok Sabha segment. He said that he had submitted a note to Mr. Pawan Kalyan in Mangalagiri about the requirement of additional funds for the development of roads and water facilities in remote areas of the district.

## 'Suspension (from House) should be a measure of last resort, not routine practice'



Rahul Narwekar, Speaker of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, Mumbai, for a wide ranging interaction during the ongoing Budget Session, addressing key issues from the delay in appointing a Leader of the Opposition to concerns over Assembly functioning, anti-defection law reforms, and the recently passed anti-conversion legislation. In the conversation, Narwekar also spoke about maintaining neutrality in a politically charged environment, scrutiny of the Speaker's role, and administrative challenges within the House. Edited excerpts:

Why has Maharashtra not yet appointed a Leader of the Opposition LoP, despite a proposal pending before you?

If we genuinely want to uphold parliamentary democracy, we must begin with discipline. There has to be order, adherence to rules, and respect for institutional processes. The Constitution provides the framework, and the Vidhan Sabha has its own rules for functioning. Alongside this, precedent plays a crucial role in guiding decisions. In the present situation, the central question is whether a Leader of the Opposition can be appointed when the largest opposition party does not meet the 10 per cent strength threshold. There are precedents suggesting that without this minimum strength, appointing an LoP may not be appropriate. Even Parliament operates on a similar understanding. However, this is not a straightforward issue. There have been differing interpretations at different points in time. Therefore, rather than rushing into a decision, it is important to consult widely and take a well reasoned view. Whatever decision is taken today will not just resolve the current situation, it will become a precedent for future Speakers.

Given the ruling coalition's overwhelming majority, does the absence of an LoP risk making Assembly functioning one-sided?

That is a legitimate concern. In our system, justice must not only be done but must also be seen to be done. Public perception matters greatly. Today, the numbers in the Assembly are clearly lopsided, with over 232 members on the ruling side and about 56 in the Opposition. In such a scenario, the responsibility of the Speaker becomes even more critical. It is my duty to ensure that this numerical imbalance does not translate into procedural or functional imbalance. In practice, I have consciously tried to ensure that Opposition members are given sufficient opportunities whether during Question Hour, Zero Hour, or through calling attention motions. Even though parties like the BJP have significantly higher numbers compared to the Congress, I have ensured that smaller opposition parties are also given space to raise issues and question the government. The goal is to ensure that the Assembly functions in a truly democratic manner, irrespective of the numbers.

Is there a time frame for your decision on the LoP?

There is a fine balance to be maintained. Justice delayed is justice denied, but justice hurried is justice buried. We want to avoid both extremes. I am conscious of the need for timely action and will take a decision soon. You have been appointed to head a committee of presiding officers to examine the Tenth Schedule and the anti defection law. What prompted the formation of this committee, and what key challenges and reforms is it looking to address?

The Tenth Schedule, which deals with defection, has evolved significantly over the years. Initially, it allowed one third of members to split and form a separate group. This was later tightened to require two-thirds majority and mandatory merger, making the law more robust. Despite these improvements, several ambiguities remain. For instance, the definition of leader is unclear. Does it refer to the leader chosen by the legislative party or the political party. These ambiguities create challenges for presiding officers when adjudicating defection cases. Recognising these issues, a committee was constituted to review the provisions, examine precedents, and recommend necessary amendments. One major concern is the absence of a defined time frame for deciding anti-defection petitions. This often leads to judicial intervention, which ideally should not be the case since defection is within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Speaker. At the same time, prescribing a rigid time frame externally can be problematic because cases vary in complexity. Some may require detailed examination beyond a fixed period. Therefore, I believe the law itself should specify a reasonable minimum and maximum time frame. This would provide clarity, reduce arbitrariness, and strengthen the intent of the anti-defection framework.

With the anti-conversion bill passed in the Assembly, would it not have been more prudent to wait for the Supreme Court's ruling on similar laws in other states, or to refer the bill to a select committee for further scrutiny? I don't think there is any contradiction here. In fact, the Supreme Court itself has, in multiple judgments, made it clear that the state has a duty to ensure that every individual is able to protect their faith and that conversion is not the result of compulsion. The court has effectively placed an obligation on states to enact laws that prevent misuse of the conversion process. This legislation is in line with that mandate. It is clear and specific in its intent. It does not seek to stop conversion altogether but it seeks to prevent conversion through coercion, fraud, deceit, or any form of undue influence. The law is not targeted at any one religion or community. It applies uniformly to all religions and all citizens. On the contrary, the law actually removes ambiguity. In the absence of a legal framework, allegations such as "love jihad" or forced conversion can arise without any formal mechanism to verify them. Under this law, if an individual chooses to convert out of free will, they can simply state so before the competent authority. Once that declaration is made, the matter is settled. There is no scope for further dispute or speculation. In fact, many of the concerns you are referring to will be addressed and reduced because of this clarity. The Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, freedom of faith, and the freedom to choose one's beliefs. However, that same freedom also includes the right to be protected from forced or induced conversion. This law is consistent with that constitutional principle. The right to practise or adopt a religion also implies that no individual should be compelled, pressured, or deceived into changing their faith. Therefore, the legislation strengthens, rather than restricts, the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom.

One of the most criticised provisions in the conversion bill is the clause on inducement through "brainwashing" via education. For instance, could writing or reading a book on a religion potentially invite police action? Does this risk overreach? Any law, once enacted, is ultimately sub-

ject to judicial interpretation. The intent of this legislation is not to penalise legitimate expression or academic engagement, but to ensure that no individual is subjected to undue pressure or coercion that leads to a decision made under duress or through unacceptable means.

That is precisely why laws are accompanied by a statement of objects and reasons. The provisions must be read in that context. Courts will interpret the law in line with its intent and ensure that it is applied appropriately.

I do not believe this should pose a problem. There have been growing complaints from legislators across party lines about the absence of officials and, at times, even ministers in the Assembly. How serious is this issue, and how are you addressing it?

Bureaucrats are expected to be present in the House, usually seated in the officers' gallery, to assist ministers with responses and to take note of proceedings. I do agree that for some time, the attendance of senior officials had become a concern. I raised this issue in the House recently, and over the past few days, I have seen an improvement in their presence. The Parliamentary Affairs Minister has also taken this matter seriously, and I am confident that the situation will improve. As for ministers, we must keep in mind that Maharashtra has a bicameral legislature. Ministers are required to attend both Houses, and there can be occasions when a particular minister is not present. However, there have been instances in this session where proceedings had to be adjourned due to the absence of a member of the Executive. That is not desirable and must be avoided.

There was also the unprecedented suspension of an IAS officer. Was that intended as a message on accountability?

At that time, the presiding officer in the Chair took the decision based on the sense and mood of the House. However, suspension should always be a measure of last resort and not a routine practice. Subsequently, the government reviewed the matter in detail. The officer clarified that there was no such intent, and the suspension was revoked.

Has the quality of debate in the Assembly declined?

Maharashtra has a rich tradition of dignified legislative functioning. While there is some increase in rhetoric due to the current media environment, that is part of evolving politics. There may be emotional moments, but we have not crossed the line. The decorum of the House remains intact. The Speaker's chair has always been under scrutiny and it seems to have intensified in recent years. Given your political journey across parties before joining the BJP, do you feel any added pressure to demonstrate neutrality or compensate for that perception?

I actually see my political journey as an advantage because it builds trust across parties. Ultimately, the Assembly functions on rules that have a constitutional mandate, along with established precedents. Every ruling I have given has been backed either by a rule or a precedent. None of my decisions have been arbitrary. If you are able to justify your decisions within that framework, I do not think there should be any issue or distrust within the House. If there is trust in your functioning, why do political opponents continue to criticise both your conduct inside and outside the House, including during the BMC elections?

Politics is inherently driven by perception. You are scrutinised not only for your official role but also for actions that may not even be connected to your duties as Speaker. As Speaker, I am expected to conduct proceedings fairly, and I do so. But I also represent a constituency and have responsibilities towards it.

In the case of the BMC elections, every MLA in Mumbai accompanies their party candidates during nominations. I have done nothing beyond that norm. Supporting candidates during nominations does not violate any principle. At the end of the day, I too face elections, and they must be free and fair. If I notice any misuse of authority or privilege, I am duty bound to raise it with the appropriate authorities.

You faced criticism over multiple members of your family being fielded in the BMC elections. How do you respond to charges of promoting dynasty politics?

The nominations were based on merit, not relationships. My brother, Makrand Narwekar, has been a corporator for nearly 17 years, even before I became an MLA, and has consistently won with significant margins.

My sister-in-law has also been an elected representative since 2017. These are individuals with established public records. In fact, denying them tickets solely because they are related to me would have been unfair. They were given tickets based on their performance and merit, just like other sitting corporators. As for the third candidate, she is a practising doctor with strong local connect and popularity. Her candidature was also merit based. The focus should be that all three are well educated, accomplished individuals, not merely their relationship to me.

## Vendors group calls street vending ban 'anti-poor', seeks rollback



This comes a day after Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, during a pre-GBA budget meeting on Friday (March 20), said a footpath policy will be introduced.

The Karnataka Pragathi Para Beedhi Vyaparigala Sangha has opposed the proposed policy by the State government and the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) to ban street vending on arterial and sub-arterial roads in the city, terming it illegal, unconstitutional, and detrimental to the livelihoods of the urban poor. The association warned that protests would begin if the proposal is not withdrawn.

This comes a day after Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, during a pre-GBA budget meeting on Friday (March 20), said a footpath policy will be introduced. As part of the policy, street vendors are expected to be barred from doing commercial activities on arterial and sub-arterial roads.

## Organisational changes are being made to reach every part of India, says Sunil Ambekar of RSS



From defending BJP ruled State's restrictions on Namaz on roads to supporting the idea of allowing only Hindus to enter the Char Dham temples, RSS national publicity in-charge Sunil Ambekar in an exclusive interview to Ishita Mishra spoke at length on topics like demographic change and population imbalance and Gen Z protest in Nepal and Bangladesh. He also defended Narendra Modi's government on ongoing West Asia conflict and appointment of Naitin Anbin as BJP chief.

It's been 100 years since the RSS was founded in 1925. How does the Sangh define its core ideology, and how has it changed over these 100 years?

The founding vision of the Sangh was clear from the very beginning: to guide the nation toward a state of the highest prosperity and glory. The most essential requirement to achieve this goal is having unity among Hindus and unity within society as a whole. For this purpose, individuals fully dedicated to this mission were needed. With such people and these objectives in mind, the work of the Sangh began. The core idea has always been that this is a Hindu nation, where Hindutva is understood as a way of life. This way of life is not opposed to anyone, nor is it meant to eliminate or harm others; rather, it is intended for the welfare of all. Therefore, its establishment is beneficial not only for India but for the entire world and all of humanity. It was with this pure and selfless spirit that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was founded. This foundational thought has remained unchanged over time. However, as time, circumstances, and societal needs evolve, and as the number of workers grows, the Sangh engages with a wider range of issues. While doing so, it continues to express its ideas based on its original principles. The nation remains supreme in its thinking, and this reflects in its approach to national security, development, and unity. The core vision remains consistent and continues to guide its path.

So far, how many people have joined the Sangh Parivar in India?

In terms of shakhas, we currently have around 88,000 daily shakhas running across the country. Each shakha connects with many individuals—some have around 100 participants, others 200 or more. So overall, the number of people associated with the Sangh runs into several lakhs.

As the Sangh completes 100 years, is it planning any new expansion strategy? Was any such decision taken in your Akhil Bharatiya Samanvay Baithak held in Samalakra?

The number of shakhas has been steadily increasing, and the organisation continues to expand at a consistent pace. To manage this growth, we are working on strengthening and restructuring the organisation. Earlier, we had around 46 provincial (prant) units. Now, we are introducing an additional layer below that—the divisional (sambhag) level—to make the structure more decentralized. This will help us effectively address the growing needs of expansion. We have already reached villages, tehsils, mandals, and grassroots levels, and our goal is to reach every part of India. These organisational changes are being made to support that objective. People from all walks of life are joining us, and we aim to collaborate with all such individuals. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity. By working together with society, we hope to take up new initiatives and expand our work further.

In the coming years, will we see more offshoots of the Sangh or like-minded organisations?

I can't say with certainty. However, as new needs arise in different areas of work, new systems, organisations, and institutions will naturally emerge. At the same time, the institutions that are already functioning will continue to expand and incorporate new dimensions into their work. The relationship between the Sangh and the BJP is often discussed. The BJP has recently chosen Nitin Nabin as its party president after a long wait. It is being said that Mr. Nabin has not had any direct association with the Sangh or its affiliated organisations. How do you see this?

As far as I know, his family has had some connection with the Sangh. Beyond that, he has been working within the political sphere, specifically with the BJP, for many years. He is a long-time and experienced party worker.

But wouldn't this create an ideological gap? For example, someone trained in the Sangh's ideology versus someone who has only grown within the party?

I believe that Sangh volunteers work across all spheres of society and contribute to various organisations, often playing important roles in running them. In the BJP as well, there are many such volunteers who hold significant and decision-making positions. They understand the Sangh's ideas just as well as we do and have similar experience. So, I believe they will continue to take their organisation forward effectively.

So because already so many Sangh volunteers are part of the BJP, is this the reason why the RSS has not been providing organisational general secretaries to the party in several states for a long time?

No, that is more of a situational matter. Decisions depend on immediate needs, local circumstances, and the availability of individuals. Leave BJP, there are many other organisations as well where we are currently unable to provide workers despite the need—for example, Saksham, which works for persons with disabilities. Many organisations working in the field of women's welfare are also waiting. As more organisations are formed, the demand for dedicated workers continues to grow.

The Sangh has been vocal about issues like population imbalance, demographic change, and cross-border infiltration. How do you see these as concerns in present Indian society?

Going to another country for work through legal means is normal and acceptable, but illegal infiltration is not. In any country, a large influx of illegal migrants becomes a matter of concern for national security and social unity. India is a democratic nation, and illegal entry does not only cause economic strain but also affects the democratic system by allowing unlawful participation. This raises questions about the country's unity, security, and integrity. Given India's historical background—especially the Partition in 1947—this issue becomes even more sensitive. It is the responsibility of every citizen to ensure that such a situation never arises

again. The Partition itself is often linked to demographic imbalances, and this concern is not limited to the Sangh; it is shared by many citizens across the country. Sangh workers, who regularly engage with people at the grassroots level, often hear these concerns directly from society. When such concerns arise, the Sangh raises them openly. While some may avoid speaking on these issues due to political interests or pressures, the Sangh considers them a priority and addresses them. Its volunteers also try to raise awareness through constitutional and lawful means and work toward solutions.

How does the Sangh create awareness among people on issues like cross-border infiltration and demographic change?

Most illegal infiltration in India is from Bangladesh. There is data available on these issues. We reach out to people in regions where this is happening the most and spread awareness. Whenever senior leaders, including the Sarsanghchalak (Mohan Bhagwat), speak at public platforms, they highlight these concerns to society. Awareness is spread through campaigns and direct interaction with communities. I would also say that platforms like yours can play an important role in creating public awareness and contributing to informed discussion on these issues.

Are there any States where you feel cross-border infiltration and demographic imbalance are increasing?

States like Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, and Jharkhand are particularly affected. In general, regions that share international borders tend to face this issue more. In some cases, even places like the Andaman Islands have reported instances of illegal infiltration. A positive development is that institutions such as the Election Commission and administrative authorities are now taking action at various levels, and such cases are increasingly being identified and addressed.

When the Sangh says that this is a Hindu nation and that all people living here are Hindu, then how does the issue of demographic imbalance arise if everyone belongs to the same broader identity?

In our country, there are many people who see themselves as connected to its traditions, unity, integrity, and heritage. As has been said by the Sarsanghchalak, people share common DNA (ancestry) and a shared historical and cultural background. For those who recognize this, even if their mode of worship changes, their connection to the nation does not change. However, there have also been instances where changes in religious identity led some to feel that they no longer belonged to this nation and instead identified with another. This mindset contributed to events like the Partition. Similar situations have occurred in other parts of the world as well—for example, Lebanon. RSS is working on ground to make people understand that they all belong to Hindu Rashtra and have same history and DNA but at the same time, it is equally important to ensure that until everyone understands this, no section of society acts in a way that harms the unity and integrity of the nation. Both these efforts—awareness and outreach—need to continue side by side.

In today's context, how does the Sangh view SIR, CAA, and NRC? How can these help in preserving the country's culture?

I believe these are essentially constitutional and administrative processes. For example, exercises like SIR are not happening for the first time—they have been conducted earlier as well. Such measures are generally seen as being in the national interest. If someone is found to be an illegal entrant, then appropriate legal action should follow—it is a straightforward matter, not something overly complicated. At the same time, if someone feels their name has been wrongly excluded, there are provisions to reapply and seek correction. The system provides mechanisms for review and rectification.

What is the Sangh's view on the ongoing war in West Asia?

This is an international issue. As a nation, India's official stance and policies are determined by the Government of India. In such situations, it is important that all sections of society—including opposition parties—set aside differences and stand together in the national interest, keeping the country's priorities above all else. The Sangh's approach is aligned with this broader national perspective. It is believed that any conflict should be guided by truth and the welfare of people, not by selfish interests. Ideally, the world should move away from war and toward peace. India, in its approach, appears to be moving in that direction.

How does the Sangh view the Gen Z-led movements happening in neighboring countries like Nepal and Bangladesh? Why do you think India seems unaffected?

What is happening in Bangladesh or Nepal is largely an internal matter of those countries. In a democracy, people have the right to express dissatisfaction with their governments and organise movements if they feel the need. That is what we are seeing there. In India's case, the youth are highly aspirational. They are focused on taking the country forward and contributing to its growth. There is also a sense among many that the government is working in alignment with their aspirations. Indian youth have strong faith in the Constitution and prefer to bring change within its framework. Historically too, whenever the country has faced challenges, young people have stepped forward—whether during the freedom movement, the Emergency, or public movements around issues like corruption and women's safety. They have largely used democratic and peaceful means to express themselves. Today, much of the younger generation is channeling its energy into areas like technology, AI, startups, and innovation, with the aim of strengthening India's global position. They are also thinking about governance, law and order, and long-term national development. Overall, today's youth appear more optimistic about India's potential compared to earlier generations, and many also feel a strong connection to their cultural and value systems.

When you speak about unity in diversity and youth enthusiasm, how do incidents—such as restrictions on offering namaz in certain places or controversies around religious practices—impact young people?

I think even Muslim majority countries have rules about where namaz can be offered. It's usually not allowed to pray on roads there. From what I've seen and understood—for example, if you go to Dubai—you'll notice that people don't pray on the streets. They go to designated places for namaz. So, I feel this is not really a religious issue, but more about maintaining discipline in society. It should be seen in that way—discipline should be maintained. Every religious group arranges proper places for their followers, and those places are meant for worship. In a democracy, if people don't like a certain arrangement, they can speak up. There are simple ways to do that, like through media or public discussion. Overall, I think this is a broader issue involving the government, society, and communities. The government makes rules based on law and order, and people also express their views on it.

# To compete with China, India may need China



istry of Finance, in its annual Economic Survey for 2023-24, suggested that increased FDI inflows from China can help increase India's global supply chain participation and push exports. The Ministry took note of the U.S.' and Europe's shift away from sourcing imports directly from China. The U.S.' total trade with China reduced in 2023 and remained stagnant in 2024. The European Union also saw a similar dip in trade with China in 2023 (Chart 2B). The chart below shows the U.S.'s total trade (including imports and exports) with China over the years (in \$ bn)

The Survey stated that FDI from China could boost India's exports to the U.S., "similar to how East Asian economies did in the past." Pai elaborated on India's change of heart. "Due to China's dominance in most markets, India cannot attract global supply chains which want to diversify from China without including Chinese companies in the mix," he said. The chart below shows the U.S.'s total trade (including imports and exports) with China over the years. The figures were sourced from Eurostat data, wherein exports and imports are indexed at 100 each, with 2013 as the starting year. Using this method, EU's total trade in 2013, which includes imports and exports, is represented as 200. In 2019, the index had increased to 239. India has proven to be a ready alternative for the U.S. to replace China in at least one of the major items. Due to its dominance in the manufacturing of components, China made up more than 60% of the U.S.'s imports of smartphones in 2016. However, 10 years later, China's share has dwindled to about 22% of the U.S.'s smartphone imports, majorly due to higher tariffs. The chart below shows the U.S.'s overall smartphone imports in \$ bn over the years. Meanwhile, countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, and India have shown upticks in their shares of U.S.'s smartphone imports. However, the possibility of replicating this success, without China's help, in other items as well is slim as of now. The chart below shows select countries' share in the U.S.'s import of smartphones over the years. While China's FDI stock (or cumulative FDI inflows) to most of its staple investment destinations have increased over the years, its stock with India has declined over the past decade. The table below shows that when Chinese FDI stock is ranked, India fell by 19 ranks between 2014 and 2024. Pai stated that although China was eager to invest in Indian companies, the curbs that were set in 2020 may have projected an unpredictable environment for investment.

The Ministry of Finance is set to scrap curbs on Chinese firms bidding for government contracts, which were introduced in 2020. The curbs were imposed following a deadly clash between the countries' troops in the Galwan Valley. They required Chinese bidders to register with an Indian government committee and obtain political and security clearances. According to Reuters, this resulted in China losing out on contracts worth \$700-750 billion. Notably, even during periods when India had a more favourable stance, direct Chinese investment remained low. China directly contributed less than 1% of India FDI equity inflows from 2000 to 2021, showing that recent curbs only add pressure.

The chart below shows China's share and rank in India's total FDI equity inflows from 2000 to 2025. The figure for 2000-2021 is cumulative. However, China's cumulative (direct and indirect) FDI inflows before 2020 into India are difficult to calculate as they were mostly routed through tax havens, according to Santosh Pai, Partner at Denton's Link Legal and Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies. "Chinese investments almost never go directly into a country," he told The Hindu. These means of investments were wholly altered when the Indian government issued 'Press Note 3' in April 2020, which specifically stated that an entity of a country, which shares a land border with India, or where the beneficial owner is a citizen of any such country, requires mandatory approval from the Government of India before for an investment can be executed. Pai estimated that this denied any indirect investments that Chinese companies had slated for India.

A few years after this policy amendment, India's Min-

# Why only female Darwin's bark spiders weave the toughest webs

One of the strongest materials on the earth isn't made in a factory or synthesised in a laboratory but spun by a creature barely two inches long. The Darwin's bark spider (*Caerostris darwini*), found in the forests of Madagascar, weaves silk that outperforms steel and most human-made fibres in both strength and toughness. Larger webs, stronger threads its silk has a tensile strength of about 1.6 gigapascals, around 3x higher than that of iron, making it the toughest biological material ever tested. But as scientists are now finding, this extraordinary strength isn't something every individual produces. Across spider species, body size is often linked to silk quality. Larger spiders generally produce tougher silks to capture larger or faster prey. In orb-weaving spiders such as the Darwin's bark spider, larger bodies over evolutionary time have accompanied larger webs and stronger silk threads.

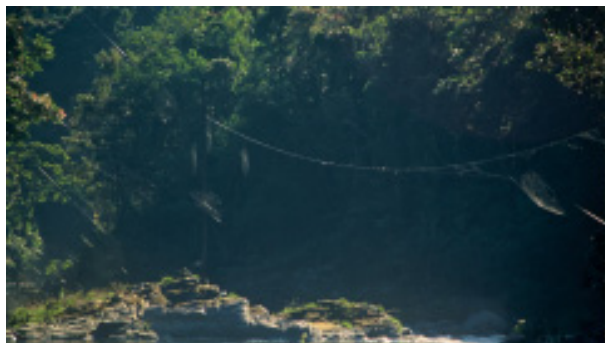
Scientists from institutions in China, Madagascar, Slovenia, and the US studied bark spiders to understand the conditions in which they produce the tough silk. Their findings were recently published in *Integrative Zoology*. Three hypotheses. The study focused on two bark spider species in Madagascar: *Caerostris darwini*, which spins the largest orb webs ever recorded, and its close relative *Caerostris kuntneri*. Egg sacs from both species were collected from Analamazaotra National Park and the spiders were raised in laboratory conditions. This allowed the scientists to compare silk produced by males and females at different life stages while keeping environmental factors such as diet and humidity constant.

The team tested three competing hypotheses. The first proposed that all individuals — males and females, juveniles and adults — produce silk of similar toughness. The second suggested only females produce tougher silk, regardless of size. The third said only large individuals, especially large adult females, produce exceptionally tough silk as and when their body size and ecological role demand it. The size difference between male and female bark spiders is striking. In *C. darwini*, adult females are about 3x larger than males. In *Caerostris kuntneri*, they can be up to 5x larger, suggesting that females are under much stronger evolutionary pressure to invest in tougher silk.

To measure silk quality, the researchers collected dragline silk, also known as major ampullate silk, from spiders of both sexes and at different life stages in each species. Each strand was carefully mounted on a cardboard frame and stretched to test its strength, stiffness, and ability to absorb energy before breaking. Dragline silk is one of the most important types of spider silk. Nearly invisible to the naked eye, it forms the structural backbone of an orb web and serves as safety lines, anchor threads, and emergency escape ropes for the spiders. Producing this silk, however, is metabolically expensive. The energy required to synthesise the amino acids that make up dragline silk varies; some such as proline, which plays an important role in making silk elastic, are particularly expensive. Darwin's bark spider silk contains unusually high levels of this protein, explaining its exceptional mechanical properties but in turn increasing its metabolic cost.

Quality and architecture. The study's results were unequivocal: only large adult females produced exceptionally tough silk. Their silk was also stiffer and more capable of absorbing far more mechanical strain before breaking than the silk produced by males or juveniles. The silk from adult males and juvenile males and females was mechanically indistinguishable.

The study also found that adult females produce high-performance silk only when it's biologically necessary. As the females grow larger and begin building large webs capable of intercepting fast-moving prey, they 'turn on' the physiological machinery required to manufacture the superior silk. The study also uncovered a close link between silk quality and the architecture of the web. Adult female Darwin's bark spiders build more sparse webs, with wider gaps between threads, using less silk per unit area. Despite being economical, these webs are highly effective because each thread can absorb (relatively enormous forces. Juveniles and males on the other hand spin more dense webs made of metabolically cheaper and weaker silk. Curiously, not all the properties of the silk varied with size and sex. Regardless of age or sex, all individuals produced silk of compar-



bly high stretchability, or how much the silk could be stretched before it broke. It suggested that the elasticity of the silk of spiders of the genus *Caerostris* is a genetically conserved feature — while extreme toughness is tuned according to body size and ecological demand. At the molecular level, differences in silk properties arise from changes in protein composition, how the proteins are arranged and cross-linked, and even the shape and length of the ducts that spin silk inside the spider's body. *C. darwini* has an unusually long and complex spinning duct that scientists believe could be allowing silk proteins to produce exceptionally strong silk fibre.

The trade-off however is time and energy. Female bark spiders produce less silk overall, take longer to rebuild their webs, and invest more in quality over quantity. "We think that very tough silk evolved because it was needed to structurally support the huge webs built by *Caerostris* spiders, rather than as an adaptation to hunt any specific prey," Matjaž Gregoric, the lead author of the study and a researcher at the Jovan Hadri Institute of Biology, Slovenia, said. The strategy pays off in the spider's distinctive habitat. *C. darwini* builds enormous webs, up to 25 m wide, suspended over rivers and lakes. These aerial traps allow the spider, to capture swarms of flies and beetles that few other spiders can. Silk production in Darwin's bark spiders has evolved to ensure energy is invested only where it can yield a greater survival advantage. The extraordinary properties of its silk thus emerge from a complex interplay between body size, sex, ecology, and behaviour.

# Gates and OpenAI team up for AI health push in African countries

The Gates Foundation and OpenAI are setting up a \$50 million partnership to help African countries use artificial intelligence to improve their health systems. The partnership, called Horizon1000, plans to work with African leaders to work out how best to use the technology, starting with Rwanda.

"In poorer countries with enormous health worker shortages and lack of health systems infrastructure, AI can be a gamechanger in expanding access to quality care," said Gates in a blog post announcing the launch. He has repeatedly described AI as one of the most transformative technologies ever developed.

The foundation has already set up a number of AI initiatives, while Rwanda last year established an AI health hub in Kigali. Horizon1000 aims to reach 1,000 primary health clinics and surrounding communities across several countries by 2028, Gates said.

The launch comes as many lower-income countries struggle with major cuts to international aid budgets; reductions Gates said in December had contributed to the first rise in preventable child deaths this century. AI could be particularly valuable in countries with severe shortages of trained health workers, Gates said. He noted estimates suggesting sub-Saharan Africa is short of around six million healthcare professionals.



# What the Anna's Archive Spotify hack reveals about digital piracy



In late December, a relatively little-known platform, Anna's Archive, made global headlines after it hacked Spotify. Tracked closely by open source movement advocates, the database that indexes millions of digital books and journals claimed it had scraped from Spotify about 86 million music files and metadata coming to slightly under 300TB. The platform claimed it "saw a role for us here to build a music archive primarily aimed at preservation." While the music collection is yet to be made fully available, the main web link to access Anna's Archive is down globally. This sudden outage has left numerous users—academics, bibliophiles, and open source activists—in distress.

What is Anna's Archive and how does it work?

Anna's Archive is a type of shadow library project that unifies existing libraries—both legal and illegal. It does this by collaborating with volunteers, scraping web content, and setting up mirrors to preserve digital records. When a user accesses Anna's Archive, they can see a variety of fast and slow download links from the platform's partner servers. Those who contribute certain amounts can get a higher number of faster downloads per day. In essence, Anna's Archive is a search engine for the contents of different shadow libraries. Anna's Archive claims that it has preserved about 16% of the world's books, including scientific journals, since its inception in 2022. The real identity of the person or group behind the project is unknown. But the group has cited Aaron Swartz, an American technologist and digital activist, as one of its sources of inspiration. The group considers itself a non-profit and claims that all donations are spent on servers, storage, and bandwidth. About its site being taken down and the scraping of Spotify data, the group posted on Reddit: "This unfortunately happens to shadow libraries on a regular basis. We don't believe this has to do with our Spotify backup." While many expressed support for the database, others criticised the project for purportedly drawing attention to its illegal activities by targeting a high-profile company like Spotify.

Is Anna's Archive an illegal platform?

Yes. But Anna's Archive claims that its mission is "backing up all knowledge and culture of humanity" and making it available to anyone. To fulfil its mission, the database breaks copyright laws and violates licensing permission so users can download e-books and other digital files for free. When a reader finds free books through Anna's Archive rather than going through a bookseller or a library, publishers lose out on their revenue while authors, artists, and other creatives lose out on the royalties. Anna's Archive has made contradictory claims regarding the legality of its project. In an introductory blog post published in November

# A tactical thaw in Kerala politics



With just over a couple of months to go for the Kerala Assembly elections, and coming hard on the heels of a fiercely contested local body poll, the State's political chessboard is being swiftly rearranged. At the centre of this churn is a development that would have seemed improbable even a year ago: the visible thaw in relations between the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam and the Nair Service Society (NSS). For the two Hindu community organisations that wield decisive influence across large swathes of southern and central Kerala, the symbolism of this emerging bonhomie is as potent as the electoral arithmetic. If this alignment holds, it would represent the most serious attempt at Hindu community convergence in over a decade.

The last attempt to stitch together a Grand Hindu Alliance between 2012 and 2014 had failed. It collapsed under bitter disagreements between these very same bodies over caste-based reservations and the Devaswom Recruitment Board. The bitterness of that rupture lingered for almost a decade, making the present display of warmth all the more striking. Beneath the cordiality, however, still lies a fundamental uncertainty over how they intend to reconcile positions shaped by sharply different social and political standings. For now, the convergence appears tactical. In reality, the rapprochement did not materialise overnight. The leadership of the NSS and SNDP had been edging closer for over a year. The turning point came in September last year with the Global Ayyappa Sangamam at Pampa, organised by the Left Democratic Front government ostensibly to deliberate on the future course of development at the hill shrine.

But what has clearly accelerated the public expression of this alignment is the emergence of a common adversary in Opposition leader V.D. Satheesan. The general secretaries of both organisations, G. Sukumaran Nair and Vellappally Natesan, have made little effort to hide their hostility toward Mr. Satheesan since he assumed office. This discontent came to the fore after Mr. Satheesan criticised controversial remarks by the SNDP leader, widely seen as targeting the Muslim community in Malabar. From there,

2022, the author noted: "We deliberately violate the copyright law in most countries. This allows us to do something that legal entities cannot do: making sure books are mirrored far and wide". On the other hand, the website claimed that it does not host any copyrighted materials, and only indexes publicly available metadata as a search engine.

Furthermore, Anna's Archive shared that its code and data are fully open source. The platform offers its dataset that includes unreleased collections for archival and LLM training purposes. Anna's Archive offered enterprise-level access "for donations in the range of tens of thousands USD," or in exchange for high-quality collections it doesn't have yet. This means that companies building AI chatbots could use Anna's Archive to train their products on millions of works of art, science, and literature, without fairly compensating the creators. This month, a U.S. judge ordered Anna's Archive to delete its data from WorldCat, a global catalog of library materials. Anna's Archive in a 2023 blog post claimed it had "meticulously scraped all WorldCat records," by exploiting a flawed website upgrade to obtain a comprehensive to-do list of all the remaining books to be added to Anna's Archive. The legal order is also meant to stop Anna's Archive from scraping, harvesting, using, storing, or sharing WorldCat's data. However, this is unlikely to deter the group, which gleefully thanked WorldCat for hundreds of millions of records and the metadata of 30,000 libraries.

What is the current status of Anna's Archive?

Anna's Archive is currently unreachable through its annas-archive.org address, even when attempting to access it via a TOR browser. Some people are using alternative web addresses in order to access the database while others are waiting for the platform to come back online through the old .org address. Anna's Archive as well as community members have provided tips and technical advice for those who wish to access the platform through other links. However, there is the risk of less experienced users being scammed by fake web addresses. Anna's Archive has alleged that the annas-archive.su address, for example, is fraudulent and steals users' donations.

In spite of the takedown, downloads appear to be continuing. On January 19, Anna's Archive shared on its website that based on downloads in the last 30 days, the hourly average was 37,000 and the daily average was 883,000. There was a sharp dip in downloads after the .org web address went down, followed by a gradual recovery. The platform also provides downloads stats for individual books. Multiple Anna's Archive users and donors on Reddit justified their downloads by citing the prohibitive cost of buying books. Others spoke about the lack of libraries in their country, high import fees for foreign books, the need for educational resources, the ability to get new books during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, getting digital versions of physical books they already had, upskilling for career reasons, working on their hobbies, inculcating a reading habit instead of scrolling online, reading more diversely, or not wanting to use the restrictive e-book formats provided by the original publishers. "[G]od bless, being from 3rd world country where can i get all [this] valuable knowledge. however we have to come to a common ground and see how to compensate authors. [.] the knowledge that i got from books has made people retain jobs and support families," shared a user on Reddit this month, in response to Anna's Archive.

the divisions became sharper, and the alignment unmistakably public. After all, both organisations have long harboured concerns over a perceived rise of Muslim influence in Kerala's political arena.

The projection of the LDF as enjoying the confidence of two of Kerala's most influential Hindu community organisations has sparked speculation that the CPI(M) played a quiet role in nudging the SNDP-NSS rapprochement. The move is widely seen as a counterweight to the steady consolidation of Muslim votes in Malabar and Catholic votes in central Travancore behind the Congress-led United Democratic Front. Viewed through this prism, the timing of senior CPI(M) leader A.K. Balan's remark that Jamaat e Islami would control the Home portfolio under a UDF government appears anything but incidental. This pattern found continuity when Cultural Affairs Minister Sajji Cherian drew pointed attention to the identity of candidates fielded by the Indian Union Muslim League. The CPI(M) and the LDF have maintained a studied silence, as if to allow the narrative to gain traction without formal endorsement.

For the UDF, which rides high on its local body election gains under Mr. Satheesan's leadership, this evolving chemistry between the NSS and SNDP is an unwelcome complication. Not just the Congress, but even the IUML has chosen restraint. After a decade out of power, the UDF's strategy is clear: allow anti-incumbency to do the heavy lifting, consolidate its social coalition, and avoid detonating new fault lines on the eve of the Assembly polls. Whether the coming together of these two Hindu community organisations, which together represent roughly 35% of Kerala's Hindu population, will convert into a proportionate electoral swing remains an open question. Large sections within these communities are already anchored to entrenched political loyalties. The National Democratic Alliance also commands a significant share of this social space. What is already beyond doubt, however, is that identity politics is no longer hovering at the margins. It is fast-moving to the very centre of Kerala's high-stakes electoral contest.

# Tunnel Boring Machine for Bullet Train project to arrive at Mumbai port from China

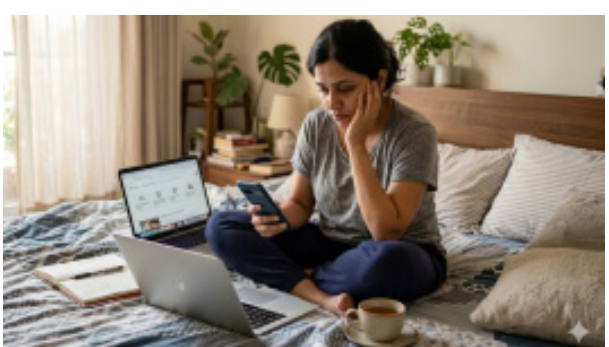


The Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) for India's maiden bullet train project is set to arrive in Mumbai, marking a major step forward for the 21-km tunnel stretch of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) project. The long-awaited machine — designed to excavate tunnels — is required to complete the tunnel in Mumbai for the project. The 3,000-tonne machines, supplied by German company Herrenknecht, will arrive late on Monday night at the port. Sources said the machine is being shipped via China. The LOA Fortune vessel carrying its parts departed from Guangzhou last month.

blasting, while the finishing work is ongoing. The remaining excavation will now be carried out by TBM," said a source. Of the 508-km bullet train project, tunnels account for 27.4 km. Of this, 21 km comprises underground tunnels, while 6.4 km consists of surface tunnels. A major breakthrough in the 4.88-km underground tunnel between Ghansoli and Shilphata was achieved in September 2025. This stretch, part of the 21-km tunnel in construction between Bandra-Kurla Complex and Shilphata in Maharashtra, also includes a 7-km undersea section beneath the Thane Creek. This will be the first time in India that a mixed-shield TBM of this scale, with a diameter of 13.65 metres, is deployed in an infrastructure project.

"Transporting its components to the site will require over 150 trailers, and assembling the machine is expected to take approximately 90 days. We are optimistic about commencing TBM operations by the first week of July. The use of a TBM ensures a much safer excavation process, especially since the tunnel passes through a densely populated area where conventional blasting methods would pose significant risks. The project includes the excavation of a 7-km undersea tunnel, which demands exceptional precision and advanced engineering capabilities," the source added. The bullet train project spans 352 km in Gujarat and Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and 156 km in Maharashtra. As of February 2026, 430 km of piers, 341 km of girder casting, 174 km of track bed, and 153 km of Overhead Electrification (OHE) masts have been completed. OHE masts are vertical steel structures used in railway electrification to support catenary and contact wires. The first stretch of the project, from Surat to Bilimora in Gujarat, is slated for completion by August 15, 2027, while the entire 508-km corridor is expected to be completed by December 2029.

# The zero trimester: Why women are training for pregnancy like a marathon



Before the nausea, the scans, the cravings. Before conception itself, there is an entirely different chapter taking shape for women in India and around the world today. It is called the 'zero trimester', a term coined by American sociologist Miranda Waggoner in her 2017 book of the same name, which examined how medicine and public health had begun focusing on women's bodies as perpetually 'pre-pregnant'.

Today, the concept has escaped the pages of academic sociology and landed squarely in the wellness mainstream driven by social media, biohacking culture, and a growing anxiety about getting pregnancy 'right' from the very start. As Wired reported, the cultural obsession with wellness and optimisation, "currently driven and designed by male biohackers like Bryan Johnson and Peter Attia," has now come for this murky preconception period. Women have started training for pregnancy "like it's a marathon," as influencer Kaylie Stewart announced to her 1 million TikTok followers.

The numbers bear this out. Wired states in its report that the hashtag "#preconception" appears in 106,000 Instagram posts and #pregnancyprep in 36,000. It adds, "Singular TikTok 'prep' videos rack up tens of thousands—sometimes millions—of views and likes." 'Pregnancy Prep' influencers post curated lists, aesthetic vlogs, and GRWM (Get Ready With Me) TikToks filled with glowing, happy women. They suggest a litany of lifestyle changes, niche products, books, courses, and 'quick' tips to follow in the six to twelve months before getting pregnant. But what does this global trend look like when it lands in India, with its particular mix of tradition, urban aspiration, and overburdened healthcare systems?

What real women experience For the women actually living through this, the picture is more textured. Juilee Ghadigaonkar, an account director, did not plan her pregnancy in advance. "Once I found out I was pregnant, I became very conscious about taking care of my health," she says. Her guidance came primarily from her gynaecologist and not from social media, which she found overwhelming. "Too much overthinking is not good during pregnancy," she notes. Her pregnancy was hormonally challenging, requiring medication to stabilise her levels, and she experienced persistent nausea throughout. But what carried her through was professional medical guidance, a supportive work environment, and the empowerment to continue working despite the physical demands.

Prerna Gagerna, 33 and nine months pregnant at the time of speaking with indianexpress.com, had a more ambivalent relationship with the flood of preconception content available today. She was mindful about her health beforehand, taking balanced meals, staying active, and doctor-recommended supplements, but stopped well short of following any structured programme. "There are videos explaining what you should be doing in every single week of pregnancy, discussions around the 'best birthing plan', endless doctor recommendations online," Gagerna observes. "In some ways, it's empowering because you feel more informed. But at the same time, it can become overwhelming." The anxiety that comes from feeling like you may have missed something, or that an unexpected development is somehow your fault, is real. Her conclusion: "Pregnancy is not a one-size-fits-all journey. You have to step back from the noise." Maintaining a healthy weight, managing stress, quitting smoking, and moderate alcohol consumption represent essential lifestyle changes which help people achieve better fertility results. Maintaining a healthy weight, managing stress, quitting smoking, and moderate alcohol consumption represent essential lifestyle changes which help people achieve better fertility results. (Source: AI Generated)

Brinda Gupta, a new mother at 27, hadn't consciously prepared for pregnancy at all. Her body was low in iron, calcium, and DHA when she found out she was expecting, making the first trimester particularly gruelling. Her recovery came not from supplements or structured programmes but from instinct and tradition: increasing water intake, prioritising sleep, eating simple home-cooked vegetarian meals, and drawing on the food wisdom of her elders. She also maintained a daily practice of chanting and meditation. "That practice gave me a lot of calmness and strength during the journey," she says. "By God's grace, I had a normal delivery exactly at 36 weeks without much pain or complications. After delivery, there was a little discomfort, which is natural, but today when I see my baby's little smile, it makes everything completely worth it," she mentions.

Let's talk about what actually works, medically Doctors across India are quick to point out that preconception care, stripped of its wellness-influencer packaging, has genuine medical merit. Dr Deepthi Ashwin, consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Aster Whitefield Hospital, outlines what evidence-based preparation actually involves: screening for chronic conditions such as thyroid disorders, diabetes, anaemia, and hypertension; ensuring vaccinations like rubella and hepatitis B are up to date; and optimising nutrition, particularly folic acid intake, to reduce the risk of neural tube defects.

"Maintaining a healthy weight, managing stress, quitting smoking, and moderate alcohol consumption represent essential lifestyle changes which help people achieve better fertility results," she tells indianexpress.com. Dr Pallavi Vasal, clinical director of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Marengo Asia Hospitals in Gurugram, is noticing a generational shift. More and more couples are becoming conscious of 'clean living' before pregnancy, she says — driven by increased urbanisation, lifestyle pressures, and a more educated population. "Couples want to be sure of conceiving in a state of good health." What concerns do they bring to her clinic? Work pressure, frequent travel, and questions around alcohol and smoking. Dr Aindri Sanyal, clinical director and senior fertility specialist at Nova IVF Kolkata, makes a compelling case for the importance of early planning, especially as delayed parenthood becomes the norm. She says, "Life plans can be adjusted, but the biological clock remains constant," she says.

Female fertility declines notably after the mid-30s, affecting both the quantity and quality of eggs. Pre-conception consultations, she argues, offer a window to catch conditions that may otherwise go unnoticed for years — from PCOS and thyroid disorders to endometriosis and genetic risks like thalassaemia. She shares a striking case of a couple who sought preconception counselling simply to

understand their readiness, discovered that the woman had a large endometriotic cyst and very low AMH levels despite having no symptoms whatsoever. Without that early evaluation, their fertility challenges might not have surfaced until after months of unsuccessful trying.

And yet, the doctors are unanimous on one thing: below the age of 35, couples should try naturally for at least a year before considering fertility intervention. "Getting pregnant is a natural process and should be left to nature, at least for a couple of months," says Dr Vasal. "The human body does not behave like maths."

What you eat and what you don't need to cut out Nutrition is the most crowded arena in the preconception wellness space, and the one most vulnerable to misinformation. Dr Shabana Parveen, head of Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics at Artemis Hospitals, recommends that women start thinking about their diet at least three to six months before trying to conceive — not to embark on an extreme regimen, but simply to ensure nutritional reserves are in place.

The essentials? Folic acid, iron, iodine, vitamin D, and vitamin B12. These nutrients support egg health, hormonal balance, and early foetal development. Beyond that, the prescription is refreshingly unglamorous: whole grains, fruits, vegetables, healthy fats, dairy or calcium-rich foods, adequate hydration, and consistent meal timings. "The goal is always to give the body good food, not to follow strict diets that make you stressed or miss out on important nutrients," she says. Doctors are unanimous on one thing: below the age of 35, couples should try naturally for at least a year before considering fertility intervention. Doctors are unanimous on one thing: below the age of 35, couples should try naturally for at least a year before considering fertility intervention. (Source: AI Generated)

Sandhya Narasimhan, Clinical Nutritionist and Founder at Svastha Wellness: Health and Beyond, addresses some common myths. "One common belief is that certain 'superfoods' can improve the chances of conception on their own. Foods like nuts, seeds, and traditional ingredients such as turmeric or ginger are certainly nutritious. However, no single food can guarantee fertility," she stresses.

Another myth is that taking multiple supplements can replace a healthy diet. Narasimhan says that many people think that supplements alone are enough to boost fertility. "In reality, fertility nutrition works best with a mix of balanced whole foods and supplements when necessary." "Not every woman needs every supplement," reveals Narasimhan, adding that supplementation should always be personalised based on blood reports and medical advice. It's important to remember that taking too many supplements can sometimes cause more harm than good and may even lead to toxicity. The mental health dimension: when optimising becomes overwhelming Psychologist Abhilasha Chouhan offers perhaps the most nuanced lens on this trend. She acknowledges that in a world of environmental uncertainty and busy lives, approaching pregnancy from a 'planning and preventive perspective' is understandable. But she draws an important distinction between informed preparation and relentless optimisation.

"Women may begin to treat pregnancy as a constant task," she observes, by monitoring diet, exercise, blood pressure, ultrasounds, and appointments in an unending loop. For women navigating fertility challenges in particular, this hyper-vigilance can tip into catastrophic anxiety. Chouhan compares it to an alarm system stuck in the 'on' position: "Vigilance can sometimes make a person constantly alert or anticipating future outcomes." Social media, she notes, plays a complicated role. It can spread awareness and reduce stigma. But it also pushes women to compare their pregnancies and their bodies against carefully curated versions of others, without any knowledge of those individuals' actual health circumstances. "It is influencing women's choices and decision-making, and at times affecting their trust in available resources such as doctors and the advice or wisdom of elders."

Her advice for a healthier approach is to add mindfulness and breathing practices; spend time with loved ones; don't let the idea of independence become an excuse to refuse help; reconnect with yourself through hobbies; and engage in genuine self-care. And, most importantly, "trust your available support system, from doctors and hospitals to family, and also trust your own body." There is something real and valuable in the idea of the zero trimester, particularly for women with underlying health conditions, nutritional deficiencies, or a family history of genetic disorders. But the wellness industry has taken this kernel of medical truth and wrapped it in a layer of optimisation anxiety that serves commercial interests far more than it serves women. The most experienced doctors keep returning to the same, unglamorous prescription: see your doctor, eat well, manage stress, and trust your body. That's not a trending hashtag. But then, the healthiest pregnancies rarely are.

## Where did the ancient Greeks and Romans think lightning came from?

Sydney: Is it any wonder ancient people thought lightning came from the gods? Even today a close lightning strike feels like a terrifying brush with the supernatural. Some ancient thinkers, however, suspected the gods had nothing to do with it.

They wondered, centuries ahead of their time, if lightning was related somehow to the movement of air and clouds. In the mythology of ancient Greece and Rome, thunder and lightning strikes were the prime weapon of Zeus (the king of the gods, known to the Romans as Jupiter). Reminders of his power and wrath via lightning strikes were everywhere.

The ancient Greek poet Hesiod (who was writing around 700 BCE, about the same time as Homer) described Zeus hurling bolts of lightning and thunder at his divine enemies. Zeus also struck humans such as the mythical King Salmoneus as punishment for demanding his subjects worship him as a god.

Surviving Greek and Roman statues depict Zeus hurling lightning bolts as his chief weapon of power. For the Romans, Jupiter and the gods more generally intervened dramatically in human affairs via lightning strikes. They were often a clear indication of divine displeasure.

The father of Pompey, one of Rome's most powerful Republican generals, was killed in 87 BCE by lightning (according to one version of the story). He was conducting a military campaign in the middle of a civil war. According to the Roman writer Plutarch, Pompey's father was one of Rome's most hated generals. For many at the time, the gods had dispensed justice.

# Amid pain for airlines from West Asia war, Govt to remove domestic airfare caps imposed during IndiGo's December meltdown

pain for airlines from West Asia war, Govt to remove domestic airfare caps, domestic airfare caps, Govt to remove domestic airfare caps imposed during IndiGo December meltdown, IndiGo December meltdown, Indian express news, current affairsIt also warned airlines that any instance of excessive or unjustified surge in fares, particularly during periods of peak demand, disruptions, or exigencies, will be viewed seriously. Domestic Airfare Caps Removed March 23: The government has decided to remove temporary airfare caps for domestic flights that were imposed in December during IndiGo's widespread flight disruptions. The airfare caps removal, effective from March 23 (Monday), comes at a time when Indian airlines are grappling with operational disruptions and cost escalations due to the raging war in West Asia.



removal of airfare caps. Airfares are deregulated in India and are decided by market forces, but the government can intervene to regulate fares if major disruptions hit the sector. For instance, airfare bands were imposed by the government during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also warned airlines that any instance of excessive or unjustified surge in fares, particularly during periods of peak demand, disruptions, or exigencies, will be viewed seriously. MoCA will continue to closely monitor airfare trends on a real-time basis, and reserves the right to take regulatory and administrative measures, including re-introduction of fare controls, in public interest, the order said.

Like their global peers, Indian are operating a heavily truncated schedule to and from West Asian airports due to the airspace restrictions and airport closures in the region amid the war there. This is expected to hit their revenues on these high demand routes. Moreover, carriers with long-haul operations—Air India and IndiGo—are being forced to take much longer and circuitous flight paths for their flights beyond West Asia, leading to longer flying times and additional fuel burn. Prices of jet fuel—which accounts for over 40% of Indian airlines' operational cost—have also shot up in the international market. The rupee has also fallen to historic lows, which would further lead to an increase in Indian airlines' dollar-denominated costs. Most major Indian carriers have already announced fuel surcharges on airfares due to the fallout of the West Asia crisis.

# NTPC eyes imported PWR tech for nuclear fleet; in talks with French, Russian, US players

K Shanmugha Sundaram, NTPC Parmanu Urja Nigam Limited, NPUNL, Bharat Electricity Summit 2026, NTPC, NTPC power plant, NTPC share, Indian express news, current affairsGiven that access to enriched uranium is not a constraint in much of the western world, LWRs are used extensively by the US, Russia and France and now form the backbone of most international reactor fleets.



State-run power major NTPC is looking at imported Pressurised Water Reactors (PWR) technology for its planned nuclear fleet. The company is in talks with various players across France, Russia and the US, said K Shanmugha Sundaram, Chairman of NTPC Parmanu Urja Nigam Ltd (NPUNL), a subsidiary of NTPC.

nary water as the moderator as well as the coolant. LWRs entail a simpler design and engineering compared to heavy water reactors given that they use normal water as both coolant and moderator. So, they have some degree of overlap with the technology used by regular thermal power units (coal-fired and gas-based power plants), typically involving lower construction cost and make up most of the global installed nuclear capacity. LWRs are also considered more thermal efficient. They use normal water and need enriched uranium as fuel.

"The combination will be between the existing technology, the proven technology, the cheapest technology, that is PHWR. Then, we will also explore PwR, of course, from various players across France, Russia, and even the US. We are exploring that," he said, adding that a certain percentage will also include small modular reactors. On the Centre's target of 100 GWe of nuclear power by 2047, he said around 70-75% of the capacity will be provided by the government sector while the rest will be provided by private players. The chairman said the target is not difficult to achieve if finance is available. "Because it needs a lot of money. Rs 20 lakh crore capital. The availability of cheaper financing, cost-affecting tariff, availability of supply chain, man-power, and public perception, are crucial," he added.

Since access to enriched uranium is not a constraint in the West, LWRs are used extensively by the US, Russia and France. They now form the backbone of most global reactor fleets. On the contrary, PHWRs are prized for fuel flexibility and the ability to operate on natural uranium, an advantage in India's resource-constrained context but a relative handicap in export markets shaped and dominated by the LWR technology.

While PHWRs use natural uranium as fuel and heavy water as both coolant and moderator, PWRs are light water reactors (LWR) that use enriched uranium as fuel and ordi-

Sundaram was speaking at a strategic session, titled 'Nuclear power for energy security: delivering scalable and reliable clean power', alongside Dr Thierry Advocat, Nuclear Counsellor, Embassy of France; Prateek Agarwal, Executive Director, Corporate Planning and Corporate Communication, NPCIL and Ranjay Sharan, President of Nuclear Energy Business at Reliance Industries Ltd.

## From Hathod to the IPL: How a small Rajasthan academy is producing big-money cricketers



GNS News Agency, March 25

In 2021, seven years after Vivek Yadav — a former First Class cricketer who played a handy role in Rajasthan's Ranji Trophy triumph of 2012 and was even picked for an IPL team — gave up a playing career to become a coach of repute in his home state, his life was tragically cut short. He would suddenly succumb to COVID-related complications from early onset kidney cancer, never getting to see the results of his methods and convictions. Initially leasing a small ground from a school to turn the local Aravali Cricket Club into the Aravali Cricket Academy on the outskirts of Jaipur, the facility Vivek founded would become one of the premier destinations in the state. Next week, as many as four of his proteges will hope to take the field in this year's IPL.

Among them, three — wicketkeeper batters Mukul Choudhary and Kartik Sharma, as well as pacer Ashok Sharma — will be hoping to make their debuts. Mukul, 21, was signed by Lucknow Super Giants for Rs 2.2 crore; 19-year-old Kartik, despite not being the biggest or burliest of batters, was snapped up by Chennai Super Kings for Rs 14.2 crore — a sum that reflects a very particular bet on a very particular skill.

Eyewatering sums that have changed the lives of small-town Rajasthan youngsters seemingly scouted out of nowhere. None of them were seen as prodigious players in their formative years; none have formidable First-Class records or appearances with the India U-19 or India A setups. All owe their allegiance to a nondescript academy in the small town of Hathod. "Bhai was always good at spotting talent," says Vikas, Vivek's brother, who stepped into his shoes to run the academy four years ago. "Once he saw something in a player, he backed him to the very end. Sometimes, even when he shouldn't have. He would not be surprised that they got picked. But he would be happy — like he was when Akash got his contract." Akash Singh, a fast bowler who has since earned ten IPL caps, was among Aravali's earlier success stories.

Neither mere coincidence nor a stroke of genius propelled Aravali to becoming an elite player development facility. Their methods simply put them in the best position to take advantage of the changing currents of the Indian cricket ecosystem. Eyewatering sums that have changed the lives of small-town Rajasthan youngsters seemingly scouted out of nowhere. None of them were seen as prodigious players in their formative years; none have formidable First-Class records or appearances with the India U-19 or India A setups. All owe their allegiance to a nondescript academy in the small town of Hathod. "Bhai was always good at spotting talent," says Vikas, Vivek's brother, who stepped into his shoes to run the academy four years ago. "Once he saw something in a player, he backed him to the very end. Sometimes, even when he shouldn't have. He would not be surprised that they got picked. But he would be happy — like he was when Akash got his contract." Akash Singh, a fast bowler who has since earned ten IPL caps, was among Aravali's earlier success stories.

gious players in their formative years; none have formidable First-Class records or appearances with the India U-19 or India A setups. All owe their allegiance to a nondescript academy in the small town of Hathod. The IPL may have altered the traditional pipeline to fame and top-tier status, but the unconventional scouting methods of franchises mean that players from all parts now get visibility. Teams are no longer looking only for strong U-19 showings or domestic records. The process is more holistic — they track state leagues and competitions and stay in touch with elite academies. Ashok, for example, had been called up as a net bowler for Rajasthan Royals when he was spotted by Kolkata Knight Riders assistant coach Abhishek Nayyar. That led to a contract in 2022, even if he was never handed a cap.

Aravali, then, has succeeded by reading the writing on the wall early. Vikas says his brother always maintained that winning a couple of local trophies could never lead to long-term success; real recognition would only come if some of their players made it to the top level. With IPL contracts up for grabs and scouts appearing at state-level tournaments, players showing aptitude for T20 cricket were given specialised coaching tailored to what franchises actually wanted. Ashok arrived at the academy as a scrawny 15-year-old. The consistency in his line and length excited the coaches, and so the objective became simple: make him as fast as possible. With a tall frame and natural power, Mukul's potential as a pinch hitter was spotted early — coaches worked on biomechanics to find the right hitting arc for timing big sixes. For Kartik, it would be the opposite. Coaches saw in him a natural ability to connect with the ball and hit it long, and range hitting became the immediate priority.

Four players from a small-town Rajasthan academy, called Aravali Cricket Academy, are heading to the IPL this season. (Photo: Special arrangement) Ashok Sharma (centre) with Kartik Sharma (right) at the academy. (Photo: Special arrangement) "There are days when he spends hours hitting anywhere between 500 to 700 balls — against the machine, pace and spin. The objective is to hit as many out of the park as he can," says Jagjimsir Singh, head coach at the academy. "It all started when we realised how well he can connect with the ball. And there is a clarity in his head about what he is working on: hitting sixes." CSK have punted Rs 14.2 crore on exactly that. Another central pillar of Aravali was a residential setup from day one — allowing them to absorb players from across Rajasthan who arrive in Jaipur looking for the right step up. Mukul hails from Jhunjhunu; after a skin allergy made hostel life difficult, his family took rented accommodation nearby to facilitate his cricket. Kartik is from Bharatpur, where his cricket-obsessed father has even installed a ball machine at home so he can keep practising between academy stints. Ashok's brother Akshay had to give up his own cricket dream to support his sibling. A common thing about them is that they all come from modest means, lower middle-class families. They would not have come to our notice if not for the sacrifices of their families," Vikas says. "For them, the amount written on that contract is no small thing."

## 'Rohit Sharma is going to bring back his T20 batting this season': R Ashwin backs India veteran to fire in IPL 2026



GNS News Agency, March 25

A fresh and fitter Rohit Sharma will finally make amends and be primed to produce the best version of his T20 self in the IPL 2026 season, reckoned former India off-spinner R Ashwin. While acknowledging that Rohit has not lived up to his exalted status for the Mumbai Indians with the bat for an extensive period, Ashwin backed the former India captain to turn his fortunes around this season. Having given up Test and T20 cricket, Ashwin feels that a better mindset will also assist Rohit, who remains as MI's

most successful batter in IPL history.

"I personally think this is going to be a season where Rohit will really take it on. He doesn't need to play cricket for the whole season. He is getting enough breaks. His mind is fresh. He is physically in a good space. He looks really fit. And I think this could well be a season where Rohit Sharma is going to bring back his T20 batting in the IPL," Ashwin remarked on his YouTube channel.

"Let's not forget, Rohit Sharma, the IPL batsman, hasn't been quite present in the last few years. But this could be a great opportunity for him to really restore that. And I, personally, think he can go on to enjoy his season and do some incredible things for Mumbai Indians this season," Ashwin added. Rohit aggregated 835 runs in the last two seasons with a strike rate clocking near-150, making them two of his better seasons in over a decade with the franchise. The five-time IPL-winning captain has only scored over 500 runs in a season once, back in 2013 during his maiden season as captain of the franchise. Rohit, however, remains as one of the IPL's most successful run-getters, amassing 7046 runs in 272 matches with 49 fifty-plus scores. Soon-to-be 39, Rohit last featured in the ODI series against New Zealand, scoring only 61 runs in three innings.

## 'Everyone knows how he became RR captain': Former India opener takes dig at Riyan Parag's appointment



Former India captain Krishnamachari Srikkanth made a bold claim regarding Riyan Parag's appointment as the Rajasthan Royals captain ahead of the IPL 2026 season, hinting that the 24-year-old was backed by preferential treatment.

GNS News Agency, March 25

Former India captain Krishnamachari Srikkanth made a bold claim regarding Riyan Parag's appointment as the Rajasthan Royals captain ahead of the IPL 2026 season, hinting that the 24-year-old was backed by preferential treatment. Parag will take over as full-time captain from Sanju Samson, whom the Royals traded for Rs 18 crore with the

Chennai Super Kings in exchange for the services of Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran ahead of the mini-auction last December. Srikkanth took a dig at Parag's appointment over other established names in the franchise.

"Everyone knows how he became the captain. That is their decision but he is treated like the king there. Parag didn't have a good season last year, but the year before last, he did brilliantly. Last year, he didn't do anything deadly," claimed Srikkanth on his YouTube channel.

With Samson out injured, Parag led the Royals in eight matches last season, winning only two games. The franchise chose Parag as their skipper over the likes of Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel and the incoming Jadeja. Parag was particularly aggressive with the bat, racking up 393 runs at 166.52. Picked up as a teenager back in IPL 2017, Parag has been a consistent face with the franchise in the period. Despite his inconsistencies, Parag has piled on 1566 runs in 84 matches for the Royals with seven half-centuries. Srikkanth said that while the team carried some sting in its tail, RR looked like a team that could implode during the course of the forthcoming season.

"It's a decent side. They have the potential to upset sides. But they are also a side that will self-destruct. Yet, if two in their top five click, they will smash the opposition. The Jaiswal-Suryavanshi opening stand is their biggest plus. They are capable of winning matches singlehandedly. So they are a good side but not a dangerous one. They are not a championship-winning side. They are 50-50 even for play-off qualification," remarked Srikkanth.

## Suresh Raina, Matthew Hayden become first players in CSK Hall of Fame



GNS News Agency, March 25

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) announced the launch of their CSK Hall of Fame where the franchise will pay tribute to all those who have played a key role in the team's glorious history. The first players to be inducted in CSK's Hall of Fame were Suresh Raina and Matthew Hayden, with the duo's place in the Hall of Fame formalised on Sunday at CSK's Roar '26 fan event at MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai.

Fondly called 'Chinna Thala' by CSK fans, Raina is the highest run-scoring Indian batsman for the Chennai franchise. He scored 5529 runs in 205 games for 13 seasons from 2008 to 2021 with an average of 32.52 and strike rate

of 136.76. Raina was part of four IPL-winning CSK squads — in 2010, 2011, 2018 and 2021. He was a vital middle order batter for Chennai where his consistency held fort for his side. Besides being an able fielder, he also claimed 25 wickets and captured 108 catches for the CSK. Raina was also part of two Champions League T20 title-winning teams at Chennai Super Kings — in 2010 and 2014.

2014 was among Raina's standout seasons for CSK, he won the Player of the Tournament award in that edition for scoring 234 runs in the IPL. Australian opener Hayden, meanwhile, spent less time with CSK than Raina but made a huge impact in the short time when he was there. He played 32 matches for CSK between 2008 and 2010. In this spell, he scored 1117 runs at an average of 36.90 and strike rate of 137.52. His best season came in 2009, when he scored 572 runs and became the first CSK player to win the Orange Cap. He was also a part of the CSK team that claimed their first Indian Premier League title in 2010. The Roar '26 event at Chepauk turned out to be a reunion as several former players from the CSK team who attended the event, which includes Dwayne Bravo, Shadab Jakati, Muttiah Muralitharan, Ambati Rayudu, Parthiv Patel, Joginder Sharma, Harbhajan Singh, Subramaniam Badrinath and Murali Vijay. Chennai Super Kings will start IPL 2026 with a game against Rajasthan Royals (RR) in Guwahati on March 30.

## Anna Muzychuk to replace Koneru Humpy after Indian GM pulls out

GNS News Agency, March 25

The global governing body of chess in India, FIDE, has announced that Ukrainian grandmaster Anna Muzychuk will be replacing Koneru Humpy in the FIDE Women's Candidates tournament which starts later this week in Cyprus. The Indian grandmaster confirmed that she was pulling out of the event due to fears for her personal safety. In a tweet, FIDE confirmed that Humpy would be replaced by Muzychuk.

FIDE wrote on X: "In accordance with the tournament regulations, her place was offered to the next highest finisher in the Women's Events Series 2024-25 who has not yet secured qualification. As a result, Anna Muzychuk (Ukraine) will join the tournament as her replacement." While announcing her withdrawal from the tournament, Humpy wrote on X: "After deep reflection, I have taken the difficult decision to withdraw from the FIDE Women's Candidates Tournament. No event, no matter how important, can come before personal safety and well-being. Despite the assurances provided, I do not feel fully secure under the current circumstances. This is a painful but necessary decision, and I stand by it."

Humpy's problem with playing in Cyprus was that the island in the Mediterranean was not too far away from nations like Lebanon and Israel who are active participants in the West Asia War. The war between Iran on one side and Israel and the USA on the other side has seen Iran attacking its neighbours in the Gulf like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Oman in the past month. Lebanon also hit a British



airforce base in Cyprus at the start of the month.

On their website, the body mentioned that after Humpy's withdrawal, Muzychuk was extended an invite "in accordance with Article 2.2. of the Tournament Regulations". FIDE added: "According to Article 4.5.3. of Tournament Regulations, 'the pairings shall remain the same except that the replacement player shall take the place of the withdrawn player.' The Chief Arbiter will shortly adjust the pairings accordingly." With Humpy pulling out, there will be three Indians in the twin Candidates tournaments now. While Praggnanandhaa will be India's lone challenger in the open Candidates section, Divya Deshmukh and Vaishali Rameshbabu will be contending in the Women's Candidates tournament to earn a shot at challenging Ju Wenjun for the women's world championship.

## 'Unable to deal with the weight': Tottenham Hotspur sink toward relegation with latest defeat to Forest

GNS News Agency, March 25

Tottenham Hotspur's assistant coach Bruno Saltor admitted that his side could not "handle the weight of the game" after their 0-3 defeat to Nottingham Forest leaves the Spurs just one point and one place above the relegation zone. The defeat to Forest was a double blow, because both clubs are fighting to escape relegation and the win helped them climb above Spurs to 16th in the standings.

With only seven games left in the Premier League season, Tottenham Hotspur are on 30 points with West Ham United on 29 points, setting up a race to the finish between the two London clubs. Saltor said that Tottenham could have taken the lead in the first half, but the half-time break interrupted their rhythm.

"The players were affected by the rhythm of the game and we couldn't find that rhythm to create more chances. The first half, the first 44 minutes, I thought were good, really good, creating chances, getting into the box. In the second half, probably, we were unable to deal with the weight of the game," he told the media at the post-match press conference. The relegation fight has also led to talk that coach Igor Tudor could be at risk of losing his job, speculation that was helped by his assistant fronting the media after the defeat. While Saltor said that Tudor was missing



due to personal "family issue". Tudor was hired by Tottenham only last month to try to salvage Spurs' season. But the rescue act has not gone as per plan. Under him, Tottenham have lost five of their seven games in all competitions and seen his team eliminated from the Champions League. Spurs have gone 13 games without a win in the Premier League now. "The season is tough, especially in this moment. Another very bad (result) for us," said Tottenham captain Cristian Romero. "The situation is tough, but most important thing is play (every game) like a final now."

## Pramod Bhagat wins two golds as India shines at Spanish Para Badminton International

Hyderabad: India delivered an exceptional performance at the Spanish Para Badminton International 2026 — Level 2, held in Vitoria, Spain, led by standout performances from Paralympic champion Pramod Bhagat and Sukant Kadam. Bhagat secured two gold medals and one silver, while Kadam added one gold and one silver to India's tally, underlining the nation's dominance on the global para badminton stage. Bhagat produced a thrilling performance in the Men's Singles SL3 final, overcoming compatriot Nitesh Kumar in a hard-fought three-set encounter lasting 51 minutes. Bhagat claimed the first set 21-17 before Nitesh responded strongly to take the second 21-10. In a tense decider, Bhagat showcased his experience and composure to seal the match 21-18.

Final Score: 21-17, 10-21, 21-18

He continued his golden run in the Mixed Doubles SL3-SU5, partnering with Manisha Ramdass. The Indian duo staged a remarkable comeback after losing the opening set 13-21 to defeat Brazil's Rogerio Junior Xavier de Oliveira and Edwanda De Oliveira Dias. They bounced back 21-12 in the second set and edged a closely contested third set 21-19 to clinch gold. Final Score: 13-21, 21-12, 21-19. Bhagat also secured a silver medal in Men's Doubles SL3-SU5 alongside Sukant Kadam, finishing runners-up to fellow Indians Nitesh Kumar and Rithvik Ragupathi. Final Score: 19-21, 14-21. Speaking after his performance, Pramod Bhagat

said: "This tournament was a true test of patience and resilience. The singles final was very intense, and I had to dig deep after losing the second set. I'm happy with the way I stayed composed in crucial moments. Winning two golds here gives me great confidence moving forward."

Meanwhile, Sukant Kadam delivered a commanding performance in the Men's Singles SL4 final, defeating Korea's Cho Nandan in straight sets. Kadam controlled the match from the outset, winning 21-16, 21-17 to secure gold in convincing fashion. Kadam said: "I felt in control throughout the match and was able to execute my game plan well. This gold reflects the hard work I've been putting in, and I'm motivated to build on this momentum in the upcoming tournaments." India's strong showing extended across multiple categories. Nitesh Kumar secured silver and Jagdish Dilli won bronze in Men's Singles SL3. Neeraj claimed bronze in Women's Singles SL3. In Men's Doubles SL3-SU5, Deep Ranjan Bisoyee and Kuldeep Mahulk earned bronze. In mixed doubles SL3-SU5, pairs of Shivam Yadav & Neeraj and Nitesh Kumar & Thulasimathi Murugesan both secured bronze medals. Rithvik Ragupathi (silver) and Shivam Yadav (bronze) delivered strong performances in men's singles SU5. In Women's Singles SU5, Manisha Ramdass clinched gold while Thulasimathi Murugesan secured silver. Jatin Azad and Shivam Yadav won bronze in Men's Doubles SU5, and Manisha Patel added another bronze in women's singles SH6.

## Dhurandhar 2 actor recalls accidentally injuring Ranveer Singh during action scene, reveals actor's 'humanity': 'I was scared, he hugged me'



and protect myself between the tyres, and then Ranveer had to cover me, as told by action master. We had quite a few rehearsals and everything went perfectly. But don't know how I got wrong and it took 2 seconds to set the bomb. As soon as I left there, me and Ranveer brother had a big collision – like something would hit at 70 speed. I fell into the tyres, and Ranveer fell on me."The actor shared that both he and Ranveer were injured. "His gun hit my stomach and my gun hose hit his elbow. He got up and moved out there. He was hurt too, but I fainted, and I was scared he might have been hurt more," he said.

Gursewak added that the entire crew rushed to check on Ranveer after the accident and only seconds later realised that he too was injured. A doctor was immediately called in, and director Aditya Dhar also rushed to his aid. The doctor informed the team that Gursewak had suffered an injury to his stomach and had swelling. Meanwhile, Aditya consoled him and said, "It happens in action, don't you be afraid". I told him that Ranveer Singh sir also got hurt. He said, 'No problem, you relax, it's part of the shoot' and told the doctor to check properly."After Ranveer got to know about Gursewak's condition, he too rushed to meet him. The actor shared, "I said in fear, 'Sir, sorry, it was my fault.' but Ranveer told me 'never mind,' and gave him a hug."

Gursewak went on to reveal that despite his injury, Ranveer continued to shoot and even motivated him to do the same. He said, "My eyes were teary- I was totally emotional with their love. Then he saw my injury and asked, 'Can you shoot or do want a break?' I also dared and said, 'It's the last scene, when you're doing it, I'll do it too'. I asked, 'Sir, how hurt are you?'. He said, 'Elbow will have a little trouble exercising, but never mind – let's do the scene.' Then we finished that scene. This is the third day of shoot. After that we shot for 35 more days."Lauding Ranveer, he further wrote, "From that day till the release of the movie, Ranveer Singh never let me feel like I made a mistake. This is what humanity is... Love... Take care of each other. I guess this is why he's a star..."

During various interactions, Ranveer Singh had made one thing clear — that he worked extremely hard for Dhurandhar. The film's recently released second part is currently on a spree of breaking box office records. But even during the film's intense action sequences, Ranveer never let go of his humility. Recently, his co-star in Dhurandhar 2, Gursewak Singh, shared one such instance when the actor, despite being injured on set, continued to shoot and also motivated Gursewak, who was hurt during the sequence. Gursewak took to Instagram to share photos with Ranveer and wrote in Hindi, "Why brother Ranveer Singh is such a lovely person and brilliant artist, let me tell you a story. We were shooting an action scene at Amritsar's plane house, which is also in the movie. I was behind Ranveer Singh and I had a bomb that I had to go ahead and set."

He went on to share, "Then I had to go to the tractor

## Dhurandhar star Gaurav Gera shares emotional 1998 letter from his days of struggle in a Mumbai cottage: 'Future is bright'

Actor Gaurav Gera, who plays Mohammad Aalam in Dhurandhar: The Revenge, has been receiving widespread praise for his performance in the film. As the spy-thriller continues to do well at the box office, the actor recently shared a very personal moment from his early days in Mumbai. On Sunday, Gaurav took to his Instagram account to post pictures of a handwritten letter he had written to his parents back in 1998, soon after he moved from Delhi to Mumbai to pursue a career in acting. In his post, Gaurav reflected on his 28-year journey and how much has changed over time.

Through the letter, Gaurav shared details about his simple life back then. In the letter, he spoke about living in a small cottage with a friend to manage expenses and learning to survive in a new city. Talking about his hopes at the time, he had written, "Other expenses include telephone, electricity, gas, and water bills, and food. Mumma and Papa, the future is bright, but I still have a lot to learn," demonstrating his patience and belief in his dreams.

He also wrote a caption that read: "This letter to my parents – 3rd Dec 1998 ... less than a month after I moved to Mumbai ... this was 28 years ago ... so no emails, let-



ters ... of course, after that, lots of TV, some films, ad films, musical plays, radio, TikTok, Reels ... it's been a lovely journey with ups and downs ... God has been kind ... but this Dhurandhar ... dunno what the future holds ... but I want to thank my 23-year-old self for staying hopeful and Ma Pa for endless support #DhurandharTheRevenge."Dhurandhar: The Revenge, directed by Aditya Dhar and starring Ranveer Singh, released on March 19 and continues to perform strongly at the box office.

domestic earnings to Rs 60.80 crore, according to industry tracker Sacnilk. On the same day, the Telugu version of Dhurandhar 2 earned Rs 5.25 crore, besides its original Hindi edition's Rs 107 crore.

Dhurandhar 2 worldwide box office collection, all records broken till now: Biggest Hindi opener; rare back-to-back Rs 100 cr days; fastest to cross Rs 500 cr mark Ustaad Bhagat Singh's worldwide gross currently stands at Rs 80.75 crore. During the day, the action comedy witnessed an overall occupancy of 33.96 per cent in the Telugu market. While the morning shows commenced with 21 per cent occupancy, the rate fluctuated as the day progressed, reaching 41.38 per cent in the afternoon, 44.54 per cent in the evening, and 28.92 per cent during night screenings.

Worse still, the action comedy is performing worse than Pawan Kalyan's most recent box-office bomb, Hari Hara Veera Mallu. Although the two movies opened at the same Rs 34.75 crore (both on Thursdays), Hari Hara Veera Mallu experienced a steep decline in its daily earnings to Rs 8 crore on Friday. However, it improved its collection slightly and earned Rs 9.15 crore and Rs 10.60 crore on Saturday and Sunday, respectively. Even as Ustaad Bhagat Singh fared better than Hari Hara Veera Mallu on its first Friday with Rs 9 crore, it declined afterwards, collecting only Rs 9.05 crore and Rs 8 crore in the domestic market on Saturday and Sunday, respectively. Thus, while Hari Hara Veera Mallu's opening weekend nett collection stood at Rs 19.75 crore, Ustaad Bhagat Singh's was Rs 17.05 crore. Hari Hara Veera Mallu grossed Rs 116.88 crore in its lifetime against a mammoth budget of Rs 300 crore. Helmed by Harish Shankar, Ustaad Bhagat Singh had opened to largely negative reviews from all quarters. In her review, SCREEN's Yashaswini Sri wrote, "Pawan Kalyan's movie had every reason to work. A beloved star, a director who hit gold with him once before, and over five years of build-up. What arrives on screen instead is a film that worships its hero, lectures its audience, and forgets to tell a story worth caring about."

## 'Heartbreaking': Kareena Kapoor Khan shuts down rumors of Ranbir Kapoor reviving the iconic RK Studios



Last year, reports were rife that Ranbir Kapoor was all set to revive his grandfather Raj Kapoor's legendary RK Studios, which was established in 1948. However, recently, during an event in Mumbai, Kareena Kapoor squashed all such claims, stating that Ranbir is currently focused on acting. As reported by The Economic Times, Kareena spoke about the revival of RK Studios and said, "That's just not true. It was even being discussed in our family group, and everyone was like, 'This isn't happening.'"

Kareena admitted that fans really want this generation of the Kapoor family to revive the iconic studio, but clarified that Ranbir is focused on acting. She called her

cousin "the best actor in India" today and said he wants to concentrate solely on that. "It's heartbreaking, but it's not happening," Kareena said. However, she also added that it is only Ranbir and Karisma who could potentially revive the studio, being the two most successful actors from the current generation of the family. She also clarified that she does not see herself taking up such a responsibility, as she does not think like a director or a producer.

RK Studios, which was founded in 1948, shaped the identity of Indian cinema for decades to come. The studio delivered films like Barsaat (1949), Awaara (1951), Mera Naam Joker (1970), Satyam Shivam Sundaram (1978), Prem Rog (1982), and many more that continue to live on today. During the conversation, Kareena also spoke about her memorable characters—Geet (from Jab We Met) and Poo (from Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham)—and how the younger generation, while inspired by these roles, does not want to imitate them. "No one really intentionally wants to (ape them), because you have to have your own identity, and that's very important," she said.

Lately, Kareena has opted for more character-driven roles. She will next be seen in director Meghna Gulzar's Daayra. Speaking about the same, she said, "Trying to do something different every year. Our film (Daayra) is topical, and I'm really looking forward to it." Kareena shared that she constantly tries to reinvent herself through her characters and also expressed interest in featuring in a mini-series. "I am hoping to do something really different this year, maybe a good show, maybe a miniseries," she said.

## 'I gave Ranveer Singh a look...': Rakesh Bedi reveals Dhurandhar easter eggs audiences missed, how he set up Dhurandhar 2's biggest twist

The comical, yet equally shrewd and menacing character of Rakesh Bedi's politician Jameel Jamali in Dhurandhar 2 has garnered praise from all quarters. In a recent interaction, Rakesh opened up about how he prepared for the role and revealed that he had been subtly hinting at the major plot twist in Dhurandhar 2 right from the beginning.

Warning: Spoiler alert. Speaking to CNN-News18, Rakesh admitted that he was aware of his character's graph from the very start and understood how Jamali was manipulating Ranveer Singh's Hamza to fulfil his own political motives while making him believe he was in control. He said, "I knew the graph of my character from the beginning, otherwise how I would have craft it? There are a few looks that I have given to Ranveer in the first part when I see him for the first time or when I am sitting in the car and I look at him, I am noticing him in that moment. In many places in the previous film, I have given these looks to Ranveer because in the film, Ranveer doesn't know, but I know that he is my asset and I have to work on him."

He added, "And then the planning starts that how without Ranveer even knowing it, I start eliminating one person after another through him, eventually taking Ranveer to the top. I let Ranveer think that he is using me, but it is actually that I am using him the way I want to."When asked how he prepared for the shrewd character of a Pakistani politician, Rakesh admitted that he studied several real-life figures. He said, "I studied a lot of Pakistani politicians for this role." Recently, Pakistani politician Nabil Gabol claimed that Rakesh's character is based on him. Responding to this,



the actor said, "The one politician who thinks I studied him for this role, he has a misunderstanding. He thinks that I took inspiration from him because I resemble him, but it is not the case. Let him take that privilege, he's basking in the glory that somebody has portrayed him but actually I have not. I didn't even know that a Nabeel Gabol type person exists."

Praising Ranveer and Dhurandhar director Aditya Dhar, he said, "Ranveer's performance is out of the world. I don't see any actor today who is anywhere near him. He is fantastic. He is a bundle of energy."He added, "No words for Aditya, he is an amazing man. One of the coolest demeanour in the industry. Doesn't lose his cool ever, doesn't raise his voice ever and the magnitude of the gravity that he carries inside him is immense, which doesn't come out very easily. When you talk to him or when he directs you, you realise that this man is really full of something."

## Dhurandhar 2 worldwide box office collection, all records broken till now: Biggest Hindi opener; rare back-to-back Rs 100 cr days; fastest to cross Rs 500 cr mark

Dhurandhar 2 Box Office Collection Worldwide: Despite opening to polarised reviews, with one section praising it as a cinematic marvel while the other criticising it as yet another pro-establishment propaganda vehicle, it seems there's no stopping director Aditya Dhar's Ranveer Singh-starrer Dhurandhar: The Revenge at the box office. In fact, the spy actioner has grossed Rs 691.32 crore globally in its opening weekend itself, according to industry tracker Sacnilk, and is poised to become one of the biggest hits in Indian cinema. Dhurandhar 2 has already broken several records and is continuing its successful run.

Dhurandhar 2 box office collection On Sunday, the spy actioner recorded an India nett collection of Rs 114.85 crore across 21,202 shows, taking its total domestic earnings to Rs 454.12 crore. During the day, the movie witnessed an overall occupancy of 79.7 per cent in the domestic market. Thus far, the film has grossed Rs 149.35 crore overseas. However, only its Hindi version is currently performing well and earned Rs 107 crore on Sunday. While the Telugu edition contributed Rs 5.25 crore to the overall daily haul, the Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada versions earned just Rs 2.50 crore, Rs 90 lakh, and Rs 10 lakh, respectively.

Dhurandhar 2's opening weekend performance is on par with movies with the highest nett collections in India. The spy actioner minted Rs 227.85 crore over its first Saturday and Sunday combined. In comparison, Baahubali 2, which ranks second on the list, recorded Rs 183 crore, while KGF 2 collected Rs 173.65 crore. However, Dhurandhar 2 trails behind the top performer, Pushpa 2, which recorded a cumulative total of Rs 260.3 crore during its opening weekend.

After earning Rs 43 crore from paid previews a day prior to its worldwide release, Dhurandhar 2 opened at Rs 102.55 crore in India. Its Hindi version alone accounted for Rs 99.10 crore, delivering the biggest Hindi opening-day performance ever and surpassing Pushpa 2: The Rule's Rs 70.30 crore.

Even before its worldwide release, the Ranveer Singh-starrer had teased that it had the potential to become one of the biggest Indian movies, as it registered record-breaking



paid preview collections. On Wednesday, March 18, it earned Rs 43 crore from such screenings, the highest ever for an Indian film, thus smashing the record previously held by Pawan Kalyan's They Call Him OG (Rs 25 crore). \* First Hindi film to cross Rs 100 crore mark in a single day On its release day, the spy actioner also became the first Hindi movie to score Rs 100 crore nett in a single day. It has followed it up with becoming the only Hindi film to earn Rs 100 crore from one language on Saturday. \* Second-highest India opener worldwide Dhurandhar 2 has fundamentally taken Hindi cinema to new heights after trailing behind regional industries for a long time. The movie earned Rs 236.63 crore worldwide, ranking second on the list of biggest-opening Indian movies, ahead of RRR (Rs 223 crore) and behind Pushpa 2 (Rs 275.2 crore).

\* Fourth-highest day 1 collection in India Not just worldwide, the Ranveer Singh-starrer showcased its power even in the domestic market and recorded the fourth-highest day one nett collection (Rs 102.55 crore) for a movie in India. It now ranks behind Pushpa 2 (Rs 164 crore), RRR (Rs 133 crore), and KGF 2 (Rs 116 crore).

In yet another major achievement for Hindi cinema, Dhurandhar 2 also crossed the Rs 100 crore mark on both its first Saturday (Rs 113 crore) and Sunday (Rs 114.85