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Car driver held for double murder and robbing elderly women

Hyderabad: The Filmnagar police arrested a car driver on Tuesday for allegedly killing two women in separate incidents and robbing them of their gold jewellery. The suspect, 29-year-old Kunasani Vasu, a resident of Jubilee Hills and a native of Andhra Pradesh's Krishna district, reportedly targeted older women.

According to the police, Vasu would befriend women under the pretext of offering help, only to lure them to secluded areas on the city outskirts.

Changeable hawk-eagle carries Indian giant squirrel in rare capture in Nallamala forest

Sangareddy: In a rare capture on camera, a Changeable hawk eagle, a bird of prey, was captured carrying an Indian giant squirrel in its talons which was almost equal to its weight. Both the Changeable hawk-eagle and Indian Giant Squirrels weigh between one kg and two kgs depending on their age. Seasoned wildlife photographer Sriram Reddy along with his fellow birder Tulasi went birding to Umamaheshwaram Temple in Nallamala forest in Nagar Kurnool district, where they captured the rare moment. Since they were well aware of Changeable hawk eagle's habitat in the forest, they had been roaming around the area for quite some time capturing other birds.

US drops massive 900-kg bomb on nuke city Isfahan as Trump hints at ending war

New Delhi, March 31

On the diplomatic front, US President Donald Trump reportedly told his aides he was willing to end the war without reopening the strategically important Strait of Hormuz. This came even as Iran refused to yield to Trump's threats demanding the reopening of the strait, asserting that "ships would be allowed passage only in compliance with measures it had laid down".

Iran has declined to unblock the waterway despite

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told Iran to abandon all weapon programmes and all nuclear ambitions. "And if they do that, then Iran's future can be bright," he said. This even as Israel and US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, in separate statements, indicated that the US and Israel were ready for a long haul.

Trump chided European allies for lack of support, lashing out at France for denying passage for US planes carrying ammunition

Italy too barred US planes carrying weapons to stage through an airbase in Sicily; Spain had done the same on Sunday

"The upcoming days will be decisive. Iran knows that and there's almost nothing they can do militarily about it," Hegseth told a news conference on Tuesday. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had earlier said the assault on Iran was "definitely beyond the halfway point", later clarifying "he meant in terms of missions, and not necessarily in terms of time".

Meanwhile, Trump chided his European allies for their lack of support. He lashed out at France for denying passage through its airspace for US planes carrying ammunition to Israel. "France has been very unhelpful with respect to the 'Butcher of Iran', who has been successfully eliminated. The US will remember this," he wrote.

Trump also asked the UK to itself go to Hormuz for fuel. This even as reports from London suggested that King Charles was headed to the US. In a post on Truth Social, Trump said countries like the UK should build up "courage to go to the Strait of Hormuz to take fuel". "You'll have to start learning how to fight for yourself, the US won't be there to help you anymore, just like you weren't there for us," Trump said as he criticised countries that "refused to get involved in the decapitation of Iran". "Iran has been, essentially, decimated. The hard part is done. Go get your own oil!" said Trump while concluding his social media post.

Meanwhile, Italy joined France and barred US planes carrying weapons to stage through an airbase in Sicily. Spain had done the same on Sunday.

Gram Sabhas to Reflect People-Centric Governance: Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka

Arvapalli Nagesh khammam bureau March 31 indian Chronicle: Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu stated that Gram Sabhas should be conducted in a manner that reflects true people-centric governance. "On Tuesday, the Deputy CM, who also holds the Finance, Energy, and Planning portfolios, reviewed the implementation of the Praja Palana Pragati Pranalika 99-day program and the arrangements for Gram and Ward Sabhas scheduled on April 2. The review meeting was conducted via video conference from Hyderabad, along with Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao and other senior officials. From the Khammam Collectorate, Additional Collector Dr. P. Sreeja participated in the meeting. "Speaking on the occasion, Bhatti Vikramarka emphasized that Gram Sabhas across the state should follow a uniform format and ensure the participation of public representatives—from ward members to MPs and MLAs. "He directed that the Chief Minister's message be conveyed during the Gram Sabhas and that the names of beneficiaries under various welfare schemes be read out. Beneficiaries of schemes such as Indiramma Housing, new ration cards, fine rice distribution, and free pump sets for tribal farmers should be encouraged to speak during the meetings. "The Deputy CM also instructed officials to inform the public about upcoming initiatives, including the Indiramma Life Insurance Scheme starting from June 2, breakfast programs in government schools, provision of milk and ragi java, and the introduction of a mid-day meal scheme for Intermediate students. "He stressed the importance of widely publicizing feedback received from the public and suggested preparing an action plan involving cultural department artists to promote awareness about government schemes. "Further, he advised that funds released by the government should be effectively utilized for village development and directed collectors to continuously monitor the progress of the program to ensure successful implementation. "CS Calls for Successful Conduct of Gram Sabhas" Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao noted that the special drives conducted from March 6 to 15 for clearing pending files and sanitation activities received a positive response. He urged officials to carry forward the same spirit in successfully organizing Gram and Ward Sabhas on April 2. "He instructed district collectors to submit reports on the conduct of Gram Sabhas and ensure maximum public participation. Pub-



lic representatives must mandatorily attend these meetings, he added. "He also directed officials to explain government welfare schemes, identify local issues, and inform people about steps being taken to resolve them. Similar meetings should be organized in municipal wards as well. "Officials were further instructed to explain not only existing welfare schemes but also new initiatives proposed in the current budget during these meetings. "Officials Emphasize Awareness in Urban Areas" Additional Collector Dr. P. Sreeja highlighted the need to conduct Ward Sabhas in municipalities to ensure awareness of the Praja Palana program among urban residents. She instructed officials to ensure the participation of local MLAs and public representatives in these meetings.

Airfares set to spike with surge in jet fuel prices from today

New Delhi, March 31

A surge in the prices of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) from April 1 is set to push airfares higher, as a sharp global crude spike and escalating tensions around the Strait of Hormuz tighten the screws on India's aviation sector.

The pressure is already visible on ticket pricing, and airlines say the next round of revisions will accelerate the pass-through to passengers.

What is unfolding is not a routine fuel adjustment. Global jet fuel prices have more than doubled in four

For the airlines, that risk is now being priced in. The Centre is attempting to limit the damage. Sources said the Ministry of Civil Aviation was working on a three-pronged plan, pushing states to cut VAT on the ATF, reviewing airport charges and examining policy options to absorb part of the shock. Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu is expected to write to chief ministers, particularly in high-tax states, where VAT continues to keep the ATF prices elevated.

But the room to absorb costs is shrinking. The airlines are facing a double hit. Alongside rising fuel bills, airspace restrictions across parts of West Asia are forcing longer flight paths, increasing fuel burn and crew costs. This is pushing up operating expenses even before the ATF revision kicks in.

Aviation expert Mark Martin said the situation left little flexibility. "With the rise in world jet fuel prices expected to be over 20 per cent, it is extremely likely that Indian companies will raise the cost of jet fuel in proportion, and this has already happened with the increasing of fuel surcharges," he said.

Dr Vandana Singh of the Federation of Aviation Industry in India said fare increases were now a calibrated necessity. "Fuel accounts for nearly 35-40 per cent of the cost. Any sustained rise directly feeds into pricing, especially on high-demand routes. The challenge is to avoid a demand shock in a price-sensitive market," she said.

For passengers, the shift is already underway. "Fuel surcharges range from Rs 399 on domestic routes to Rs 3,000 on long-haul sectors, with base fares rising by Rs 425 to Rs 2,300 depending on distance," the industry expert said, adding that even a 5-10 per cent increase in fares could soften demand, a risk airlines were weighing as they adjust pricing.

Advocate Varun Singh, founder of Foresight Law Offices India, said the trend was no longer unfolding, it had arrived. "ATF prices are at record highs, and rising. What we are seeing is not a future risk but a present cost shock," he said.

"The April 1 revision will accelerate fare increases. The airlines will either raise prices or cut capacity to protect margins. Low-cost carriers will be under most pressure if volatility continues," Varun added, calling for urgent VAT rationalisation, fuel hedging and tax review measures.



weeks, from \$95.9 per barrel on February 20 to nearly \$197 by March 20, driven by supply disruptions linked to the US-Israel and Iran war. Crude has risen over 50 per cent during the same period. For the airlines, where fuel accounts for 30-40 per cent of the cost, this is a direct hit on margins.

The geopolitical risk has sharpened the uncertainty. US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said countries facing jet fuel shortage should "go to the Strait and just TAKE IT" and "learn to fight for themselves", underlining the fragility of supply lines and the possibility of prolonged disruption. "...countries that can't get jet fuel because of the Strait of Hormuz, like the UK, which refused to get involved in the decapitation of Iran, I have a suggestion for you: number 1, buy from the US, we have plenty, and number 2, build up some delayed courage, go to the Strait and just TAKE IT. You'll have to start learning how to fight for yourself, the US won't be there to help you anymore, just like you weren't there for us. Iran has been, essentially, decimated. The hard part is done. Go get your own oil," Trump said on Truth Social.

GHMC sets record with Rs 2,501 crore property tax collection

The GHMC has achieved its highest-ever property tax collection of Rs 2,501.25 crore for the 2025-26 financial year. Commissioner RV Karnan credited the success to the One-Time Scheme.

Hyderabad: March 31

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has set a new record by collecting Rs 2,501.25

According to an official release, GHMC Commissioner RV Karnan on Tuesday said that the record was achieved as the deadline for the financial year closed at 8 pm on March 31.

A significant portion of this success, Rs 548 crore, was collected between December 2025 and March 2026 following the implementation of the government's One-Time Scheme (OTS).

Following the record-breaking year, the Commissioner urged taxpayers to take advantage of the Early Bird Scheme for the upcoming 2026-27 financial year.

Property owners who pay their full tax for the new year during the month of April will receive a 5 per cent discount. The Commissioner clarified that this incentive applies only to the current year's tax and does not cover arrears from previous years. He encouraged residents to pay early to benefit from the government-provided rebate.



crore in property tax for the 2025-26 financial year, marking the highest collection in the Corporation's history. Geographic Reference

India bars sale of non-certified imported CCTVs from April 1

New Delhi: March 31

India's CCTV market will only sell made-in-India products, as the government has barred the sale of non-certified imported units from April 1, a senior official said on Tuesday. The Ministry of Electronics and IT had barred the sale of CCTV units without Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification (STQC) from April 9, 2025, onwards, but allowed traders to exhaust imported inventories by March 31, 2026.

"The order to bar non-certified STQC was effective from April 9 onwards. The order does not impact any manufacturer in India," the government official, who did not wish to be named, said.

Aditya Infotech, which makes CP Plus brand CCTVs, said the STQC compliance regime, implemented by the government in April 2025, represents a significant shift for the surveillance industry as it has accelerated the adoption of trusted and locally aligned solutions, creating a more level playing field for Indian manufacturers.

"With growing focus on security compliance and reliability, customer preferences are expected to increasingly favour such solutions. The government's follow-through actions, including the prohibition of sales of non-STQC products across all levels of the value chain, will further accelerate and consolidate this process," CP PLUS (Aditya Infotech Limited), Managing Director, Aditya Khemka said.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Counting castes, a step towards inclusive India

It would be naïve to assume that India has overcome the caste divide. The harsh reality is that the country remains a deeply unequal society with caste continuing to play a powerful role in shaping access to opportunity. Therefore, a population count that takes caste into account is an essential tool to ensure social justice, an ideal that every political party in the country vouches for. At last, the government has set the ball rolling for the most complex statistical exercise ever undertaken: a national census that includes counting castes. The two-phase mammoth task, beginning April 1, has several firsts to its credit. This is the first time since 1931 that nationwide caste enumeration is being undertaken. It is also the first fully digital exercise, with enumerators using mobile applications to record responses, making the process more efficient and less prone to errors. Also, citizens will have the option to self-enumerate by visiting the official portal and submitting their details digitally. The digital format also enables faster data processing and analysis, helping policymakers access updated information more quickly. Another unique feature of the year-long exercise is that live-in couples, who consider their relationship a "stable union", will be counted as a married couple. The inclusion of caste in the nationwide census — delayed from its original 2021 timeline due to the Covid-19 pandemic — is a welcome development. It marks a vital step towards evidence-based policymaking aimed at building a more just and inclusive India.

After much dilly-dallying, the NDA government approved the inclusion of caste in the national census in April last year. The previous UPA government did conduct a national caste survey in 2011, but the full results were never made public. While some States, such as Bihar and Karnataka, have already conducted caste-based surveys, this national initiative aims to create uniform, standardised, and legally supported caste data to aid welfare policies and reservation decisions. According to submissions made by the Centre to the Justice G Rohini Commission, just 10 OBC castes cornered 25% of all public jobs and education seats reserved for OBCs, while a quarter of OBC castes secured 97% of the benefits. Shockingly, 38% of OBC castes received only 3% of the benefits, and another 37% got nothing at all. In such a scenario, caste enumeration is crucial to prevent the elite among the backward classes from cornering all the benefits.

Lawyers Celebrate the Passage of the Advocates' Protection Act Bill

“(Mandava Srisailam – Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District, Indian Chronicle Bureau – March 31): Under the aegis of the Bhuvanagiri Bar Association, lawyers celebrated the passage of the Advocates' Protection Act Bill with great enthusiasm. On this occasion, the lawyers distributed sweets among themselves. Subsequently, addressing the gathering, several lawyers expressed their



special gratitude to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for the efforts he undertook on behalf of the state government to ensure the approval of the Advocates' Protection Act Bill. The event was attended by Bar Association President Vallandas Venkataiah Goud, the newly elected Bar Association President Nisangi Vidya Sagar, and senior advocates including Damodar Reddy, Linga Reddy, Srikanth, Ravinder, Goda Venkateshwarlu, Narsimha Yadav, Hari Priya, Jaya, and others.

Ramanthapur BJP leaders felicitate Gorige Krishna on appointment as State Executive Member

“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 31 (Indian Chronicle): “Senior BJP leader and former Uppal councillor Gorige Krishna was felicitated by BJP leaders on the occasion of his appointment as a member of the Telangana State BJP Executive Committee. “On this occasion, former corporator of Ramanthapur division Bandaru Srivani Venkata Rao extended special congratulations and stated that under the leadership of Gorige Krishna, the party will grow stronger. “Uppal Assembly Convener Devasani Balachander, Muttineni Jagadeesh, Ulugonda Narayanasu, Parri Srinivas, Padigam Nagesh, and other division leaders participated in the program.



ASHA workers' pending wages must be paid Indefinite strike if issues are not resolved

“(BRTU District President Gone Yuvraju “Devulapally Srinivas, Warangal Bureau, March 31 (Indian Chronicle): BRTU District President Gone Yuvraju demanded that the wages pending for the last two months for ASHA workers be paid immediately. On Tuesday, under the leadership of the Telangana Rural ASHA Workers Union (affiliated with BRTU), a protest rally was held from the bus stand to the MRO and PHC centers, followed by a dharna, demanding a salary of ₹18,000 as promised in the election manifesto. “Speaking on the occasion, Gone Yuvraju criticized the state government for remaining indifferent despite ASHA workers being on strike for the past 19 days demanding resolution of their issues. He said it is not right for the government to suppress them using the police machinery when they are trying to bring their problems to the government's attention through democratic means. He stated that they are only asking for what was promised in the Congress party's election manifesto—₹18,000 salary and timely payment on the first of every month—and expressed concern over the use of force against women without addressing their

issues. “He questioned how their families are supposed to survive when wages have been pending for two months. He warned that if the government does not respond and resolve the issues even now, the agitation under BRTU will be intensified further. Former MPP Vemulapalli Prakash Rao, Khanapur Sarpanch Dasari Ramesh, and Manubothulagadda Sarpanch Abothu Srilatha-Ashok stated that the BRS party supports the ASHA workers' struggle. “District ASHA Union President Lalitha, BRS leaders Jatoh Sadar Lal, Maulana, BRTU Mandal President S.K. Allavuddin, ASHA Workers Union Mandal President Sandhya, and ASHA workers Sunitha, Jyothi, Sujatha, Sharada,



Bharathi, Sulochana, Saroj, Anitha, and others participated in the program.

Cooling Water Stall Inaugurated by Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy

“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 31 (Indian Chronicle): “A summer cooling water stall (Chalivendram) set up under the aegis of Uppal Arya Samaj and Tapasya Foundation was inaugurated by Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy along with former corporator Bannala Geetha at Pista House Junction in Chilkana Division. “On the occasion, the MLA participated in a buttermilk distribution program and served buttermilk to people passing along the road. Speaking at the event, MLA Lakshma Reddy appreciated the efforts of Uppal Arya Samaj and Tapasya Foundation for organizing the cooling water stall every year at Pista House Junction and providing relief to the public from the summer heat. He praised their initiative as a commendable service to society. “Former corporator Geetha Praveen also lauded the organization's founder Acharya Veda Sindhu for consistently organizing buttermilk distribution every summer, earning the appreciation of the public. She stated that such service activities inspire a spirit of social responsibility among people and extended her congratulations to the organizers on behalf of the public. “Several leaders and members attended the program, including BRS state leaders Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, Somashekar Reddy, Sai Jan Shekhar, Mallikarjuna Goud;



senior leaders Kokonda Jagan, Muddham Srinivas Yadav, Balakrishna Goud, Jilala Praveen Ramanjaneyulu, Bingi Srinivas, Marka Seenu, Auto Balu, Shyam Balu; along with members of Uppal Arya Samaj and Tapasya Foundation including founder Acharya Veda Sindhu, secretary Bollam Vijay Kumar, president Mahender Jaiswal, secretary Pandit Vijay Kumar, P. Lakshman, Gangadhar Mahajan, Santoshi, Latha, Munni Kumari, Sampath Ramesh and others.

Anyone can attain salvation through penance

“(Jagithyal Correspondent, March 31 (Indian Chronicle): “Anyone can attain salvation through penance in life, said Chitla Gangadhar, District President of Social Samarasya Veda, and Arav Laxmi, Councilor of 22nd Ward. “Under the leadership of ACS Raju, former Councilor and State Vice President of Bharat Suraksha Samithi, leaders organized a grand function to celebrate the birth anniversary of Mahavira, a Jain preacher, 24th Tirthankara, and propagator of non-violence, at the local office. “Gangadhar explained that Mahavira was born in a Kshatriya family but renounced household life and un-

dertook severe penance to attain knowledge and became Mahavira. He propounded the three jewels and taught a pure life. He added that Mahavira was an inspiration for Mahatma Gandhi's principles of non-violence, truth, and peace during the freedom struggle. “Leaders who participated in the program include Akkina Pelli Kashinath, Singam Gangadhar, Kothakonda Balanna, Vemula Devaraj, Narendula Srinivas, Kandlapalli Rajeswara Rao, Thuniki Anjanna, Siripuram Gangaram, Bashetti Dubbarajam, and others.

Grand Celebrations of Sri Bangaru Maisamma Jatara in Rajiv Gandhi Nagar - Puppala Bhaskar

“(NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 31 (Indian Chronicle): “The Sri Bangaru Maisamma Jatara, organized by the Tamil community, was celebrated with great fervor and devotion at Rajiv Gandhi Nagar in Suraram Division under Quthbullapur Constituency. On this occasion, GHMC Division President Puppala Bhaskar attended the event as the chief guest and offered special prayers to the deity, seeking blessings. Later, he organized an annadanam (free food distribution) program for the devotees who attended the jatara and actively participated in serving them. Speaking on the occasion, Bhaskar said that such jatara festivals symbolize unity among people and play a vital role in preserving cultural traditions and heritage. Several local leaders and community members, including Pole Srikant, Rudra Ashok, PACS Chairman Srinivas Yadav, Mukunda Rao, Ravi Kumar, David, temple priest Selvaraj, Anji, Ashok, Jagan,



Arumugam, Manikanta, and others, participated in the celebrations.

Dependence to Independence: Women Empowered by Mahalakshmi Scheme

Rs 77 Crore Saved: Free Bus Travel Transforms Women's Lives

“(Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 31, “Asifabad: District Collector K. Hariitha described the Mahalakshmi Scheme as a boon for women, highlighting its significant impact on their financial and social empowerment. “Speaking at a special Mahalakshmi Scheme programme held at the RTC bus station premises in the district headquarters on Tuesday, the Collector stated that women in the district have saved approximately ₹77 crore through free bus travel benefits as of the 29th of last month. “She noted that women engaged in small businesses and street vending are now becoming financially stable, as free travel has significantly reduced their expenses. “The Collector further observed that earlier, men would typically travel for work-related tasks, but now women themselves are confidently handling such responsibilities and completing tasks independently. “She also remarked that other states are viewing this scheme as a model and may implement similar initiatives. “Earlier, at the District Collectorate, the Collector held a review meeting with Additional Collector David and RDO Lokeshwar Rao, along with other officials. She directed the officials to conduct house-to-house surveys in villages efficiently and systematically.



Providing Better Healthcare Services to the Public is the Government's Goal: Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairperson Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar

“(Mandava Srisailam – Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District, Indian Chronicle Bureau – March 31): Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairperson Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar stated that the State Government is providing improved healthcare services through government hospitals to ensure the public remains healthy; she urged everyone to utilize these services and strive to lead healthy lives. Under the leadership of Nazia Raheman Jahangir, the Councilor for Ward No. 15 (Bhuvanagiri Urban Colony), a health camp titled "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures" was organized at the Urban Primary Health Centre



(UPHC)—also known as the Ayushman Arogya Mandir—located near the Uppalamma Temple. Speaking as the chief guest at the event, Municipal Chairperson Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar remarked that the primary objective of State Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is to ensure that government welfare schemes reach every underprivileged individual and to provide better health outcomes for the public. She added that the government's core mission is to systematically implement, in a phased manner, all the promises made to the people by the Chief Minister during the election campaign. Government officials, political leaders, party workers, local residents, and others participated in this program.

A Special Law Must Be Enacted for the Protection of Journalists: TWJF State President Mamidi Somayya

“(Mandava Srisailam... Hyderabad... Indian Chronicle... March 31): Telangana Working Journalists Federation (TWJF) State President Mamidi Somayya stated that it is regrettable that the State Government—which enacted various laws during the recent State Assembly sessions—failed to enact a special law specifically for the protection of journalists. He acknowledged that the State Government's enactment of new laws—particularly those concerning the protection of parents and lawyers—is commendable; however, he expressed deep anguish over the injustice of ignoring their long-standing demand for a Journalists' Protection Act, terming this neglect as a manifestation of severe discrimination against journalists. He noted that their affiliate union at the national level, the Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ), has been fighting for a Journalists' Protection Act for a considerable time; similarly, he urged the State Government to introduce and pass this legislation within the State Assembly. He pointed out that a law for the protection of journalists has already



been enacted in Chhattisgarh, and a similar law has been introduced in Maharashtra; furthermore, study committees have been constituted in several other states—including Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha—to facilitate the enactment of such protective legislation. Mamidi Somayya expressed grave concern that journalists in the state of Telangana currently lack adequate protection, citing a disturbing rise in attacks, acts of violence, and the filing of false cases against them. He stated that the previous government had neglected journalists—who fought more intensely than any other section of society during the Telangana movement—with severe discrimination. He criticized the current Congress government for adopting the very same attitude that the previous administration had maintained. He pointed out that the recent state budget made absolutely no mention of journalists' welfare; there were no budgetary allocations whatsoever for their well-being—neither for housing plots nor for pensions. Furthermore, he noted that newspapers have not received advertisement bill payments for two years, and journalists have yet to be issued accreditation cards or health cards. He asserted that the rulers' complete disregard for journalists and their families is unjust and ultimately detrimental to the government itself. He described it as regrettable that other major journalists' associations have remained completely silent regarding the issues faced by journalists and the government's stance on the matter. He demanded that the promises made to journalists during the last elections be implemented.

Successful Complex Surgery at Gandhi Hospital



“Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, March 31: “Doctors at Gandhi Hospital successfully performed a rare and highly complex surgical procedure on a 43-year-old woman suffering from massive splenomegaly (enlarged spleen) and pancytopenia. The surgical team, led by Dr. Sunil (Senior Surgeon) and Dr. Murali (Anesthesiologist), carried out a challenging splenectomy (removal of the spleen) with great precision. The patient, a resident of Warasiguda, had been experiencing abdominal pain for three months and abdominal distension for one month before approaching the hospital. Medical examinations revealed that her spleen had enlarged significantly, extending below the navel. “Ultrasound (USG) findings

showed the spleen measuring approximately 19 x 23 cm, far exceeding its normal size. During surgery, it was found to have enlarged further to about 45 x 20 cm and weighed nearly 2.8 kilograms. The condition was further complicated by a significant reduction in red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets, making the procedure highly challenging. Despite these risks, the medical team successfully completed the surgery with careful planning and execution. Post-surgery, the patient is stable and recovering well, doctors confirmed. The team also expressed gratitude for the support extended by Dr. Vani (Additional DME), Dr. Shobha (In-charge Superintendent), and Dr. Indira (Principal), which played a key role in the success of the procedure.

Radha Study Halls Inaugurated in ECIL Green Hills Colony - MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy - Labour Minister Dr. Gaddam Vivek



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 31 (Indian chronicle): “The grand opening of Radha Study Halls was held with great enthusiasm in Green Hills Colony under the ECIL area. Labour Minister Dr. Gaddam Vivek Venkatswamy attended the event as the chief guest, along with Uppal constituency MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy. Speaking on the occasion, Bandari Lakshma Reddy described the establishment of study halls as a commendable initiative aimed at supporting students' futures. He stated that providing a calm and well-equipped environment would greatly benefit candidates preparing for competitive examinations and help them achieve success. Dr. Gaddam Vivek Venkatswamy emphasized that access to educational resources is essential for youth and noted that such initiatives play a key role in the overall development of society. BRS party leaders, local representatives, students, and residents of the area were present at the event.

Boduppall Circle Records Highest Property Tax Collections in Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 31 (Indian chronicle): “Boduppall Circle officials have announced that as part of property tax collection for the financial year 2025-26, a total of ₹86.00 lakh has been collected so far on the final day of the financial year. Further, cumulative collections for the financial year 2025-26 have reached ₹45.00 crore. Among the 14 circles under the Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation, Boduppall Circle has achieved the highest collection against its demand, securing the top position. Officials also informed that for the financial year 2026-27, all payments through cheques should be made in favour of Commissioner, Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation. Residents, as well as residential and commercial property owners, are requested to make note of this.

Seven Police Personnel Felicitated on Retirement at Malkajgiri Commissionerate

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 31 (Indian chronicle): “Seven police personnel serving under the Malkajgiri Police Commissionerate were felicitated by the Commissioner of Police at the Commissionerate office on the occasion of their retirement. The officers who retired from service include K. Karunakar Reddy, Sub-Inspector, Ghatkesar Police Station; P. Satyanarayana Chary, Reserve Sub-Inspector, Armed Headquarters; Assistant Reserve Sub-Inspectors N. Jairam, Y. Saibaba, and A. Murtuza; and Home Guard personnel K. Padma Rao and B. Balanarsamma. Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner of Police Avinash Mohanty, IPS, stated that policing is a challenging profession that demands dedication and resilience. He appreciated the officers for their long-standing service, discipline, and commitment to duty throughout their careers. He advised the retired personnel to lead a peaceful and healthy life post-retirement, to remain mindful of their health, and to maintain financial discipline in matters related to pension and other benefits. He also directed officials concerned to ensure that all retirement benefits due to them are processed and delivered without delay. DCP (Admin) Indira, CAO (Admin) Srinivas, Chief Accounts Officer Srinivas, Police Officers' Association President C.H. Bhadra Reddy, Cooperative Director Suvama, Vala Raju, and other officials were present at the event.



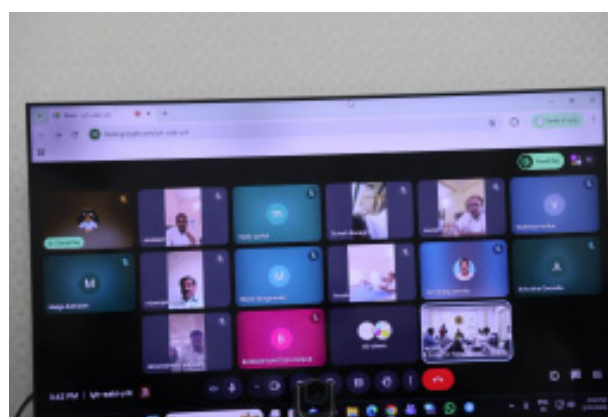
Special focus on providing quality education and nutritious food to students – Collector's comprehensive inspection of schools and Anganwadi centers

“Indian chronicle correspondent Sunil... Sangareddy, March 31: “As part of the inspection of education and child welfare services in the district, District Collector Praveenya made a surprise visit to Gunthapalli village in Kondapur mandal on Tuesday. She inspected the primary school and Anganwadi center in the village and made a comprehensive inspection of the facilities and quality of services there. “The Collector, who first visited the primary school, thoroughly inspected the condition of the classrooms, cleanliness, toilets, drinking water facility, electricity supply, school surroundings, and compound wall. He personally inspected the mid-day meal served to the students and spoke to the students and inquired about the quality of the meal. The Collector expressed satisfaction as the students said that the meal was good. He advised the teachers and staff to provide quality food to the students as per the menu. “Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the government is giving priority to the development of the education sector and is taking several steps. He suggested that teachers should play a key role in pro-



viding quality education to students and that every student should focus on their studies. “Next, he visited the Anganwadi center and inspected the kitchen, cleanliness, and food served to the children. He inquired whether the children were getting eggs and other nutritious food. Stating that nutritious food is very important for the physical and mental development of children, he ordered that proper nutrition be provided as per the standards set by the government. He advised that special attention should be paid to the health of children. Keeping in mind the intensity of summer, he said that children should be taken care of properly and drinking water and a cool environment should be provided. “Later, the Collector inspected the Indiramma houses in the village and instructed the concerned officials to complete all the necessary arrangements for the opening of the houses. “Later, the Collector visited the Monin industry and inspected it and congratulated the company management for the satisfactory safety measures being implemented in the industry. “Tehsildar Ashok, MPDO Venugopal, Sarpanch Ananth Reddy, Housing AE and others participated in this program.

As part of the 99-day action plan of the Prajapalana-Pragati Plan being ambitiously implemented by the state government



indian chronicle correspondent Sunil “Sangareddy, March 31: District Collector P. Praveenya has instructed the Mandal Parishad officials to complete all arrangements for the Gram Sabhas to be held in the district from April 2nd next month. “In a video review meeting held at the Collectorate Mini Conference Hall on Tuesday, Additional Collector of Local Bodies Pandu, ZP CEO Janaki Reddy and others reviewed the establishment of Gram Sabhas. “Speaking on the occasion, the Collector... suggested that the 99-day action plan prepared by the state government should be coordinated with the public representatives and Gram Sabhas should be organized effectively. He ordered that each Gram Sabha should start at 10 am. He instructed the officials to prepare the details related to the selection of beneficiaries in advance and explain each scheme in a way that the people can understand. “He directed that complete details of government schemes related to the agriculture department such as farmer assurance, farmer insurance, loan waiver, grain purchase, mechanization schemes, as well as food security cards, door-to-door distribution of rice through ration cards, Cheyutha, Mahalakshmi, Gruha Jyoti, Mahila Shakti, SHG loans, employment guarantee works and other schemes should be ready with the officials in the gram sabhas. He said that financial security like farmer insurance and pensions are being provided to women



farmers. He said that the government's new scheme, Indiramma Kutumba Bima Yojana, which will be implemented soon, should be informed that it will be applicable to all families. “Details of new schemes like the mid-day meal scheme for intermediate students and Indiramma Kutumba Life Insurance Scheme should also be explained in the gram sabhas. He suggested that steps should be taken to ensure that youth, voluntary organizations, farmers, women's groups, etc. attend gram sabhas. He said that special facilities should be provided for women and the elderly and appropriate arrangements should be made in view of the summer. “He suggested that the details of the Gram Sabhas should be displayed on notice boards and widely publicized to the people of the villages through dandora and posters. He said that the lists of beneficiaries should be kept ready in the Gram Sabhas. He said that special counters and feedback boxes should be set up for the receipt of new applications and that preventive measures should be taken to prevent any technical problems in the Gram Sabhas. He also directed the district officials to attend every Gram Panchayat and monitor the program. “Mandal Parishad officials, officials of various departments and others participated in this video review meeting.

Distribution of Three Months' Ration (April, May, June) to be Conducted in April 2026, as per Government Orders: – District Additional Revenue Collector Venka Reddy



““(Mandava Srishailam, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau, Indian Chronicle – March 31): – District Additional Revenue Collector Venka Reddy announced that, in accordance with government directives, the ration distribution for the three-month period of April, May, and June will be carried out during April 2026. He advised ration beneficiaries to collect their three-month quota of rice from the ration shops exclusively within the month of April 2026, and suggested that beneficiaries make necessary arrangements for bags and transportation accordingly. He further stated that 15,031.035 metric tonnes of rice have been allocated for the 7,91,142 units covered under the 2,50,789 ration cards currently existing in the district. Subsequently, Collector (Civil Supplies) Venka Reddy inspected the Ganni Godown, Buffer Godown, a petrol bunk, and the Vasavi Rice Mill located in Valigonda Mandal.

"Women's Freedom to Travel... A Source of Pride for Telangana"

Congratulations to the Women Who Have Availed the Free Bus Travel

Scheme: Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Additional Collector Bhaskara Rao



hospitals and government schools with the same enthusiasm and frequency with which they have availed themselves of the free bus travel scheme. Speaking subsequently, District Rural Development Officer T. Nagireddy highlighted that, with the objective of women's empowerment, [various initiatives are being implemented] in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District... Approvals have been received from SERP to purchase one bus for each Mandal Mahila Samakhya (Mandal Women's Federation). These buses are to be leased to the RTC on a rental basis, with a monthly rent of Rs. 69,500 being deposited into the respective Mandal Mahila Samakhya accounts. The construction of the District Mahila Samakhya office,

located within the premises of the District Collector's office, is nearing completion. It was reported that against a target of Rs. 611 crores for bank loans to women in the Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, loans amounting to Rs. 632 crores have been disbursed; furthermore, 99 percent of these loans are being repaid by the women on time. "Speaking at the event, Krishna Reddy, RDO of Bhuvanagiri, offered a suggestion regarding the women's utilization of free RTC bus travel. He advised that for every journey undertaken, each woman should deposit the equivalent cost of the bus ticket into a hundi (collection box); at the end of the year, these accumulated funds could be counted and saved for other essential needs. The meeting was attended by Kondal Rao (In-charge Municipal Commissioner), Ch. Murali Krishna (DM, RTC, Yadagirigutta), Municipal Councilors, Renuka (District Samakhya President), Pallavi (Secretary), Alivelu (Treasurer), and Kota Jangareddy (Additional DRDO), along with a large number of women.

“(Mandava Srisailem – Indian Chronicle Bureau, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District – March 31): The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District organized a celebratory meeting at the Bhuvanagiri bus stand—located at the district headquarters—to mark the success of the 'Mahalakshmi Scheme' (free RTC bus travel for women). The event celebrated the milestone wherein the travel expenses saved by women through this scheme exceeded ₹10,012 crores. Additional Collector A. Bhaskar Rao, Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairperson Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar, Municipal Vice-Chairperson Pothamsetti Manjula Venkatesh, District Library Chairperson Mohammed Awais Chishtii, District Rural Development Officer T. Nagireddy, and Bhuvanagiri RDO Krishna Reddy attended the program as chief guests. Speaking on the occasion, Additional Collector A. Bhaskar Rao declared, "Women's freedom to travel is a source of pride for Telangana." Addressing the women present, he urged them to utilize the free services provided at government

Village Sarpanch Ward Path for the Development of Ammai Palli Village

Village Sarpanch Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud

“Village Sub-Sarpanch Arepalli Madhavi Madhava Reddy” “Wanaparthy correspondent Indian Chronicle” “In Ammai Palli village, for the development of the village, Village Sarpanch Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud, Deputy Sarpanch Arepalli Madhavi Madhavareddy, ward members and village leaders took the initiative to solve various problems under the name of Ward Path. They inspected the places where there are no street lights and related poles in the village and installed new poles, and made people aware of the potholes in the village so that sewage does not flow on the roads. Keeping in mind the current dry season, no house in the village should have a problem with water. A pipeline connection has been made to the motor on the outskirts of Ammayapalli village so that the surrounding houses do not have water shortage. Similarly, Sarpanch Madagauni Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud, who promised in the elections that he would be there for you if there is any danger while solving problems on the ward path, is moving forward. The village sarpanch and deputy sarpanch visited Jagadish, who has been suffering from illness for the past few days, and provided financial assistance. The Anganwadi teacher was also instructed to ensure that the children do not have any problems near the Anganwadi center. If there are any problems, they should bring them to their attention and they will always help and support them for immediate resolution. Village



Sarpanch Madagauni Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud, Upasarpanch Arepalli Madhavi Madhav Reddy, ward members Allenagoud, Maheshwaramma Satya Reddy, Dargayya Swero, Pavani Kavinder Goud, Village Congress Party President Mohan Reddy, leaders Sukumar, Bittu, Venkatesh Naidu, Tarachand Goud, Peddireddy, Ramadasu, and village people participated in this program.

Political Party Representatives Must Provide Full Cooperation to Successfully Complete the Special Intensive Revision Mapping Process: District Collector Anurag Jayanti

“(Mandava Srisailem – Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District, Indian Chronicle Bureau – March 31): District Collector Anurag Jayanti stated that representatives of political parties must extend their full cooperation to ensure the successful completion of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) mapping process. On Tuesday, a coordination meeting regarding the SIR process was held in the Mini Meeting Hall, attended by the District Collector, Additional Collector (Revenue) Venka Reddy, and representatives from various recognized political parties. Speaking on this occasion, the Collector urged political party representatives to immediately submit lists of their Booth Level Agents to ensure that the SIR mapping process in the district is completed with transparency and accuracy. He emphasized that the cooperation of political parties is crucial for Booth Level Officers to effectively execute the mapping process at the grassroots level. “The Collector provided the political party representatives with a detailed explanation regarding the upcoming Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise. As part of this process, he explained that Booth Level Officers would visit every household within their respective booth jurisdictions across the district. They will carry a pair of enumerator forms; after inquiring about and collecting the details of each voter, they will fill out the forms with the appropriate information—retaining one copy for their records while handing over the duplicate copy to the voter. “The Superintendent of the Elections Department and representatives from various political parties participated in this meeting.



The Services Rendered by Planning Officer Venkata Ramana Are Unforgettable: Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Anurag Jayanthi

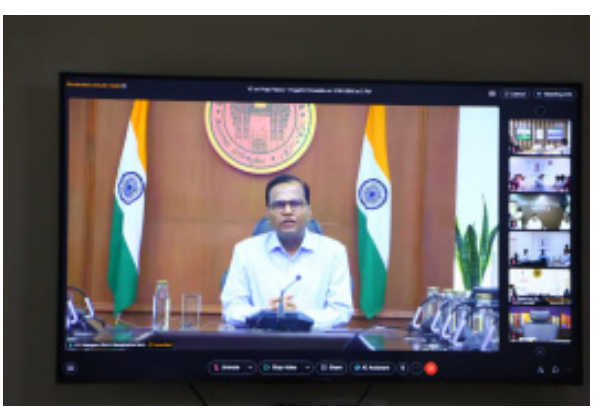


“During the retirement felicitation ceremony, District Collector Anurag Jayanthi honors Venkata Ramana with a shawl and presents him with a memento

“(Mandava Srisailem – Indian Chronicle Bureau, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District – March 31): On Tuesday, a grand farewell ceremony was organized at the Collectorate conference hall to mark the retirement of the District Chief Planning Officer, Venkata Ramana. District Collector Anurag Jayanthi attended the event as the chief guest; addressing the gathering, she began by extending her best wishes and congratulations to the retiring officer. “She lauded Venkata Ramana for his dedicated service as the Chief Planning Officer. She remarked that the commitment and hard work he demonstrated in the formulation of various plans were truly praiseworthy. She further highlighted his significant role in successfully implementing training programs for relevant officials and staff—specifically regarding key administrative matters and the upcoming Census-2027—within a very short span of time since his arrival in the district. It was remarked that he worked efficiently in achieving government objectives and served as a role model for his colleagues. Expressing the hope that he would continue to engage in social service even after retirement, the Dis-

trict Collector wished him excellent health and a joyful future. Speaking on the occasion, Bhaskar Rao, the Additional Collector for Local Bodies, commended his services, noting that as the Chief Planning Officer, he had rendered unforgettable service to the district. He highlighted that, as part of the Census-2027 exercise, he had conducted training sessions for officers and staff with great dedication. He further wished him a long and healthy life ahead, spent happily in the company of his family members. Mandadi Upender Reddy, State Associate President of the TGO and Chairman of the JAC, lauded his services, observing that he approached his official duties with a friendly demeanor, fostered a spirit of unity among fellow officers and staff, and rendered exceptional service to the district. The retiring Chief Planning Officer shared his experiences from his tenure and expressed his gratitude for the cooperation extended by his colleagues. Subsequently, District Collector Anurag Jayanti—accompanied by Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Bhaskar Rao, District Rural Development Officer Nagi Reddy, TGO State Associate President and JAC Chairman Mandadi Upender Reddy, and other officials—felicitated him grandly by presenting a memento and draping a traditional shawl over him. ZP CEO Shobharani, DRO Jayamma, officials from various departments, staff members, and others participated in this program.

Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu Holds Video Conference with District Collectors on 'Praja Palana - Pragathi Pranalika' (99-Day Action Plan) Gram Sabhas (Village Assemblies) to be Conducted on a Large Scale Starting April 2: Explain the Welfare Schemes Currently Being Implemented by the 'People's Government' and the New Schemes Set to Launch from June 2: — Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu“



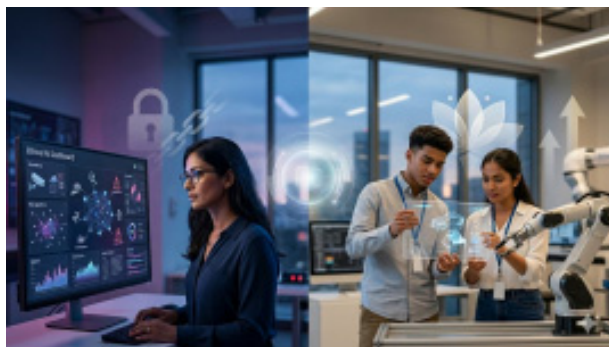
“(Mandava Srisailem | Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District | Indian Chronicle Bureau | March 31): Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu stated that, as part of the 'Praja Palana - Pragathi Pranalika' (People's Administration - Progress Plan)—a 99-day action plan—the state government intends to conduct Gram Sabhas (village assemblies) on a massive scale starting April 2. On Tuesday evening, he held a video conference with District Collectors from Praja Bhavan. Chief Secretary Ramakrishna Rao, Principal Secretary of Finance Sandeep Kumar Sultania, and other officials participated in the meeting. The Deputy CM directed the Collectors to take measures to ensure that the Gram Sabhas are conducted in a uniform manner across the entire state. He instructed that, initially, the Chief Minister's message should be played, followed by a comprehensive reading of the various schemes currently being implemented by the state government. He further directed that, to the greatest extent possible, the lists of beneficiaries for schemes such as 'Rythu Bharosa' (Farmers' Assurance), the 200-unit free electricity scheme, and 'Indiramma Houses' should be read out during the Gram Sabhas. He emphasized the need to explain the welfare schemes currently being implemented by the 'People's Government,' as well as the upcoming launch of universal life insurance coverage for all citizens, effective from June 2. He instructed officials to explain to the public that, as part of the morning breakfast program for government school students, a glass of milk is being provided for three days of the week, and Ragi Java (finger millet porridge) for the remaining three days. He further directed them to ensure that everyone is made aware of the newly implemented mid-day meal scheme for students attending Intermediate colleges. He suggested seeking the assistance and cooperation of the Department of Culture and the Department of Public Relations while disseminating this information. Noting that substantial funds are being released to Gram

Panchayats, he instructed officials to keep detailed records of village-wise fund allocations readily available and to announce the specific amount received by each village during the scheduled Gram Sabha (village assembly) meetings. “He stated that the Chief Secretary and the Planning Department would regularly gather information from District Collectors regarding the successful progress of the "Praja Palana" (People's Administration) program. He emphasized the need to convey to the public that the State Government is not limiting itself solely to welfare and development initiatives but is also forging ahead by actively developing infrastructure and the service sector. District Collector Anurag Jayanthi, Additional Collector Bhaskar Rao, and Additional Collector (Revenue) Venka Reddy participated in this video conference. Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector announced that, as part of the "Praja Palana – Pragathi Pranalika" (People's Administration – Progress Plan) 99-day action plan, the State Government would be organizing large-scale Village and Ward assemblies starting from April 2nd. He added that, during these assemblies, the details of the various welfare schemes currently being implemented by the government would be read out and explained to the public. He stated that, in strict adher-



ence to government directives, public representatives and citizens across all villages in the district would be actively involved in this initiative. He further informed that during the Gram Sabhas (village assemblies), discussions would be held regarding the schemes currently being implemented by the government for the welfare of the underprivileged, as well as newly proposed initiatives such as the Indiramma Family Life Insurance Scheme, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (extended up to the Intermediate level), and the Breakfast Scheme for school students. “The District Panchayat Officer, Vishnuvardhan Reddy, and Municipal Commissioners participated in this program.

Between fear and possibility: reimagining a world shaped by artificial intelligence



GNS News Agency, March 31

Conversations around artificial intelligence seem to have become endemic. AI is now the most recognisable acronym, and no one is confusing it with Air India, not even us Indians. Beyond the memes and social media humour, the dominant sentiment is one of trepidation and apprehension, mixed with a measure of confused curiosity. ChatGPT appears to have spread with remarkable speed; whether its impact proves beneficial or deleterious will only become clear with time. Many from my generation view it as yet another technological shift that we will have to adapt to, for purposes that Gen Z, or whatever follows, will determine for us. It is seen as another step towards further isolation, even annihilation, of human interaction. Among younger people too, there appears to be unease. Based on what one reads, hears, and observes across media, there is a growing belief that a large number of jobs will be taken over by AI, AI-enabled systems, and automated machines.

From a policing perspective as well, such concerns are not entirely misplaced. Law enforcement agencies are already confronting questions around cybercrime, algorithmic manipulation, surveillance ethics, and the possible misuse of AI-enabled tools. At the same time, AI holds the potential to significantly enhance policing through predictive analytics, better resource deployment, and improved pub-

lic safety outcomes. The dilemma, therefore, is not merely technological but deeply societal. I would, however, like to focus on how the world might look if this transition unfolds fully. Imagine a world where we are freed from compulsive manual labour across fields. We may still labour, but as a matter of choice, much like morning walks for urban dwellers. For farmers in less developed regions, walking remains a necessity, not a choice.

For millennia, the human species grappled with survival. It was neither the strongest nor the most adaptable, yet it endured. Not only did it survive, it spread. It began to thrive once it learned to reshape its environment to suit its needs. In the last century, this flourishing has accelerated to such an extent that humanity has effectively flooded the planet, pushing it towards what now appears to be an existential crisis. Does greed, which can be seen as an artificial construct shaped by individual and collective struggles over resources, play a central role in this? What happens if this calculus of scarcity, and the consequent drive for maximisation, is removed from the equation? If AI-enabled systems can produce, distribute, and manage material resources efficiently, the human mind could be liberated from the compulsions of scarcity. There would be enough for everyone. One would receive what one requires, rendering the very idea of "desire" redundant. With no contest over resources, conflict may diminish. Even the relentless exploitation of the planet could ease. Population levels might stabilise naturally, balancing increased longevity, better health, and lower fertility rates. AI, working alongside what we may call natural intelligence, could drive breakthroughs that dissolve the boundaries between science and philosophy. Works like Gitanjali might be understood in their fullest depth. Humanity could leap beyond Maslow's hierarchy of needs to the stage of self-actualisation, an ideal long envisioned. Perhaps we discover other worlds. Perhaps human life extends by another century. Perhaps existence itself takes on new dimensions, with possibilities that today seem implausible.

Gogi and Tillu are dead, but their feud lives on: Inside the gang war playing out on Delhi streets

GNS News Agency, March 31

Jitender Maan, alias Gogi, once Delhi's most wanted gangster, was shot dead in Delhi's Rohini Court on September 24, 2021. Almost 20 months later, his arch-rival Sunil Balyan, alias Tillu Tajpuria, was murdered inside a high-security Tihar Jail ward on May 2, 2023. The two murders shocked the national capital, as one was carried out in the middle of court proceedings, while the other took place inside Asia's largest prison. Both Gogi and Tillu were running criminal gangs involved in extortion and land grabbing in Delhi and border areas adjoining Haryana. The gang war between them, which began during their college days in Alipur, had claimed over 20 lives — including their own — by 2023.

With their deaths, the Delhi Police believed the gang war, too, would cease. But recent shootings in the Capital have shown that it's far from over. On March 19, Ravi Bharadwaj (30) was shot dead allegedly by members of the Tillu gang inside his home in Outer Delhi's Bawana. Ravi's father and an eight-year-old boy from the neighbourhood were also injured in the firing. Days later, three of the shooters, including a minor, were nabbed by police teams in two separate operations in Bihar's Begusarai and Delhi's Rohini. The police said the crime was carried out by five men; two others are still absconding. Police said during questioning, the accused admitted that they were acting under the directions of one Tarun, who was further acting at the behest of gangster Naveen Bali. As police dug deeper, they found that Bali had been taking orders from Deepak Pakasma and Himmat Chiku, both close associates of Tillu. The police said that Pakasma and Chiku are believed to be operating from abroad. The accused also told the police that Ravi was allegedly associated with Deepak Titar, who was allegedly involved in stabbing Tillu at Tihar.

Sources said the gang rivalry has not ended, as members of both gangs are now targeting remaining members on either side. Police said the main members of the Gogi gang — Yogesh Tunda, Deepak Titar and Dinesh Karalia — are operating from behind bars. Police said several mem-



bers of the Gogi gang have also teamed up with Lawrence Bishnoi's gang to go after the Tillu gang. Deputy Commissioner of Police Sanjeev Yadav said Ravi's killing appears to be another chapter in the prolonged cycle of vendetta between the two rival factions, in which each act of violence has triggered counter-violence, sustaining a chain of targeted killings over the years. "The pattern of killings, including the murder of Gogi inside a courtroom, the murder of Tillu inside Tihar Jail, and now the killing of Bharadwaj, clearly demonstrates the persistent and organised nature of the gang conflict, marked by calculated retaliatory attacks aimed at weakening the opposing faction," Yadav said. Rivalry that lives on

Police believed the tiff between Gogi, a resident of Alipur village and Tillu, from Tajpur village, started from their college days. The duo supported different parties during college elections in 2014. Besides, Deepak, a close associate of Tillu, had been pursuing Gogi's cousin. "He would tease Gogi, saying he would become the family's damaad (son-in-law)," said a police officer, adding that Deepak was killed on January 20, 2015. In 2016, Gogi formed a gang with key aides — Kuldeep alias Fajja and Rohit Moi — to eliminate Tillu. However, the balance tilted after the trio's arrest in Gurgaon, while Tillu aligned with major gangsters, strengthening his network.

come in contact with Kharat in 2022 along with her husband, seeking guidance for personal and family issues. She alleged that during one visit to his office, Kharat asked her husband to step outside and assaulted her under the pretext of a ritual. The complainant further alleged that he threatened to harm her children and "destroy her life" if she disclosed the incidents, which prevented her from approaching the police earlier. The police said the woman approached them after learning that multiple cases had been registered against Kharat.

BRAOU to conduct orientation programme on job and skill enhancement

Hyderabad: Dr BR Ambedkar Open University is set to conduct an orientation programme on "Job, employment, and skill-enhancement courses" for first and second-year degree students at all BRAOU learner services centres across Telangana on Sunday.

The university launched training programs in collaboration with organisations such as TCSiON, WeHUB, RASCI, and SRTRI to equip students with the necessary skills to secure employment in corporate firms.

Students have been urged to opt for these courses as supplements to their regular degree programmes. The admissions are currently underway with TCSiON, with opportunities available for the first and second-year degree students (B.A., B. Com & B.Sc.) to acquire industry-relevant skills, including computer proficiency, English language skills, business management skills and IT skills.

For complete details, students were advised to visit www.braou.ac.in or to contact the coordinators at their nearest study centres, or call: 04023680333 / 555.

Dabholkar remark row: "Fadnavis intent is good, but..." son Hamid responds



GNS News Agency, March 31

Hamid Dabholkar, son of slain anti-superstition activist Dr Narendra Dabholkar, Saturday said the Devendra Fadnavis government's intent in the self-styled godman Ashok Kharat rape case was "good", but there was a long way to go before it could be said that the government was serious in implementing the Black Magic Act. "The issue is whether the government is implementing the law seriously or not. We can't pass judgment based on just one case. Self-styled godmen are calling the shots across the state... As far as this case is concerned, the government has shown intent, but there is a long way to go before we can say that the Black Magic Act is being implemented seriously," Hamid Dabholkar

His reaction followed comments made by Baramati MP Supriya Sule that Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis was "carrying forward the legacy" of Dr Narendra Dabholkar. Sule's statement has drawn sharp rebuke from the Maharashtra Congress unit. The Congress said there can be no comparison between Narendra Dabholkar and

Fadnavis. "How can we talk about the legacy of Dr Narendra Dabholkar? We cannot draw a conclusion just from one case. In the Ashok Kharat case, the government has started taking action, but there is still a long way to go. We want to see what happens in the future. Whether the case is taken to its logical conclusion and whether those involved are punished," Hamid Dabholkar said.

Hamid Dabholkar said they have given a list of self-styled godmen to the police, but there has been no action against them. "The police do not take action against such self-styled godmen. They continue to operate brazenly and mislead people. There is no dearth of such self-proclaimed godmen who are obviously making false claims on social media and are exploiting the gullible people in the state of Maharashtra. All this is in the public domain, and the government continues to remain silent," he added. As far as the Black Magic Act is concerned, Hamid Dabholkar said, "The Act came into being in 2013, but still the rules for implementing the Act have not been framed. This speaks poorly of the intention of the government... The government has not cited any reasons for the delay." Hamid Dabholkar also remarked that the state government had announced some time ago that every police station in the state would have a cell to deal with cases related to superstition. "But the announcement has remained on paper," he added. Hamid Dabholkar claimed that the government has also not set up tribunals to file complaints against false claims made on social media despite the Supreme Court issuing guidelines for the same a few years ago. "In the light of all this, we need to understand the government's full intention... We do not want to make any judgment based on one particular case. If the government takes long-term action, then we will welcome it. As of now, it does not seem to be doing so," Hamid Dabholkar concluded.

A video against BJP, an FIR in Nanded, and police summons: Pune YouTuber Mukta Kadam says 'have nothing to fear'

GNS News Agency, March 31

Days after she was summoned by the Nanded police in relation to a First Information Report (FIR) lodged against her for alleged poll code violations, freelance journalist and YouTuber Mukta Kadam said on Saturday that nothing would deter her from exposing the "wrongdoings" of those in power. She alleged that the FIR was filed because she had criticised the BJP and senior leader Ashok Chavan in her social media posts.

"I will not be cowed down by any such FIR. I am raising my voice fearlessly against the inconveniences meted out to people of Nanded for years," said Kadam, 35, whose videos highlighting the lack of civic amenities in Nanded city have garnered millions of views on social media. Kadam, who was born in Nanded, is now based in Pune, where she is studying journalism. The Nanded police filed an FIR against her on January 15, the day of polling for the Nanded-Waghala City Municipal Corporation. The FIR states that election officials complained that she had posted social media content violating the model code of conduct.

"We filed the FIR after election officials gave us a written complaint against Mukta Kadam for violating the code on the last two days of the elections," Prashant Londhe, Assistant Police Inspector, Vajirabad police station, told The Indian Express. Asked if the police had conducted any investigation before registering the FIR, Londhe said, "No... after the election officials gave us the complaint, we straightaway registered the FIR against her." He added that though the police have sent notices to Kadam, asking her to cooperate with the investigation, she has yet to come to Nanded. "We will not arrest her, we will file a chargesheet against her," Londhe said.

Kadam confirmed that she has received the notice. "Yes, a few days ago, I received the notice. I will be visiting Nanded soon. I have nothing to fear, I have done nothing wrong," she added. Kadam has been highlighting the alleged dismal state of civic amenities in Nanded. "Everywhere in Nanded, uncollected garbage is a common sight. In some areas, it is never collected by conservancy staff for days on end. Similarly, a drinking water problem persists in the entire city. Roads are in poor shape," she alleged.

Kadam said the poll code regulations do not apply to a private individual. "I am not a political party. The poll code is applied to a political party, their leaders, and registered members. I am a private individual. I can write what I feel is right," she added. "The FIR says I appealed to voters not to exercise their voting rights and tried to create hurdles in the election process... Neither did I ask anyone not to vote, nor was I on the field on polling day. I only urged voters not to vote for the BJP, which is a corrupt party and was distributing Rs 2,000 per vote," she alleged. "In all my posts, I have criticised the BJP for all the wrong it was doing in



Maharashtra and the country," she added. She further said that she was critical of BJP leader Ashok Chavan in her videos. "Chavan was earlier a Congress chief minister, a Lok Sabha MP, and is now a Rajya Sabha MP. He shifted to the BJP along with all Congress corporators in Nanded in 2022. Despite enjoying power for so long, Nanded has remained a mess," she alleged. Nanded Municipal Commissioner Mahesh Dhoipode, who was the election officer, said that Kadam had been instructed not to post videos during the 48 hours before election day, yet she did not comply. "There is a difference between a private individual and a YouTuber. An individual can write news criticising or praising politicians or parties... But during the 48 hours before the polling day, no one should put out posts that can influence voters. We had told Mukta Kadam twice not to put new videos during the last 48 hours of polling day. But she did not listen," he said. Dhoipode pointed out that no action was taken against Kadam when she posted videos highlighting the alleged civic inconveniences in Nanded. "We did not object to it because she was not taking anybody's name. In her videos, she was asking questions as to who is responsible for such inconveniences. But in the last 48 hours, she carried on in the same vein, putting out posts violative of the code," he added. While Atul Londhe, chief spokesperson of the Maharashtra Congress, alleged that the police lodged the FIR under political pressure, BJP state vice-president Keshav Upadhye said the party always welcomed criticism. "The FIR against Mukta Kadam seems to have been done under pressure from the ruling politicians. The poll code violation does not apply to Kadam, who is a private individual," said Londhe. Meanwhile, Upadhye said, "Criticism of BJP is always welcome... If the election officials have filed the case against her, she can always approach the court for justice. We have nothing to do with her."

PES University professor suspended over 'Islamophobic remarks' against student during class; case lodged

GNS News Agency, March 31

A professor at PES University in Bengaluru was suspended after he allegedly made Islamophobic remarks and humiliated a student during a classroom session on Tuesday, leading to a police complaint and protests by student groups. The faculty member, an adjunct professor in the commerce department, identified as Dr Muralidhar Deshpande, allegedly referred to a student as a "terrorist" multiple times during a BBA Analytics class attended by around 60 students. According to the complaint, he also made remarks such as "Iran war happened because of people like you," and "Trump will take you away", creating what students alleged was a hostile environment.

A purported video of the incident went viral on Friday. The Giri Nagar police, who had initially registered a non-cognisable report following a complaint by the National Students' Union of India (NSUI), registered a suo motu case against the professor on Saturday.

Head Constable Ravikumar T N lodged a complaint, leading to an FIR filed under sections 299 (deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings) and 352 (intentional insult to provoke a breach of peace) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. The complaint also raised serious concerns over the deletion of crucial CCTV footage, suggesting possible tampering with evidence. It is further alleged that several students who supported the victim were subsequently suspended on disciplinary grounds. "There



was an approach from the student, who later sought time. We will take action based on the complaint," Lokesh B Jagalasar, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South Division), said earlier. Lakshya Raj, the NSUI's Bengaluru central district president, said the police have advised complainants to first approach the institution. "They have assured action if the response from the college is not adequate. This is an unfortunate incident and should not be repeated," he said. In a parallel development, the Students Islamic Organisation of India (SIO), Karnataka chapter, condemned the incident, calling it a case of Islamophobia within an academic space. "Such conduct violates the principles of inclusivity and mutual respect expected in educational institutions," state secretary Mohammed Hayyan said.

Former Dera Bassi MLA N K Sharma opposes Mohali AI data centre, flags health and environmental risks



GNS News Agency, March 31

Addressing a press conference, Sharma, along with Shiromani Akali Dal Mohali district president Parvinder Singh Sohana, raised serious concerns over the notification issued by the Housing and Urban Development Department. The notification calls for a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for land acquisition in villages Safipur, Nadyali, Dharamgarh, and Rurki under the Greater Mohali Area Development Authority (GMADA)-led Expo City project. Sharma alleged that although the notification was issued under Section 4(1) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, the government has "misrepresented Section 2(1)(e) to bypass the mandatory consent of Gram Sabhas and landowners." He added that the law clearly includes provisions for planned development, rural planning, urban site improvement, and housing for weaker sections, but these aspects have been "deliberately omitted to dilute public consent."

Questioning the intent behind the process, Sharma said, "The Social Impact Assessment appears to be a mere formality, as the role of Gram Sabhas is being systematically reduced from the outset." He also pointed out

that the notification does not mention an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which is mandatory for projects of this scale.

A major concern highlighted was the proposed AI Data Centre within the Expo City project. Sharma warned that it could pose significant environmental and health risks. Citing a 2024 report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), he said, "The growing use of AI is increasing consumption of energy, water, and natural resources, leading to higher pollution and e-waste risks." Referring to a 2025 study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Sharma noted that "a large AI data centre can consume electricity equivalent to nearly 1 lakh households," potentially placing immense pressure on the local power grid. He further cautioned that such facilities require millions of litres of water daily for cooling. "With Mohali and surrounding areas already facing groundwater depletion, this will worsen the crisis," he said. Sharma added that increased electricity demand and diesel generator usage could emit nitrogen oxides and other harmful gases, raising risks of asthma, heart disease, and cancer. "Punjab is already witnessing a rise in cancer cases," he added. The MLA also flagged noise pollution as a major issue. "Continuous operation of fans, servers, and generators can produce noise levels between 85 and 100 decibels, affecting sleep and mental health," he said. He warned that increased power demand could also lead to higher electricity costs for residents. "The burden on the grid will ultimately translate into higher tariffs for the common man," he said. Parvinder Singh Sohana demanded an immediate review of the notification. "The government must ensure full consent of Gram Sabhas and landowners and make the complete Environmental Impact Assessment public before initiating the project." He added that if public concerns are ignored, "a large-scale agitation will be launched in collaboration with villagers."

'Death fear', 'avatar puja' and foreign 'ritual' trips: Probe into Nashik 'godman' Kharat widens



The probe against Ashokkumar Kharat, the self-styled godman from Nashik who has been accused in multiple cases of sexual exploitation, has further expanded, with investigators finding that he forced followers to sponsor overseas trips by claiming that performing "special pujas" abroad would bring financial gains and remove obstacles. The Nashik police arrested Kharat on March 17 after a woman accused him of repeatedly sexually assaulting her between 2022 and 2025, allegedly winning her trust by claiming divine powers. An extortion FIR was registered at Nashik's Sarkarwada Police Station late Wednesday, taking the number of cases against him to eight. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) is currently probing around 10 offences linked to him. According to the complaint filed by Rajendra Jasud, a construction businessman from Pune, Kharat allegedly subjected him to sustained psychological manipulation between 2018 and March 2025, repeatedly warning him of imminent death, "sarpa dosh", and life-threatening supernatural forces. The complainant stated that repeated threats of death, combined with ritualistic practices and claims of supernatural authority, left him in a constant state of fear, forcing compliance with financial demands. "Perform rituals or die" Jasud said Kharat, 61, allegedly travelled to several countries under the pretext of rituals, with all expenses borne by the victim. Kharat also allegedly claimed that performing rituals abroad on New Year's Eve was crucial as "divine powers" were activated at that time. "He was told that performing rituals abroad thrice a year would bring fortune. The victim funded the trips, believing it would help, but the expected results did not materialise,"

a police officer said. The complainant alleged that he was shown snakes and tigers during ritual sessions and told that "dark energies" were surrounding him. The FIR states that Kharat created an atmosphere of extreme fear, telling the complainant that failure to perform specific rituals would result in his death or harm to his family. Under this pressure, Jadhav said he was compelled to undergo multiple rituals, including what the accused described as "avatar puja" — projected as a rare and powerful spiritual process necessary for survival. From Nashik temples to foreign tours the complainant claimed he was repeatedly called to locations in Nashik, including offices near Canada Corner and temples such as Ishaaneshwar Mahadev in Mirgaon, where rituals were conducted. Kharat allegedly convinced the complainant that rituals had to be performed across multiple countries to neutralise the "threat". He was told that performing pujas in 21 countries would eliminate the danger. As a result, the complainant undertook trips to countries including the United States, Uganda, Myanmar, and Greenland, Dubai, England and Sri Lanka — all expenses allegedly borne by him. The FIR alleges that over time, the accused extracted between Rs 4 crore and Rs 5 crore from the complainant through a combination of cash transactions, RTGS, and online transfers. Each payment, the complainant said, was linked to a new "spiritual threat" or a fresh ritual requirement. The accused allegedly continued to escalate demands, citing incomplete rituals or newly emerging dangers. In one instance, the complainant alleged that he was forced to purchase a Mercedes-Benz car (MH 15 GL 8181) in his own name, which was later used by the accused. Based on the complaint, the Government Wada police have registered an FIR under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including cheating and criminal intimidation, as well as under the provisions of the Maharashtra Prevention of Human Sacrifice and Other Inhuman, Evil and Aghori Practices and Black Magic Act, 2013. Inspector Suresh Shivnath Avhad is leading the investigation. Investigators are now examining whether the accused used a similar modus operandi on other victims, particularly targeting individuals through fear-based narratives involving death, curses and supernatural harm. Officials indicated that financial trails, including digital transactions and foreign travel expenditures, are also being scrutinised as part of the probe.

Man falsely claims he was detained at Bengaluru airport, gets arrested



GNS News Agency, March 31

The Bengaluru police arrested a person recently for allegedly posting abusive content on social media targeting the police and for unruly behaviour during a flight. According to the police, the case came to light on March 23 during routine monitoring of social media platforms. A user operating the handle "@Utkarshgautam96" on X had reportedly posted abusive and derogatory remarks against both the Bengaluru police and the Mumbai police.

Subsequent inquiries identified the accused as Utkarsh Gautam, who also allegedly shared posts on Instagram, falsely claiming he had been illegally detained at the Kempegowda International Airport police station. In a separate incident on March 22, IndiGo Airlines staff lodged a complaint regarding Gautam's conduct on board flight 6E373 from Jaipur to Bengaluru. "He misbehaved with the crew after being caught attempting to open the emergency door mid-air," an officer said. Thereafter, a

case was registered under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including Sections 351(2) (assault) and 352 (assault or criminal force). The police said the accused was unemployed and appeared to have no clear reason for undertaking the journey from Jaipur to Bengaluru.

BC Sub-Plan or budget sleight of hand: Talasani corners Congress govt

Hyderabad: BRS deputy floor leader Talasani Srinivas Yadav tore into the Congress government in the Assembly, accusing it of reducing the BC Sub-Plan to a budgetary illusion marked by tall claims and negligible spending. He said the ruling party deceived the Backward Classes with the Kamareddy BC Declaration, promising 42 per cent reservations and massive welfare outlays, only to abandon them after assuming power. During the debate on BC welfare demands on Thursday, Srinivas Yadav drew a sharp distinction between promises and performance. He argued that while 42 per cent BC reservation might have legal and Central constraints, key areas such as the BC Sub-Plan, fee reimbursement, welfare funds and the MBC ministry lie squarely within the State's control. The BJP never promised 42 per cent reservations. The Congress did. It must own that promise instead of shifting blame," he said, adding that even the party's protests in Delhi failed to draw support from its own high command.

'It's very humiliating': Former Calcutta HC judge Sahidullah Munshi to file appeal after name struck off Bengal voters' list



GNS News Agency, March 31

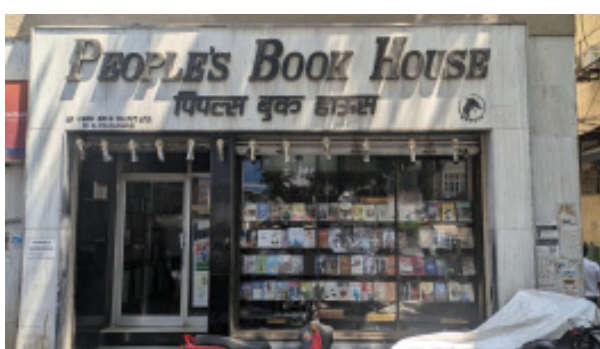
Former Calcutta High Court judge Sahidullah Munshi said on Thursday that his name has been deleted from the voters' list following the adjudication process after the controversial Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal. Former Justice Munshi, currently serving as the chairperson of the Board of Auqaf West Bengal, is now waiting to appeal before an appellate tribunal. The Election Commission (EC) published the first supplementary voters' list after the SIR adjudications in West Bengal on March 23. The list contained the names of voters whose cases have been adjudicated by the judicial officers in accordance with Supreme Court directives.

The names of the former judge's wife, Sahana, and elder son, Iftekar, are still under adjudication, while his younger son, Ibtahaj, has applied as a new voter. "Till now, only my name has been deleted. My wife and elder son are still on the adjudication list. It is very humiliating and painful... a lot of harassment. The unfortunate part is that they took the documents and said they would upload them, but no receipt was given," former Justice Munshi told The Indian Express. The former judge expressed sur-

prise at his name being struck off, saying that he had submitted all required documents, including passports. "I do not know how they have adjudicated and how they have deleted. We were kept in the dark. Had we been informed that more documents were required, we could have submitted them. There was a list of documents, and any one should have been sufficient," he added. Born in September 1958, he enrolled as an advocate in the Calcutta High Court in 1986 and practised for 27 years. He was elevated to the bench as an additional judge in October 2013, appointed as a permanent judge in March 2016, and retired in September 2020. Former Justice Munshi pointed out that before becoming a judge, he had already submitted documents as part of the appointment process. "Apart from my documents, they conduct an internal enquiry. Only after scrutiny is the name approved by the Collegium. Then the President appoints you, and you take oath on the Constitution," he said.

Saying that he did not believe his name was deleted deliberately, he said the adjudication process was "mechanical". "Nobody is applying their mind. Sixty lakh (voters) need to be adjudicated in a short span... anyone can guess what will happen. The officers doing it are doing so mechanically, not judicially," he added. The former judge said that he and his wife voted in the Bowbazar constituency. "Now, we have shifted to Entally... I do not understand how they have calculated... it was pure imagination," he said. Former Justice Munshi added that he is waiting for the official reason for his name being struck off before filing an appeal. "Unless I get the reason, I cannot present the appeal. Nothing has been declared yet about how the appeal is to be preferred or its format. Once I get it, I will lodge my appeal," he said. The EC has formed 19 appellate tribunals in West Bengal to hear disputed case appeals rejected by the judicial officers disposing of the 60 lakh under-adjudication cases following the SIR. The single-member tribunals led by former judges have been formed for 23 districts.

At People's Book House, a quiet survival of Mumbai's once-vibrant reading culture



GNS News Agency, March 31

Tucked into Meher House on Cawasji Patel Street in Fort, near Akbar Ali Departmental Store, People's Book House is easy to miss. Surrounded by stationary shops and photocopy stores, it sits quietly, its presence marked more by memory than display. Inside, there are no curated sections or spotlight shelves — just tightly packed rows of books stacked across walls and tables, arranged more by familiarity than design. What the store holds is less urgency and more a sense of a reading culture that once thrived on discussion, ideology and exchange, and now lingers in fragments. Established in 1973 under the aegis of Lokvangmay Griha, the bookstore was part of a larger effort to make political and social literature accessible. Its roots trace back to the Communist Party of India's publishing initiatives in the 1950s, but this modest Fort outlet grew into something more: a meeting ground. "There was a time when people didn't just come to buy books," said Gopal Pujari, who has managed the store since 1992. "They came to sit, talk, discuss literature, politics, everything."

Through the 1970s and 1980s, its shelves were filled with subsidised Soviet publications and translations of writers like Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy, alongside political pamphlets and theory. Students, trade unionists, activists, journalists and writers gathered here, and conversations often spilled beyond the books

themselves. The shift began in the early 1990s. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the steady supply of Russian books stopped. "After 1992, everything changed," Pujari said. "When those books stopped coming, we had to start with local publications." The store adapted, turning to Indian languages and regional publishers. Today, its collection leans towards Marathi, Hindi and English works on social and political thought, Dalit literature and progressive writing. Munshi Premchand sits alongside works on B.R. Ambedkar and contemporary critical theory. "We started keeping local books... from Mumbai, Pune, Kolhapur — wherever we could get them," Pujari said. The space once hosted regular poetry readings, music and discussions. "Every Saturday, there used to be programmes — poetry, music, talks. Around 20 to 25 people would come. Now, that doesn't happen," he recalled. Among its visitors were literary figures such as Marathi poet Arun Kolatkar, Hindi novelist and playwright Bisham Sahni, Marathi novelist and critic Balchandra Nemade and poet and translator Dilip Chitre, who read and engaged with audiences in intimate settings. Musicians like Neela Bhagwat also performed here, blurring the boundaries between literature and performance. Journalists, too, frequented the store, reflecting its role as a hub for ideas beyond the purely literary. Today, there are fewer visitors. The store sees about 10 to 15 customers on an average day. A worn counter still holds paper registers. "Earlier it used to be 25, 30, even 50 people. We didn't get time to eat. Now that situation is not there," he said. Younger readers, Pujari notes, rarely walk in, often gravitating towards self-help and lifestyle books. There is no bitterness in his voice, only a quiet acknowledgement of change. Even the space reflects this shift. Shelves have multiplied, leaving little room to sit or linger. Where conversations once unfolded, transactions now dominate. Unlike larger retail chains such as Crossword, People's Book House continues to stock titles that are difficult to find elsewhere — works that challenge, provoke or exist outside mainstream demand. Its pricing remains modest, its curation deliberate. "We try to give people something different," Pujari said.

Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy agrees to mediation in dispute with IPS officer M Chandrashekar



GNS News Agency, March 31

Union minister H D Kumaraswamy, his son Nikhil, and Janata Dal (Secular) leader Suresh Babu on Thursday informed the Karnataka High Court that they were willing to join the mediation process to resolve a dispute between them and senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officer M Chandrashekar. The IPS officer has registered a case against Kumaraswamy, accusing him of allegedly threatening him. "We are ready to join for mediation," Senior Advocate Hasmath Pasha, appearing for petitioner Kumaraswamy and others, said on Thursday. The counsel for the IPS officer argued that it would suggest the name of a mediator and sought a week. "We will suggest somebody (mediator). If either of you suggest (a mediator) there could be some misgivings. Let there be an even-handed dealing. We will nominate somebody who can handle this," Justice S Sunil Dutt Yadav said. The court orally emphasised that mediation has nothing to do with adjudication. "I feel that you do not have to spend so much time on such matters," the court said.

The court adjourned the case to April 2, when it will choose "somebody appropriate". "In principle, if you have agreed for mediation, then rest you leave it to us. It is a

win-win for both parties," Justice Dutt said in an oral observation. Chandrashekar, who heads the Lokayukta Special Investigation Team (SIT) and is investigating illegal mining cases in which Kumaraswamy is an accused, had alleged that on September 28 and 29, 2024, the former Karnataka chief minister held a press conference where he made false accusations and issued threats. Kumaraswamy has also allegedly accused Chandrashekar of bribery and falsifying documents to remain in the Karnataka IPS cadre. After Chandrashekar filed a complaint in October last year, the Sanjay Nagar police station in Bengaluru registered a First Information Report (FIR) based on a court direction under Section 224 (threatening a public servant) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Thereafter, Kumaraswamy and others moved the high court seeking to quash the FIR. In the previous hearing on February 12, the court had suggested, "If it is compoundable, both of you can 'bury the hatchet'. Sometimes, remarks are made, the media is the only beneficiary. TRPs will go on and on and keep on increasing."

Cybercrime police bust Rs 26-crore online gaming, betting fraud in Hyd

Hyderabad: The City Cybercrime police have busted a major financial network linked to online gaming and betting fraud and arrested four key suspects for their alleged involvement in fraudulent transactions to the tune of Rs 26 crore, police said on Thursday. The arrested suspects are Rajesh Venkata Raman, a businessman from Tellapur, B Abhishek, an operations manager from Nallaganadla, Augustene Williams.

No wages for 8 years: How 172 railway workers at Kharagpur station survived on 'unfair means'



GNS News Agency, March 31

For more than eight years, from 2001 to 2009, 172 workers selling food to passengers at the Kharagpur Railway Station were pushed into "unfair means" simply to survive. The reason: throughout this entire period, not a single one of them received any wages for their labour. On January 20, 2026, the Calcutta High Court finally provided some relief to these workers, directing that they must be paid wages for a period of 100 months, between April 2001 and July 2009, along with interest. The victory came after a protracted legal battle that stretched across more than two decades, during which the workers were compelled to knock on the doors of courts, tribunals, and labour authorities in their fight for unpaid wages. The workers were helpers and vendors engaged in selling food and refreshments at Kharagpur Railway Station. Their services were used daily to cater to passengers, an activity that generated revenue for the Railways, yet remained unpaid for years. What happened

Ajitesh Pandey, one of the advocates appearing for the petitioners, said, "The problem began after the Railways entered into a profit-sharing agreement with a private contractor, M/s Dynamic International, in 2001. Under this arrangement, the contractor was allowed to sell food at the station and keep 75 per cent of the sales, while the Railways received 25 per cent. The contractor used the labour of these 172 workers to run stalls and trolleys." He added, "While the Railways and the contractor earned from the catering business, the workers were caught in the middle. When they demanded wages, the contractor claimed the workers were not his employees. The Railways, on the other hand, said the responsibility lay with the contractor. As a result, the workers were left unpaid." How the workers survived on being asked why the workers continued for eight years without wages, Arvind Pandey, general secretary, Kharagpur Division Railway Thikadar Mazdoor Congress, told The Indian Express, "The main reason was greed. The then catering manager had told the workers they would get permanent jobs just like the railway commission vendors. They were also told that they would be given 10-15 per cent commission for selling food."

Pandey also said that the workers survived by engaging in "unfair means". "On July 3, 2012, T B Moitra, Labour Enforcement Officer, Kharagpur, had submitted an enquiry report in which it was mentioned that, suppose 80 puris can be made from a kilogram of flour, then the workers would make 100. If a portion of aloo dam was supposed to have five pieces of potatoes, they would give four or give only 50 ml of tea instead of the mandated 70 ml. By selling the 20 puris or the excess potatoes and tea, the workers managed to survive," Pandey said. While hearing the case, the Calcutta High Court noted that the Labour Enforcement Officer (Central) had examined the matter and found that both the contractor and the Railway administration were responsible for the abnormal delay in payment. The court also noted that the enquiry report clearly stated that the workers' claim was genuine. However, despite this finding, the workers still did not receive their dues.

What the enquiry report says The enquiry report, a copy of which is available with The Indian Express, says, "Prior to 2001, the food items at Kharagpur Rly Stn were being sold by the Railway Commission vendors who were directly under the control of the Railways and were receiving commission from the Railway catering department for sale." After a 1997 Supreme Court order, the commission vendors were regularised into railway service. At Kharagpur Railway Station, 86 such commission vendors worked, and they were permitted to have two assistants each, making the total sub-vendors 172. The enquiry report stated that the workers tried their best to be heard, but the Railway administration and the contractor

"probably did not pay any heed to their legitimate demand". It added that the workers were "put to undue risk and stress by their employers who reportedly used to threaten them, indicating withdrawal of their Identity Cards". What the workers said Over the years, the workers approached multiple authorities, including the Central Administrative Tribunal, labour officials, and the High Court, Pandey said. "Many of their cases were dismissed on technical grounds, such as limitation or jurisdiction, without ever addressing the core issue, that they had worked for years without wages," Pandey added. Speaking to The Indian Express, Pradip Dey (52), a tea vendor, said, "The catering manager lured us by saying he would get us a permanent job and also get us a commission. But neither did we get the jobs nor were we paid commissions till 2009."

He added, "We had a tough time making ends meet. While my mother worked as a maid, my father worked as a labourer. With no steady income in sight, I used to ask passengers for some money. Some would give, some would abuse. I feel very ashamed to say this, but I had no other way out." While the complaint against the then catering manager is consistent among all the workers The Indian Express spoke to, asking for alms to run their families was not the only way out for all of them. 42-year-old Nandadulal Dutta said, "We are supposed to provide 70 ml of tea to passengers, but we gave only 50 ml. By selling whatever we saved, we made some money to help run our families." Accepting that they had no option but to resort to unfair means, Anil Rana (51), who worked at a food trolley, acknowledged the findings of the enquiry report. "Yes, we did make eight to 10 puris extra out of one kilogram of flour and made the chapatis thinner than usual to sell whatever we could squeeze out," Rana said. Rana was echoed by Milon Sau, who said that if a food item was meant to be sold at Rs 20, they charged passengers Rs 21. "But whatever we did, we did to run our families," Sau, who is now in his fifties, said.

Pandey said the then catering manager was Narendra Prasad, who was later removed from service. The Indian Express accessed the termination letter issued to Prasad on March 31, 2011, which said he is a "blot on the system leading not only to the loss of the revenue to the government exchequer but the loss of image of the Railway Administration". In the letter, underlined by the Senior Divisional Railway Manager, Kharagpur, Prasad has been mentioned as OS-Gr II under Sr. DCM/KGP. Prasad was removed with "immediate effect as a measure of disciplinary action without any compassionate allowance". The High Court observed that the workers had been "running from pillar to post" for decades and that their wages for the 2001-2009 period had never been paid. The court rejected the argument that the workers were merely helpers with no employer-employee relationship. It relied on official agreements, identity cards issued to the workers, and admissions by the contractor to conclude that they were contractual labourers working under the Railways as the principal employer. Justice Shampa Dutt (Paul) held that under the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, the contractor was legally responsible for paying wages. The court further ruled that if the contractor fails to do so, the Railways, as the principal employer, must step in and make the payment and later recover the amount from the contractor.

Considering that the workers began receiving monthly payments of ₹4,000 to ₹10,000 only after 2009, the court fixed ₹4,000 per month as the minimum wage payable for the unpaid years. The contractor has been directed to pay the wages with statutory interest within 30 days. The consolidated amount, without interest, comes to ₹6 crore 88 lakh. If the dues are not paid, the Railways must pay the workers and then recover the money from the contractor. The court made it clear that no worker who has put in honest labour can be denied wages, especially for such an extended period. No end to their plight Although the Calcutta High Court order goes in their favour, most of the 172 workers do not have any permanent employment. After the contract with M/s Dynamic International ended, most of the workers were rendered unemployed. Left with little choice and age not on their side, some of them started working as hawkers independently. However, since this is illegal, the railway police often impose fines on them. Sau said, "We don't have any option left. Even if the police impose fines on us, at this age, finding a different type of employment is nearly impossible. We have a family to look after."

Double-decker design delaying Sarjapur-Hebbal Red Line proposal for Bengaluru Metro, says BJP MP P C Mohan

GNS News Agency, March 31

A proposed 37-km Red Line of the Bengaluru Metro (Namma Metro) service to connect Sarjapur, on the south eastern fringe of the city, to Hebbal in the north of the city has not received the approval of the Union Cabinet on account of technical issues connected to its construction, according to a BJP MP representing Bengaluru in the Lok Sabha. "Karnataka's blanket double-decker rule has stalled Centre's approval for the ₹28,405-crore Hebbal-Sarjapur Metro corridor. MoHUA cautions that full-length road and Metro stretches weaken mass transit gains. BMRCL must revisit the design and justify viability to secure approval," P C Mohan, BJP MP for the Central Bengaluru region, stated on social media on February 11. "A double-decker may be justified at select junctions. But extending it across an entire corridor risks creating parallel infrastructure, encouraging private vehicle use, reducing Metro ridership, and weakening anticipated social benefits, including lower congestion and pollution," the BJP MP posted on X. The MP has implied in the post that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs had red-flagged the Karnataka Government proposal to have a rail-cum-road flyover system along the proposed Red Line. Earlier, Mohan had stated that the Phase 3A (Red Line) from Sarjapur to Hebbal is crucial, but at ₹28,405 crore (₹776 crore/km), it is the most expensive project in Namma Metro's history. "The Centre has rightly sought revisions. BMRCL will now reassess and aim to reduce the high estimated costs," he had posted earlier on social media. The Karnataka Cabinet approved Phase 3A in December 2024, with the Detailed Project Report (DPR) submitted in June 2023. The Union Urban Development Department granted initial approval on October 16, 2024, and the project now awaits final Union Cabinet approval. The proposed Red Line would span 36.59 km, with 22.14 km elevated (17 stations) and 14.45 km underground (11 stations), featuring 28 stations in total. The



line connects Sarjapur to Hebbal, passing through key areas such as Carmelaram, Koramangala, Dairy Circle, and Basaveshwara Circle. It includes five interchange stations: Ibbalur (Blue Line), Agara (Blue Line), Dairy Circle (Pink Line), KR Circle (Purple Line), and Hebbal (Blue Line and Orange Line). Namma Metro Phase 3 Phase 3 of the project, which includes the Orange Line, was approved in August 2024 for Rs 15,611 crore and includes two elevated corridors totaling 44.65 km: Corridor-1 (32.15 km, JP Nagar 4th Phase to Kempapura - Orange Line) and Corridor-2 (12.50 km, Hosahalli to Kadabagere - Grey Line). The construction has begun for this section, which is expected to be operational by 2029. A total of 96.1 km of the Bengaluru Metro is currently operational. The target is a 317 km network around the city. In 2026, the operational length is targeted to increase by 41.01 km from 96.1 km to 137.11 km with the opening of sections of the Pink Line. The Reach 6 Line - from Kalena Agrahara to Tavarekere (Pink Line) - which has an elevated section of 7.50 km with six stations, is planned for opening in May 2026, and a 13.76 km underground section from Dairy Circle to Nagawara (Pink Line) with 12 Stations, is planned for commissioning in December 2026. Phase-2A (Blue Line) from Central Silk Board to Krishnarajapura, having a length of 19.75 km

RTE admissions limited to 1 km radius, documents must be uploaded online



GNS News Agency, March 31

In a significant change to the Right to Education RTE admission process, the Maharashtra school education department has restricted school selection to within one kilometre of a student's registered residential address, replacing the earlier provision that allowed applicants to choose schools within a three kilometre radius and beyond. Additionally, parents will now have to upload all required documents online at the time of application, instead of submitting them later during admission.

The revised guidelines were issued through a Government Resolution GR dated February 12, even as parents across the state await the commencement of RTE admissions. While the core framework of the admission process remains unchanged, officials said the two key modifications, the reduced distance limit and mandatory online document submission, are aimed at improving

transparency and preventing last minute disputes. Under the RTE Act, 25 per cent seats in private unaided schools are reserved for children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, with the state government reimbursing the schools for the fees.

Director of Primary Education Sharad Gosavi said the changes are based on recommendations of a committee constituted in January 2025 to suggest reforms to the RTE admissions process. Officials said the panel also took public feedback into account. Admissions under the revised process are expected to begin next week. Gosavi said, "The one km restriction will ensure that children are admitted to nearby schools. Whereas with mandatory online submission of all required documents, there will be no room for confusion at the time of admission when a seat is allotted to an applicant. In the past there have been multiple instances when admission is denied by the school, after seat allotment; due to incorrect or insufficient document proofs." As part of the updated procedure, applicants must upload Aadhaar cards of both the student and parent. If the residential address mentioned in the application differs from the one on the Aadhaar card, parents will be required to submit a valid rental agreement or other proof of current residence. Officials clarified that in case of complaints, the applicant's address will be verified to rule out fraud. Authorities noted that under the earlier system, some applicants submitted temporary rental agreements in localities close to preferred schools to secure admission, a practice the new verification norms seek to curb.

PU forensic scientist Dr J S Sehrawat gets US honour for identifying India's 'unsung heroes' of 1857



GNS News Agency, March 31

Dr J S Sehrawat is the principal investigator leading a government-funded forensic project aimed at identifying hundreds of human remains discovered in an ancient well in Amritsar in 2014. Dr J S Sehrawat is the principal investigator leading a government-funded forensic project aimed at identifying hundreds of human remains discovered in an ancient well in Amritsar in 2014. Dr J S Sehrawat, a scientist from Panjab University, has been elected a fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) at its Annual Scientific Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, for his "continued contributions to the field of forensic science". The conference, which began on February 9, is set to conclude on Saturday.

Dr Sehrawat is the principal investigator leading a

government-funded forensic project aimed at identifying hundreds of human remains discovered in an ancient well in Amritsar in 2014. Earlier scientific research in 2013 had suggested that the nearly 250 skeletons found in the Ajnala well were of Indian soldiers killed during the uprising of 1857, rather than victims of Partition violence in 1947. The strontium isotope analysis, reinforcing earlier DNA-based genetic findings, indicated that the skeletal remains belonged to individuals originating from the Gangetic plains — specifically Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal — as well as coastal Odisha, rather than from communities living in and around Ajnala. This research was a collaborative effort involving several leading institutions, including Panjab University, the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences in Lucknow, and Memorial University in Canada.

In its communication to Dr Sehrawat, chairperson of the Department of Anthropology, PU, on Thursday, the Academy stated: "This achievement reflects your continued contributions to the field of forensic science, your commitment to excellence, and your active involvement within the Academy. Your status of Fellow recognizes not only your experience and expertise, but also your dedication to promoting our collaborative mission of promoting forensic science through integrity and justice for all." It further added, "We are proud to have you among our Fellows and appreciate the leadership and insight you bring to the Academy. Congratulations again on this well-deserved recognition. We look forward to your continued engagement and involvement as a Fellow of the AAFS." Dr Sehrawat's work involves international collaborations with institutions such as Memorial University (Canada), Max Planck Institutes (Germany), University of Oklahoma (USA), and University of California, Chico (USA), focusing on identification strategies for the Ajnala skeletal remains. He has published several research papers in diverse areas of forensic science, particularly in forensic anthropology.

Divorced women targeted on matrimonial sites; conman arrested in Mumbai



GNS News Agency, March 31

The Navghar Police have arrested a 45-year-old man for allegedly cheating divorced women by befriending them on matrimonial websites, posing as the son of an IPS officer and an NGO worker supporting widows and divorcees. The accused, identified as Viraj Bhosale, allegedly duped several women of lakhs of rupees by making false promises of marriage, government-scheme housing and jobs in the film industry. In the most recent case, Bhosale is accused of cheating a Mulund-based woman of Rs 17.70 lakh. Police have seized his Mercedes car during the investigation. During interrogation, the accused told police that he does not have a permanent residence in Mumbai and has been living out of his car.

According to the police, the complainant, a 42-year-old graphic designer residing in Mulund, got divorced a decade ago. About four years ago, she had created a profile on a matrimonial website and was searching for a life partner. In September last year, she received a marriage proposal request, which she ignored. The same person sent another request in October, which she accepted. The accused allegedly contacted her the next day, introducing himself as Viraj Bhosale, a resident of Pune. He claimed that his father was an IPS officer, his mother a physiotherapist, and that his sister lived in the UK. He further told the complainant that he was the chairman of an NGO, Stree Sutram Foundation, and claimed to have close connections with politicians and other influential figures in Maharashtra.

The victim alleged that Bhosale claimed to manage CSR funds, Nirbhaya funds and several government schemes, through which he provided financial assistance to divorced and widowed women and single mothers. He allegedly promised to help her secure affordable housing in Mumbai through these schemes, asking her to pay an initial amount of Rs 7 lakh. Trusting him, the woman

transferred money from her savings account. Subsequently, the accused allegedly demanded additional sums citing various charges. The victim took a personal loan and eventually transferred a total of Rs 17.70 lakh, either from her savings account or via GPay. The complainant realised she had been cheated after the accused stopped responding to her WhatsApp messages and calls. She then approached the Navghar police station and registered a case on February 3 under sections 318(4), 352 and 351(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Based on the accused's mobile phone location, police traced him to Versova and arrested him. He was produced before a court and remanded to police custody till February 15.

During the investigation, police found that Bhosale had allegedly cheated multiple women by making false promises of marriage or by misusing the pretext of government welfare schemes. His modus operandi involved targeting divorced women on matrimonial platforms, gaining their trust and then extracting money or valuables. Several cases have already been registered against him at police stations in Thane, Mumbai and with the Economic Offences Wing (EOW), a police official said. "It appears that the accused had victimised several women and we are requesting the victim to overcome stigma and approach the police. He used many aliases names Yuraj, Rajveer, Viraj, Satish and Virendra" said Bharat Rathod, police sub inspector at the Navghar police station.

Two held with marijuana at Secunderabad railway station

GNS News Agency, March 31

Hyderabad: In a joint operation, the Secunderabad Government Railway Police (GRP) and the Railway Protection Force (RPF) caught two interstate drug peddlers and seized 18.2 kg of marijuana at Secunderabad Railway Station on Thursday.

The seized marijuana is valued at Rs 9.14 lakh.

The arrested suspects were Abhishek Singh from Uttar Pradesh and Abhishek Kumar Singh from West Bengal, who were allegedly carrying the contraband from Balugaon in Odisha to Secunderabad.

Police said the duo had boarded a train from Bhubaneswar and were waiting in the general waiting hall to hand over the consignment to a contact when they were arrested.

North Korea, Belarus leaders meet in Pyongyang, sign friendship treaty



GNS News Agency, March 31

Seoul: Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un held talks in North Korea's capital on Thursday and signed a friendship and cooperation treaty. Lukashenko, who was in Pyongyang on a two-day official visit, hailed the document as "fundamental," and said that relations between the two coun-

tries are "entering a new stage," according to his press service. "Yes, we didn't have close cooperation, largely due to our own fault. But I am sincerely pleased to note that cooperation has now significantly intensified," Lukashenko said. "In today's reality of a global transformation, when the global powers openly ignore and violate international law, independent countries need to cooperate more closely, consolidate efforts aimed at protecting their sovereignty and improving the well-being of our citizens," he said. Lukashenko's press service quoted Kim expressing "solidarity and full support" for Belarus and speaking out "against unlawful pressure on Belarus from the West." Belarus is a close ally of Russia. Lukashenko allowed Moscow to use Belarusian territory as a staging ground for the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and later authorised the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus. Kim has also tilted his foreign policy toward Moscow in recent years, sending thousands of troops and large quantities of weapons to support Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine while portraying the North as part of a united front against Washington.

B'desh Independence Day: Awami League reaffirms commitment to uphold Liberation War ideals



GNS News Agency, March 31

Dhaka: Bangladesh's Awami League on Thursday reiterated its commitment to uphold the principles of the 1971 Liberation War, defend democratic values, and pursue economic emancipation on the occasion of the country's 56th Independence Day. The nation observes Independence Day and National Day on March 26 in honour of the freedom fighters who laid down their lives for the country's independence, local media reported. The armed struggle for independence commenced in the early hours of March 26, 1971, following the brutal crackdown on the unarmed Bangladeshis by the Pakistani forces on the night of March 25, 1971, referred to as "Genocide Day". Recalling Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Awami League paid tribute to him — describing him as the supreme architect of Bangladesh's freedom, whose leadership guided the nation from "oppression to inde-

pendence". "On the night of 25 March 1971, as the Pakistani military launched the massacre known as Operation Searchlight, Bangabandhu made the historic declaration of Bangladesh's independence. Though he was arrested shortly after, his call for freedom spread across the land — carried by courageous leaders and freedom fighters and broadcast through resistance channels — igniting the great Bangladesh Liberation War," read a statement issued by the Awami League.

"Under the leadership of the Bangladesh Awami League, the struggle did not end with independence in 1971. The commitment has always been to uphold the true spirit of liberation — building a democratic, just, and prosperous Bangladesh. The pursuit of economic freedom remains central to realising the full promise of independence for every citizen," it added. Stressing that the nation faces profound challenges, the Awami League called the "militant attacks and vandalism" during July 2024 demonstrations not only isolated incidents, but also direct assaults on the ideals and symbols of the country's 1971 Liberation War. "Freedom fighters were humiliated, national symbols were destroyed, and law and order deteriorated alongside a weakening economy," it added. The party expressed serious concerns over what it described as a lack of commitment to the values of 1971 during the eighteen-month tenure of the Muhammad Yunus regime and under the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government. Reaffirming its pledge to the nation, the Awami League said, "The independence of Bangladesh is not merely territorial — it is ideological. To protect it, we must uphold the spirit of the Liberation War, defend democracy, and continue the journey toward true economic emancipation."

As juries turn against social media for harming kids, Big Tech's invincibility starts to show cracks

GNS News Agency, March 31

New York: For years, parents, teenagers, pediatricians, educators and whistleblowers have pushed the idea that social media is detrimental to young people's mental health and can lead to addiction, eating disorders, sexual exploitation and suicide. For the first time, juries in two states took their side. In Los Angeles on Wednesday, a jury found both Meta and YouTube liable for harms to children using their services. In New Mexico, a jury determined that Meta knowingly harmed children's mental health and concealed what it knew about child sexual exploitation on its platforms. Tech watchdog groups, families and children's advocates cheered the jury decisions. The era of Big Tech invincibility is over," said Sacha Haworth, executive director of The Tech Oversight Project. "After years of gaslighting from companies like Google and Meta, new evidence and testimony have pulled back the curtain and validated the harms young people and parents have been telling the world about for years."

While it's too soon to tell if this week's outcomes will lead to fundamental changes in how social media platforms treat their young users, the dual verdicts signal a changing tide of public perception against tech companies that is likely to lead to more lawsuits and regulation. For years, they have argued that the harms their platforms cause to children are a mere byproduct, unintentional and inevitable consequences of broader societal issues or bad actors taking advantage of safeguards. They pushed against the notion that psychological harms could be the result of social media use and downplayed research that showed otherwise. When asked about whether people tend to use a platform or product more if it's addictive during his testimony in the Los Angeles trial, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg said "I'm not sure what to say to that. I don't think that applies here." The verdicts show the public's growing willingness to hold the companies responsible for harms and demand meaningful changes in how they operate.

What's not apparent, at least not yet, is whether the companies will take heed. Both Meta and Google said they disagree with the verdicts and are exploring legal options, including appeals. Arturo Bejar, a former Meta engineering director who raised alarms about Instagram's harms inside the company for years before testifying in Congress in 2023, said jury trials "level the playing field" for these trillion-dollar companies. But he cautioned that it will take actual regulation to rein them in. "One thing that I saw working inside the company that effectively led to behaviour change was when an attorney general or the FTC stepped in and required things of the company," he said.

"Both New Mexico and Los Angeles and all the attorneys general that are part of this process have really an extraordinary opportunity and the ability to ask for meaningful change." While both cases focused on harms to children, there are key differences between the two. New Mexico's lawsuit was filed by state Attorney General Raul Torrez in 2023. State investigators built their case by posing as children on social media, then documenting sexual solicitations they received as well as Meta's response. The jury was asked to determine if Meta violated New Mexico's consumer protection law. The Los Angeles case had a

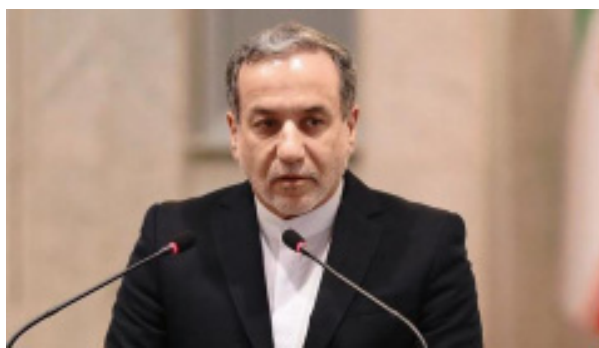


Juries in Los Angeles and New Mexico held Meta and YouTube liable for harms to children, including mental health issues and sexual exploitation. Experts say the verdicts signal growing accountability for Big Tech and could reshape social media regulation globally

single plaintiff, who goes by the initials KGM, against Meta, Google's YouTube, TikTok and Snap. TikTok and Snap settled before trial. The plaintiff in this case argued that the platform design features of the two remaining defendants, Meta and YouTube, were designed to be addictive, especially for young users. Because thousands of families have filed similar lawsuits, KGM and a handful of other plaintiffs have been selected for bellwether trials — essentially test cases for both sides to see how their arguments play out before a jury, eventually leading to a broader settlement reminiscent of the Big Tobacco and opioid trials. By focusing on deliberate design choices and product liability, the lawsuits were able to sidestep Section 230, which generally exempts internet companies from liability for the material users post on their services. Past lawsuits, which have focused on how the platforms distributed content, often failed on these grounds. "For the first time, courts have held social media platforms accountable for how their product design can harm users," said Nikolas Guggenberger, an assistant professor of law at the University of Houston Law Centre.

"This is a new legal territory that could reshape an industry long shielded by Section 230. Platforms will have to rethink their focus on engagement at any cost, which has outlived itself." The final outcome of the cases could take years to resolve pending appeals and settlement agreements, but experts say the shift in the public's sentiment and understanding of social media's dangers is already happening. In a 2025 Pew Research Center poll, for instance, 48 per cent of teens said social media harms people their age. In 2022, only 32 per cent said the same. Amid social media's reckoning, however, artificial intelligence chatbots are emerging as the next frontier in the fight to make technology safer for young people. "You can ban today's harm, but how do you know what tomorrow is going to bring?" said Sarah Kreps, a professor and director of Cornell University's Tech Policy Institute. Whether it's another social media app, AI or some other new technology, she added, new things will crop up. "And people will flock to those because where there's demand you will see a supply come to meet that demand," she said.

Israel took Iran's Araghchi, Qalibaf off hit list on Pakistan request: report



GNS News Agency, March 31

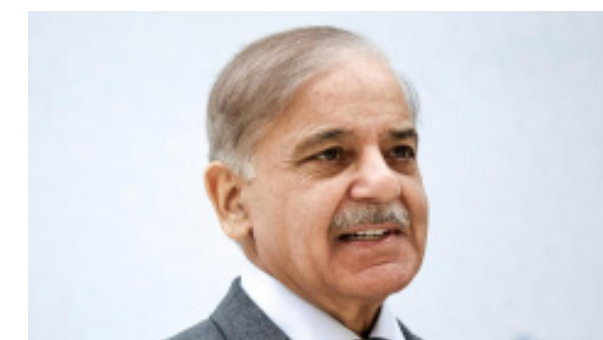
Israel took Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf off its hit list after Pakistan requested that Washington not target them, a Pakistani source "with knowledge of the discussions told Reuters. "The Israelis had their coordinates and wanted to take them out, we told the U.S. if they are also eliminated then there is no one else to talk to, hence the U.S. asked the Israelis to back off," the source said.

Chinese Envoy assures Pakistan of 'continued support' in meeting with PM Shehbaz Sharif

GNS News Agency, March 31

Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong met with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday (March 26, 2026) and pledged his country's "continued support" for trade and investment in Pakistan, a statement said. Mr. Zaidong also appreciated Pakistan's "economic resilience" in the meeting, also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and other officials, a statement by the PM Office said. Appreciating China's steadfast economic support, the Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to advancing the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, called CPEC 2.0, with a focus on agriculture, industrial cooperation, and priority infrastructure projects, it stated. Ambassador Jiang "commended Pakistan's economic resilience and reform efforts, and reaffirmed China's continued support, particularly in trade and investment," it added.

Both sides also expressed satisfaction at ongoing exchanges and looked forward to high-level engagements to mark the 75th anniversary of diplomatic



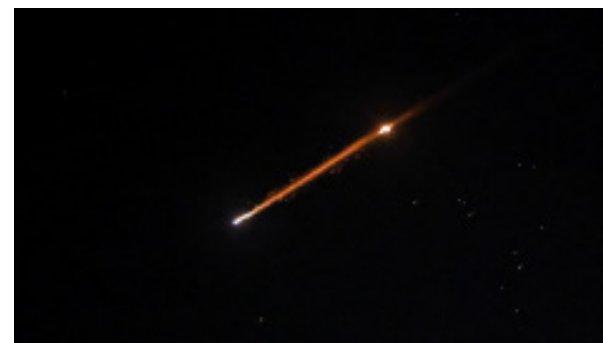
relations. Mr. Sharif also highlighted Pakistan's constructive role in promoting de-escalation in West Asia while discussing the regional situation. He also emphasised continued close coordination at all levels on issues of mutual interest while reaffirming the enduring Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership.

Iranian strikes pose 'existential threat', Gulf states tell UN

GNS News Agency, March 31

Gulf Arab states told the United Nations Human Rights Council on Wednesday (March 25, 2026) they face an existential threat from Iran as they condemned Iranian attacks on their infrastructure, which the UN rights chief said might constitute war crimes. The nearly month-long U.S.-Israeli war on Iran has sparked large-scale Iranian retaliation in the form of drone and missile strikes on energy and civilian infrastructure in Gulf countries, killing civilians and driving up oil prices.

"We are seeing an existential threat to international and regional security. This aggressive approach is undermining international law and sovereignty," Kuwait's Ambassador Nasser Abdullah H. M. Alhayan told the Geneva-based council. Other Gulf states also denounced Iran's actions, which they said were designed to spread terror. Countries at the 47-member council will vote on a motion condemning Iran's strikes, asking Iran for reparation and asking the U.N. rights chief to monitor the situation. Iran defended its actions, saying more than 1,500 civilians had been killed in the U.S.-Israeli strikes so far. "We fight on behalf of all of you against an enemy that, if not restrained today, will be beyond containment tomorrow," said Iran's ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva



Ali Bahreini, referring to Israel.

Iran has called for its own emergency session on a fatal strike on a primary school which will take place on Friday. The United Nations' top rights official, Volker Turk, on Wednesday (March 25, 2026) urged states to end the Iran conflict, describing the situation as extremely dangerous and unpredictable. "This conflict has an unprecedented power to ensnare countries across borders and around the world," he said. "Attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure must end. If they are deliberate, such attacks may constitute war crimes."

Medical students allegedly assault lecturer for proposing to student inside classroom in Karnataka



Tension prevailed in Sri Siddhartha Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre in T. Begur, Nelamangala taluk of Bengaluru Rural district, after a group of students allegedly assaulted an assistant professor on the campus for reportedly proposing to a female student inside a classroom. Videos of the incident, which allegedly occurred on March 23 around 1 p.m., were circulated widely on social media on March 26.

The Nelamangala police have registered a case against the assistant professor of microbiology for his alleged misconduct. The complaint was filed by Devakar S.V., a professor at the institution. Based on it, the accused, identified as Abdul Rahman Sharif, has been booked under Sections 74, 75(1), and 329(3) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The lecturer is said to have approached the student during class hours, offered her a chocolate, and proposed to her. The student ob-

jected to his behaviour and allegedly hit him with a slipper later outside the classroom. The situation escalated as other students gathered and confronted the lecturer on campus. According to initial reports, a group of students allegedly chased him and assaulted him near a parked vehicle on the college premises. The lecturer later managed to escape. According to the police, the accused had allegedly faced prior complaints from students over inappropriate behaviour. Acting on these complaints, the college management had issued him a notice seeking an explanation and had restricted his entry to the campus. However, despite the restriction, the accused allegedly entered the college and misbehaved with a female student. The complaint stated that his actions, despite restrictions imposed by the management, warrant penal action and strict legal proceedings. The complainant also submitted copies of earlier complaints made by students against the assistant professor. The institution is associated with Karnataka Home Minister G. Parameshwara.

Govt to rope in Telangana doctors settled abroad to treat patients

The Government is actively working on a proposal to rope in services of Telangana doctors working abroad to treat patients when they come to the State on vacation/holiday.

The doctors in patient care as well as in academics are being considered. An exclusive website is being created for this, which will provide online access to the professionals and act as a platform to bring them together.

Iran War tests European unity amid German economic slowdown and fears over Ukraine support

Middle East region, there is less potential for military support to be sent to Ukraine. This is a concrete consequence of the Iran conflict. There is also a fear of political fallout," said Ms. Selle. On March 13, when Mr. Trump announced a 30-day waiver for countries to buy sanctioned Russian oil and petroleum products, it drew immediate criticism from Europe. "The unilateral decision by the U.S. to lift sanctions on Russian oil exports is very concerning, as it impacts European security. Weakening sanctions increases Russian resources to wage the war of aggression against Ukraine," said European Council President António Costa on X.

The Brent Crude Index has gone up from \$62 on March 2 and touched \$114 on March 19. The latest escalation of the war caused by Israel's attack on Iran's South Pars gas field prompted retaliatory drone strikes by Iran on oil and gas sites in neighbouring Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Many analysts warn that this attack, paired with the shutdown of the Hormuz Strait, could further spike oil and gas prices globally. For Europe's largest economy, Germany, which has seen negative growth for two successive years, this is not ideal news. "Germany is not directly dependent on the Hormuz Strait and its closure doesn't have a direct impact. But because of the volatile markets there is an immediate impact on Germany," said Ms. Selle.

Economic shock "For Germany, there is only a limited set of policy options in the short run. The country is exposed to fluctuations in international oil and gas prices, given its dependence on fossil fuel imports. If the conflict persists over a longer term, it will experience a slowdown in its economic recovery that is already under pressure with trade tensions with the US and eroding competitiveness of its exports in global markets," said Dr. Sonali Chowdhry, trade economist at the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW). Given the current fuel price shock, DIW has revised its forecast downward, projecting slower economic growth of 1% and higher inflation of 2.4% in Germany. "Energy price hike will fuel inflation and will increase the cost for energy-intensive industries. We have suffered from a negative growth rate for the last two years, and 2026 was supposed to be the year of economic recovery. I don't see that happening if the war prolongs," said Mr. Loewe. Ms. Chowdhry also expects a longer recovery time for the German economy. "A significant share of households' consumption expenditure is on fuel. Shock to fuel prices, therefore, has important distributional effects and can exacerbate economic inequality. The crisis in the Strait of Hormuz also has implications for food security, with one-third of seaborne fertiliser trade using this route," said Ms. Chowdhry. Ms. Selle of DGAP feels it is too early to talk about economic recovery and it might be eaten up by rising energy costs. Petrol pumps in Germany are already seeing a spike, forcing the German government to adopt the so-called Austrian model, which limits price increases at the pumps to just once a day.

"This threw a spotlight on the lack of competition within this sector in Germany, where a few businesses exercise control over the full value chain from running the refineries to operating the petrol stations," said Ms. Chowdhry. The reverberations of the energy shock will be felt Europe-wide. According to a report from the Atlantic Council, Europe's gas storage levels are currently below 30%, a five-year low. They are supposed to reach 90% by November. With Qatar's LNG supply effectively shut, and Europe rejecting Russian energy sources, this would mean Europe has to look for alternatives which could translate to higher prices.

Europe's lack of influence As per the recent statements of Ms. von der Leyen and Ms. Kallas, the Iranian regime is a threat to peace in West Asia. Neither of the two have publicly called out the U.S. and Israel for this war, but their statements have focused on de-escalation measures and reiterating that member states do not want to be dragged into the war. These double standards have drawn criticism from left-wing Members of the European Parliament.

Many Parliamentarians also allege that Ms. von der Leyen's statements on the Iran War overstep her domain. Her direct diplomacy calls with Gulf Cooperation Council leaders, calls for a 'credible transition in Iran' fall under EU Council's domain. Under EU rules, the EU Commission and its President have no formal foreign policy role. "Ms. von der Leyen has raised the question as to what extent Europe can continue defending international law all the time, when others violate it. But if violating international law is justified when a purpose is met, that would set a precedent for the future," said Mr. Loewe noting the constantly changing aims in the current war do not help matters. Mr. Trump has flip-flopped from neutralising imminent threats to regime change in Iran to dismantling Iran's nuclear capabilities to annihilating the Iranian Navy since the start of the war. "Europeans were at the frontline of negotiating the JCPOA, where they played a constructive role. But it is a very harsh escalation now. At the moment, Europeans are not the central actors. I hope that once there is an end to the conflict, there will be a more structured conversation of future reordering of relations, and the EU could play a role to ensure that the shipping routes are secured," said Ms. Selle. Mr. Loewe concurs that Europe has very little influence in the ongoing war. "What we could do is work towards stabilising countries in the Middle East, including Iran, from the inside. The worst-case scenario in this conflict is destabilisation in the Middle East or regime changes leading to civil wars or the fear of the new regimes becoming even more extremist," said

Arogyasri patients to be referred to teaching hospitals: Telangana CM



Telangana Government has in principle decided to refer patients applying for medical assistance under Arogyasri Health Scheme to teaching colleges so that they can utilise the facilities, including services of expert doctors, for their treatment. The government is contemplating to reimburse the Arogyasri claims, as well as the funds provided under the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) to these hospitals so that there will not be any fund shortage to these institutions. The government is planning to appoint an exclusive team headed by a Group-I officer to effectively manage infrastructure and maintenance issues so that doctors can focus on treating patients.

"Less number of patients are visiting the 35 teaching hospitals across the State, and the hospitals where the patients go are lacking facilities. The Government has therefore decided to take steps to benefit both," Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy said in reply to discussion in the Legislative Assembly on the Rajiv Arogyasri scheme which came up during the Question Hour on Thursday. (The government had initiated steps to modernise the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (TIMS) — at four

places as well — as Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) and Osmania General Hospital. Patients under Arogyasri would be referred to them in the coming days. "We have taken steps to create additional 10,000 beds in the hospitals to meet the increasing demand," he said. The Chief Minister said the Government had spent ₹2,400 crore under Arogyasri and another ₹2,046 crore under CMRF to provide treatment to the needy. He lamented that the government inherited dues of Arogyasri to the tune of ₹627 crore as a legacy from the previous Government. The Congress Government released ₹2,408 crore under Arogyasri so far, of which ₹927 crore was paid to government hospitals and ₹1,480 crore to private hospitals.

Referring to the CMRF, he said there were several irregularities in the issuance of cheques under the relief fund in the past and cases were registered accordingly. The Congress Government took steps to ensure online applications for CMRF, which prevented scope for any misuse. He said the government decided to provide insurance coverage to all 1.15 crore families in the State thereby instilling confidence in them about their healthcare. "Health and Education are priorities of my government and there is no scope for imposing any cuts in the allocations made to them," he averred adding that the monthly releases under Arogyasri were ₹89 crore since Congress took over, as against the ₹59 crore during the previous government. The Chief Minister criticised the Opposition parties for their propaganda that private hospitals were facing closure because of Arogyasri dues and said the present government had enhanced the coverage from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh in spite of the pressure faced due to the dues left by the previous government. He said administering the Health sector was a challenging task, as new tasks would keep cropping up and the Government had decided to usher in several reforms in the coming days to make the sector effective.

Cabinet extends immigration, visa tracking system for another five years



The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of the Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme beyond March 31, for a period of five years, till 2031 with budget outlay of ₹1,800 crore. The IVFRT platform seeks to interlink and optimise functions related to immigration, visa issuance and registration of foreigners in India. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that the project was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on May 13, 2010 with a budget outlay of ₹1,011 crore and with project duration till September, 2014. The scheme seeks to expand and strengthen the scope and capacity of the existing IVFRT Scheme without compromising the security architecture. After the

recent enactment of the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 and its subsequent Rules and Order, it has become imperative to strengthen and modernize the Immigration, Visa, and Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) system to effectively meet emerging requirements and future challenges in the domain of immigration control and foreigner management including illegal migration, a government statement said.

The scheme will modernize the immigration and visa ecosystem through adoption of emerging technologies, including mobile-based services and self-service kiosks for seamless and secure passenger movement. It will upgrade and expand core infrastructure across Immigration Posts, FRROs, and Data Centres to build a resilient and scalable system nationwide. IVFRT system has led to significant improvements in service delivery and operational efficiency across immigration and visa functions. The system has enabled a 100% contactless and faceless visa process with online appointment scheduling and payment facilities, leading to faster visa processing times with 91.24% of e-Visa applications have been cleared within 72 hours during the past five years. Average passenger clearance time at Immigration Posts has also been reduced to 2.5-3 minutes including biometrics, from the conventional 5-6 minutes.

Rein in pollution by chemicals industry

The chemicals industry rarely features in public debates about climate and pollution. Oil refineries and coal plants draw the headlines. Yet the chemicals sector accounts for roughly 3.3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent every year, is the source of some of the most persistent toxins in water supply, and has for decades returned contaminated effluent to rivers and aquifers while the world looked elsewhere. This is not a story of simple negligence. The industry produces the medicines that fill hospital dispensaries, the materials that make solar panels possible, and the compounds that underpin modern agriculture. The problem is not what it makes. It is how it makes it, and how long the true costs have been passed quietly onto ecosystems, communities, and future generations.

Decarbonising chemicals is among the hardest challenges in the net zero transition. The sector faces two carbon problems at once: fossil fuels burned for intense process heat, and carbon physically embedded in the fossil feedstocks from which thousands of products are derived. Solving both requires electrifying process heat, shifting to bio-based raw materials, and developing synthesis routes that work at lower temperatures. India sits at the centre of this. The third largest emitter from the chemicals sector globally, its fertilizer industry runs largely on natural gas and coal. Indian conglomerates have announced net zero targets, but credible transition road maps for their chemicals divisions remain scarce. The gap between ambition and action will not close without enforceable policy.

For every kilogram of active pharmaceutical ingredient produced, the industry generates between 25 and 100 kilograms of waste. Solvents are the largest contributor. Many are carcinogenic, acutely toxic, or environmentally persistent. India produces roughly 20% of the world's generic medicines, making its exposure acute and largely unacknowledged. The industrial zones near Hyderabad gained international notoriety after researchers found extreme levels of antibiotics, such as ciprofloxacin, in local waterways at concentrations thousands of times above safe limits. These "antibiotic soups" create a dangerous breeding ground for drug-resistant bacteria, posing a global health threat. While recent government crackdowns have led to plant closures in regions such as Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, the persistent risk of pharmaceutical pollution means that strict, constant monitoring is still essential to ensure public safety.

The European Union has expanded its restricted solvents list. The United States moved in 2024 to phase out one of the most widely used hazardous solvents in pharmaceutical manufacturing. India will face growing pressure to align. Changing validated manufacturing processes is slow and costly, but tightening regulation and rising disposal costs are making the status quo harder to defend.

What chemical plants discharge is rarely what they



Decarbonising it is among the hardest challenges in the net zero transition, and India's combination of pharmaceutical scale, software talent, and materials science capability makes it uniquely positioned to lead clean processes

drew in. Industrial wastewater carries heavy metals, hormone-disrupting compounds, and synthetic chemicals that conventional treatment cannot remove. India has lived with this for decades. The Ganga Action Plan has had many iterations, but has achieved little because upstream industrial discharge continues largely unabated. Globally, PFAS, synthetic chemicals that persist indefinitely in nature, now contaminate drinking water across the United States, Europe, and Australia. In India, PFAS is being detected in waterways and farmland, but regulation remains years behind. Litigation elsewhere has already cost manufacturers tens of billions of dollars. That reckoning is coming here too. The least visible pollution happens before manufacturing begins. Finding a better catalyst requires testing hundreds of material combinations, each trial consuming reagents, solvents, and energy. The pharmaceutical sector generates tens of thousands of tonnes of waste annually in this discovery phase alone. It receives almost no regulatory attention. Artificial intelligence is beginning to change this. Computational models now screen vast numbers of candidate materials before any physical experiment is run, cutting laboratory trials by more than half in early applications. India has a growing computational chemistry base at institutions across Bangalore, Mumbai, and Chennai. Given its pharmaceutical scale, it stands to gain more from this shift than almost any other country. India's combination of pharmaceutical scale, software talent, and materials science capability makes it uniquely positioned to lead clean chemistry. Investment in bio-based feedstocks, solvent recycling, and AI-assisted discovery will cut costs and environmental damage together. These are not charitable gestures. They are the direction of the global market. The chemistry that built the modern world was designed when clean air, water, and climate were treated as free. That assumption is gone. The question is no longer whether this era closes. It is how much damage is done before it does.



As the war in West Asia rages on in its fourth week, European leaders have reached a consensus: not to be militarily involved. On March 16, following the EU's Foreign Affairs Council meeting, most European leaders said an emphatic NO to getting involved in the Iran War. On March 18, during his address to the Bundestag (German Parliament), Chancellor Friedrich Merz said that Germany would not participate in the U.S.-Israeli war against Iran. "To this day, there is no convincing plan as to how this operation could succeed. Washington has not consulted us and has not deemed European assistance necessary," said Mr. Merz. This is a far cry from the early days of the war when Germany, France and the U.K. put out a joint statement blaming Iran for its "reckless attacks". Mr. Merz even went to the extent of saying that international law does not apply in Iran's case. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Foreign Policy chief Kaja Kallas, who have blamed Iran for the conflict, have been more measured in their statements of late.

The change in attitude has been noticeable since U.S. President Donald Trump's call for help regarding securing the Strait of Hormuz, which has been effectively shut since the war began on February 28. Roughly a fifth of the world's oil and LNG flows through this strait. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has been the only European leader who has not changed his stance. "We reject the unilateral military action of the United States and Israel, which represents an escalation and contributes to a more uncertain and hostile international order," read a tweet from Mr. Sanchez on February 28. Spain has doubled down on its "no to war" statement, forcing many European countries to reconsider their positions. "The position of EU member states is diverging quite significantly in the current conflict. Due to their different historical ties to Israel, members have different stances. Germany has a special relationship with Israel, given its history. This is also reflected towards Iran," said Dr. Linn Selle, head of the Europe Centre at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP). According to her, even during the Iraq War in 2003, there were dramatic divisions within EU member states. "On Iran, there are different shades of perspectives, but they aren't fundamentally different. Following the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting (on March 16), there is a developing cohesion among member states. EU-wide, there is no appetite for military support of this war," said Ms. Selle.

Dr. Markus Loewe, economist and co-ordinator for research on the Middle East and North Africa at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) noted that a vast number of Germans see this war as a violation of international law. A recent nation-wide survey from March 5 shows that 58% of German respondents called this war unjustified. "The only reason Germany is not actively opposing the U.S.-Israeli actions is fear of doing anything against the U.S. government's will. Germany is worried that rejecting the U.S. would prompt it to withdraw support from Ukraine. But Germany also relies heavily on the U.S. for its own defence," said Mr. Loewe.

On March 4, when Mr. Merz met Mr. Trump in the White House, he stated that Germany was "on the same page" as Mr. Trump on the goals of the Iran war. Mr. Merz's silence as Mr. Trump threatened to "embargo" Spain drew backlash in Europe. In his defence, Mr. Merz said he defended the Spanish and U.K. leaders behind a closed door talk with Mr. Trump. "The initial German reaction had been sort of based on pandering to the U.S. and now the realisation has begun to set in, given the domestic fallout of the war. Higher energy prices, domestic reverberations of the conflict, potential cyberattacks, and other fears around it. Germany is now more cautious of not being drawn into the conflict," said Ms. Selle. With the Russia-Ukraine war still on in Europe, the main priority of Germany and the EU is to ensure the U.S. continues to support Ukraine. German defence chief had also warned in June 2025 that Russia could expand this war to attack NATO countries by 2029. "After Poland, Germany would be next in line if Russia decides to expand its operations," said Mr. Loewe. This prospect is alarming for Germany as it does not have its own nuclear deterrents. After the end of World War II, the U.S., the British, and the French promised to defend Germany because they did not want Germany to rearm. As a result, the German army is not the strongest and has limited strategic weapons because it has always relied on the U.S. for defence, noted Mr. Loewe. The U.S. even has its largest air force based outside the U.S. in Germany (at Ramstein), which serves as a critical logistics and command centre for the U.S. military. "But this does not mean that Germany supports the Iran war. The base in Germany has always been treated as an extra-territorial base. When Mr. Trump asked other countries to support the U.S. in the Hormuz Strait, the German government rejected the request," said Mr. Loewe. "As military capacities are used in the Iran conflict and the

Palnadu Medical Teaching Hospital to begin admissions in 2026-27

The Andhra Pradesh government is gearing up to operationalise the new Government Medical Teaching Hospital at Piduguralla in Palnadu district, with outpatient services slated to begin by April 15, officials said.

State Health Secretary Saurabh Gaur, who reviewed the construction works on Wednesday, directed officials and engineers to complete all arrangements within the stipulated timeline. He said the formal date for the launch of full-fledged medical services would be finalised after consultations with Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav. Mr. Gaur confirmed that admissions to MBBS course will commence in the 2026-27 academic year, with the government applying to the National Medical Commission for approval of 100 seats. Keeping the likely inspection in view, he instructed that construction works be completed by the end of May in line with regulatory norms.

He also emphasised weekly monitoring of progress and called for timely recruitment of doctors and paramedi-



cal staff. Arrangements for sanitation, security, oxygen supply, and other support systems are being put in place, with a trial run planned after April 1. District Collector Kritika Shukla directed officials to ensure uninterrupted water and power supply and develop transport access, including bus stops near the hospital.

India raises clean-energy ambition with 60% non-fossil fuel power goal by 2035



Updating its climate goals, India has pledged that by 2035, 60% of its installed electric capacity will comprise of non-fossil sources. It also aims to reduce by 47% the intensity of emissions per unit of GDP from 2005 level and to increase its carbon sink to 3.5 billion tonnes - 4 billion tonnes. These targets make up its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), which are to be communicated to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). "We will easily achieve these goals... (with) the speed with which we are expanding our non-fossil sources," Union Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said at a briefing on Wednesday following a Cabinet meeting.

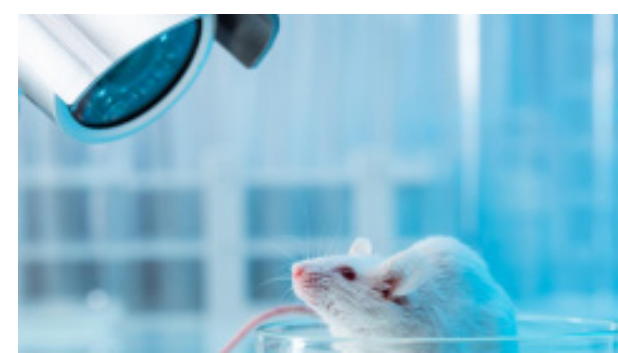
As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, India was required to issue an updated NDC in 2025, which spells out its voluntary actions towards transitioning away from fossil fuel and improving energy-efficiency measures. At the 30th edition of the Conference of Parties in Belem, Brazil, in November last year, Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav said that India would announce the NDC by the "year-end. The Conference of Parties, or CoP, is a body of nations that convenes annually to discuss climate issues and transition their economies away from fossil fuel.

India and Argentina were the only two G-20 countries that had not announced a 2035 NDC as of December 31, 2025. A total of 128 parties, representing about 78% of global greenhouse gas emissions, had submitted new NDCs by that date. These included 21 Small Island Developing States, 19 Least Developed Countries, and 18 G-20 members.

India's current NDC, officially conveyed to the United Nations in August 2022, commits to the following by 2030:

having 50% of its installed electric power from non-fossil sources; reducing the intensity of emissions per unit of GDP by 44%; and increasing its carbon sink to at least 2.5 billion tonnes to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. Currently, about 52% of India's installed electric capacity comes from non-fossil fuel sources — a target achieved well before the deadline — though only about 25% of the power generated is non-fossil. These sources include solar, wind, hydropower, biomass, and nuclear power. As of 2019, say official estimates, India has achieved an emissions intensity of 36% from 2005-2020. A carbon sink of 1.97 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent had already been created from 2005 to 2019. However, forest and tree cover accounts for about 24.6% of India's geographical area as of 2021, which is higher than the 21% in 2005, but still less than the national policy goal of 33%. "In shaping India's NDC for 2031-2035, the government has considered the outcomes of the first Global Stocktake (GST), principle of Common but differentiated responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), and equity with a view to harmonize national realities, developmental priorities, energy security and the need for greater ambition in climate action, in line with the purpose and long-term goals of the Paris Agreement," the Environment Ministry said in a statement. Initiated in 2021, the GST assesses the world's collective progress towards limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, concluding that nations are not on track. Several independent analysts have suggested that while India may meet its 2030 NDC targets, it isn't enough to keep the globe on a 1.5C pathway. Independent analysts said India was picking up the slack for developed countries. India's NDC target had come amid a "rollback of climate policies" and "unilateral trade measures" by developed, rich countries. Vaibhav Chaturvedi, senior fellow, Council for Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), told. "It demonstrates a strong resolve to address transmission and land availability constraints faced by the renewables sector. The 47% emissions intensity target shows that energy security and prices cannot be taken for granted." "At a time when developed countries are backtracking on ambition, deepening their fossil fuel entrenchment, and dragging the world towards military conflict, the signal from India shows that Global South (developing country) leadership on climate ambition is concrete and real," Avantika Goswami, of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), an influential think tank, said in a statement.

How BioPharma SHAKTI can transform biologics with non-animal models



In 2006, London woke up to a tragedy. Six healthy men involved in a phase I clinical trial of thelalizumab, a monoclonal antibody (mAb) designed to treat rheumatoid arthritis, developed multiple organ failure. The antibody triggered an intense immune reaction that the researchers didn't observe in rhesus monkeys in preclinical tests because their immune cells responded differently from human immune cells. The Northwick Park Tragedy, as it was called, became a textbook example of why animals can't be used as proxies to test human drugs. Similarly, in 2022, the mAb semorinab failed to work in 457 patients with Alzheimer's disease during phase II trials despite demonstrating effectiveness in a preclinical mouse model.

mAbs, vaccines, and insulin all belong to a growing class of drugs called biologics — large, complex molecules produced by living cells. Their use is rising worldwide as they treat many chronic diseases. Recognising their importance, the 2026 Union Budget of India announced the Biopharma SHAKTI strategy to boost domestic production of biologics and their generic counterparts. However, animal models may not reliably predict the safety and efficacy of biologics. This has prompted a shift towards bioengineered, human-relevant systems such as organoids, organ-on-a-chip, and 3D bioprinting, which are derived from human cells and thus replicate human biology more faithfully. Human-relevant models

These models are collected under the term non-animal methodologies (NAMs) and are used worldwide to reduce the use of experiments in animals. For example, last year, the U.K. published a roadmap to phase out animal experiments and promote the adoption of NAMs. Thanks to the New Drugs and Clinical Trials (Amendment) Rules 2023, India is also promoting the use of NAMs in the development of novel drugs. However, their potential remains untapped in the domain of biologics and biosimilars.

"Biologics are highly specific," University of Illinois adjunct professor Sarfaraz Niazi said. "They bind to particular receptors in the human body. But those receptors are sometimes missing or function differently in animals, which makes animal testing less predictive." One 2024 study in Cell reported a breast cancer-on-chip model to study the effectiveness of CAR T-cell therapy, a leading biologic therapy, against solid tumours. While CAR T-cell therapy has proven effective against blood cancers, solid tumours like breast cancers pose additional challenges like abnormal blood vessel formation and difficulties for T-cells to find and attack the cancerous cells. The breast cancer-on-chip model recreated this tumour environment in the lab, and the authors of the 2024 study perfused T-cells through it to observe whether they could enter the tumour and mount an immune attack, assessing both treatment benefit and potential safety risks without animals. These models can also reduce costs and shorten development timelines, making them attractive to pharmaceutical companies. A 2019 analysis in Drug Discovery Today estimated that organ-on-chip technologies could lower overall drug development costs by 10-26%. They also found the time required for lead optimisation, when scientists identify a promising drug candidate from a pool of molecules, could drop by 19%.

Future of biologics Even if NAMs are promising mod-

els, they are not as accessible as animal systems. More than 90 academic labs in India are working on these models. However, the innovation here is not translating into industry use. "Translating NAMs into industry-ready assays requires a clear context of use, robust documentation, and standardised, reproducible protocols, even before qualification. While institutions support entrepreneurship, sustained commercialisation needs stronger, modern policy support," Kasturi Mahadik, Chief Manager at the Centre for Predictive Human Model Systems (CPHMS), AIC-CCMB, said. (Note: the author works at CPHMS.) The development of NAMs also requires sustained funding and infrastructure. With an outlay of ₹10,000 crore, Biopharma SHAKTI can provide the necessary backing. "I think the best use of these funds would be not to develop a single product but to build systems that enable many companies to do so," Dr. Niazi added. "The culture of entrepreneurship is also a challenge in India," Narendra Chirmule, CEO of SymphonyTech Biologics, said. "Although there is an increase in the number of start-ups and MSMEs in biologics (supported by DBT, ICMR, and other grants), exponentially greater investment, as well as support for the development of supply chain materials, is needed to create real impact. Additionally, investors are not well versed in the risks and potentials of the biologics industry." Another area supported by Biopharma SHAKTI is biosimilars, generic versions of biologics that are reverse-engineered once the original product goes off patent. However, there are additional financial risks and regulatory adjustments involved, which require greater attention from the government. One challenge is patent evergreening, which allows the exclusive rights of an original biologic to be extended. For example, although the intravenous form of the cancer drug trastuzumab was approved in 2000, the manufacturer later introduced a subcutaneous formulation with a separate patent. Because of this prolonged market exclusivity, cheaper biosimilar versions weren't available until 2018.

Before being commercialised, biosimilars also have to receive a nod from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), India's apex regulatory body. These approvals are based on set guidelines; however, the updated guidelines are still in draft form. "While India has been updating its biosimilars guidelines to accommodate NAMs, implementation has been slow, and regulatory confidence in independently validated NAM models is still evolving. If accelerated, this would expedite the adoption of NAMs in the biologics and biosimilars field, helping Biopharma SHAKTI achieve its goals," says Mahadik.

Fuel crisis paralyses Hyderabad's gig economy as drivers suffer sharp income loss

Hyderabad: Thousands of app-based drivers in Hyderabad operating LPG and CNG vehicles are facing a severe crisis triggered by Middle-East tensions. Inordinate delays in supply have led to massive queues at fuel stations, resulting in fewer trips and immediate loss of income for workers already struggling with high operational costs. The 'panic buying' witnessed over the last few days has also crippled the food delivery sector. As LPG supplies to eateries become limited, reduced food preparation capacity has directly slashed order volumes, further denting the daily earnings of delivery partners. "The ongoing fuel crisis and panic buying have severely impacted gig and platform workers across Telangana. Long queues are reducing daily earnings and increasing working hours and stress. Many are struggling to sustain livelihoods as incentives remain stagnant despite these soaring operational hurdles," says Shaik Salauddin, Founder President of the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU).

How the OpenAI-Microsoft deal is coming undone



There is a kind of awkwardness in a relationship when both parties know something has changed, but neither wants to say it out loud. The partnership between Microsoft and OpenAI seems to have arrived at exactly that moment. The duo that joined hands even before the ChatGPT-triggered AI boom took the tech world by storm. Microsoft invested a billion dollars in OpenAI, back in June 2019, to "build beneficial AGI." The move was aimed at extending Microsoft's cloud capabilities in large-scale AI systems that were still not completely built. The logic was clean and mutually beneficial. OpenAI needed Microsoft's money and cloud infrastructure to build large language models, and Satya Nadella needed Sam Altman researchers and cutting-edge technology. The partnership worked fine for both sides.

In late 2022, ChatGPT exploded into public consciousness, making Microsoft increase its funding in OpenAI with a \$10 billion investment in January 2023 as the software maker rushed to integrate the technology into Bing — the company's search engine — and its broader Office suite, which is now rebranded as Copilot. At that point Mr. Nadella taunted Google's Sundar Pichai, asking to show what his company could do with AI, making Mr. Pichai's researchers double down on building Gemini. But the past few years have been quite dynamic and signs of strain in the partnership between the ChatGPT maker and the Windows maker were becoming visible. The first crack

The first real crack appeared when Microsoft was blindsided in November 2023 when OpenAI's board abruptly fired Mr. Altman. Mr. Nadella quickly moved to bring Mr. Altman back. After Mr. Altman took back his position, dissolving most of the board, Microsoft obtained a non-voting observer seat — a concession that looked like influence but was, in practice, something far more modest. What then followed was a slow, deliberate unravelling. In March 2024, Microsoft worked on a strategy that would make it build its own in-house AI. In a \$650 million deal, the Redmond-headquartered company acquired Inflection AI and hired its founder, Mustafa Suleiman to lead Microsoft AI. OpenAI read that signal and responded accordingly. In June 2024, it signed a roughly \$300 billion deal with Oracle, a move that would loosen Microsoft's grip on the startup for compute infrastructure. Rather than end the exclusivity clause with Microsoft, this collaboration was presented as a three-way deal between Microsoft, OpenAI and Oracle, in which OpenAI would continue to pre-train its frontier models on Microsoft Azure. It was the beginning of a pattern that would repeat itself with increasing boldness.

According to a report by The Information, OpenAI had proposed capping Microsoft's future equity stake at 33% in exchange for it foregoing rights to future profits. Microsoft, which by this point had invested over \$13 billion, had balked at these terms. OpenAI also wanted to eliminate the clause that gives Azure exclusive cloud hosting rights. A truce was eventually reached in which Microsoft and OpenAI signed a non-binding memorandum of understanding in September 2025, fundamentally restructuring how enterprises would deploy artificial intelligence. The formal renegotiation came in October, when Microsoft acquired a 27% stake in OpenAI Group PBC, valued at approximately \$135 billion at the time of signing. In exchange, Microsoft's former right of first refusal to be OpenAI's sole compute provider was formally removed. Unresolved

Why is Chennai's microplastic problem bigger than it looks? | Explained

GNS News Agency, March 31

Microplastics, especially nylon fibres, seem to be present rather sparsely in Chennai's beach sediments but could still wreak long-term ecological damage, new research has cautioned. A study by researchers at V.O. Chidambaram College in Thoothukudi examined the abundance, sources, and ecological risks of microplastics from beach sediment samples from 15 sites along the Chennai coast. The findings show fibres dominating, with most particles smaller than 1000 µm. Why does low abundance not mean low risk?

"This study is important because it shows that microplastics are already present in Chennai's beach sediments, even if we don't always see them," Sekhar Selvam, senior assistant professor at the Department of Geology, V.O. Chidambaram College, Thoothukudi, said. "What is new here is that the problem is not just the amount of plastics but also the type of plastics. We found that most of the microplastics are nylon fibres, which are more harmful than many other plastics." In other words, even though Chennai's beaches have fewer microplastics than many global ones, the risk to marine life remains significant. "This study helps us understand that early-stage pollution can still cause long-term damage if ignored," Dr. Selvam said. While there have been several studies worldwide about microplastics, data from rapidly urbanising tropical coastal regions like Chennai remain scarce, Shaji Erath, professor of geology at the University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, said. He added that the new study thus "sheds new light by demonstrating that low overall microplastic abundance does not necessarily imply low ecological risk." An additional insight from the study is the disconnect between abundance-based assessments and risk-based evaluations, Mr. Erath said. Traditional monitoring often focuses on microplastic counts alone. However, the study has shown that polymer type, shape, and aging characteristics are equally, if not more, important in determining ecological risk, he added.

What are the ecological concerns? Ecological concerns in the study are chiefly centred on marine life and coastal ecosystems, Dr. Selvam said. Small organisms living in beach sand, such as worms, crabs, and shellfish, easily ingest the small plastic fibres, which can go on to block or injure their digestive tracts. Toxic compounds in plastics can also enter and poison their

The deal was packaged as a new chapter, but the underlying discomfort had not been resolved, only paused. Per a CNBC report citing a document circulated to prospective investors, OpenAI said that Microsoft is responsible for "a substantial portion of our financing and compute," and warned that any modification or termination of the commercial partnership could adversely affect OpenAI's business. The AI company also stated that its operating results would depend on its ability to successfully develop relationships with partners beyond Microsoft. While an OpenAI spokesperson told the outlet "This is a standard legal risk factor disclosure, unrelated to any potential IPO prospectus," it does reflect the reality that a company is telling investors that its most important relationship is also one of its greatest vulnerabilities. And OpenAI has also been busy raising funds and partnering with other players in the ecosystem. In February, the company announced a combined \$110 billion funding at a valuation of \$730 billion from Amazon, Nvidia and Softbank. After this funding round, the ChatGPT maker has expanded its access to compute infrastructure as Amazon's compute commitments to OpenAI now exceeds Microsoft's.

Separately, OpenAI is also selling ChatGPT Enterprise, a product that rivals Microsoft's Copilot offering. This effectively makes the two companies competitors even as they are bound together by billions of dollars in contracts, IP licences and revenue-sharing agreements. Microsoft, to its credit, has been playing its own long game. It has begun to offer Anthropic's Claude 4 within Office 365, revealing that it isn't trapped by OpenAI's models. In fact, Microsoft began its reassessment exercise back in 2024 when it added OpenAI to the list of companies it considers competitors in its annual report. And with the Inflection AI acquisition the software maker sent a clear signal that OpenAI is not its AI strategy, but merely a part of it.

What remains in place, for now, is the contractual scaffolding that neither side has fully dismantled. Azure remains the exclusive cloud provider for stateless OpenAI APIs, and Microsoft maintains its exclusive license to OpenAI's intellectual property across all models and products. Microsoft will relinquish rights to OpenAI's research once an independent expert panel verifies AGI, or by 2030, whichever comes first. The AGI clause, in particular, is one of the stranger provisions in recent tech history — a contractual trigger for an event that most experts believe does not yet exist. Both companies felt it necessary to restate in February 2026 that its definition remained unchanged. The fact that they needed to say so tells you something about the state of trust between them. The growing-up phase

There is a school of thought that says all of this is simply what successful partnerships look like when the companies involved grow up. What starts as a patron-and-dependent relationship inevitably evolves, and evolution is not the same thing as collapse. Microsoft got what it needed from the partnership — an early lead in the AI era, the credibility of being the company that backed ChatGPT, the infrastructure deals and Azure growth that followed. OpenAI, in turn, got the capital and computing resources it needed to become the defining AI company of its generation. Both parties have now outgrown the original arrangement. But outgrowing a partnership and peacefully departing from it are two different things. OpenAI is headed toward a public market debut — expected in the second half of 2026 — at a potential valuation approaching one trillion dollars. That valuation will be scrutinised intensely, and prospective shareholders will spend a great deal of time reading precisely the kind of risk disclosures from OpenAI. The message to investors is mixed and, on close reading, somewhat alarming. We are, says OpenAI, a company with 900 million weekly active users and \$13.1 billion in 2025 revenue. We are also a company whose future is materially dependent on the goodwill of a partner that now competes with us and which has been preparing its own AI capabilities for years.



bodies. Over time, these plastics move up the food chain and affect fish, birds, and other animals. "So even small particles can slowly disturb the entire coastal ecosystem," Dr. Selvam said. According to Dr. Erath, besides feeding by marine microorganisms, plankton, and marine animals, hazardous polymers such as nylon pose higher ecological risks due to their persistence, chemical additives, and capacity to adsorb pollutants. Fibre-shaped microplastics in particular can alter habitats by modifying the structure of sediments, affecting the benthic — or bottom layer — of seas and the microbial communities there, he explained. There could also be prolonged environmental exposure and long-distance transport of microplastics, highlighting the transboundary nature of microplastic pollution. "These concerns collectively threaten coastal biodiversity, ecosystem stability, and biogeochemical processes," he said. How do human activities contribute? Most microplastics found by the Chennai study team were clearly linked to human activities, according to Dr. Selvam. These include fishing, where damaged nets and ropes shed plastic fragments that break up into microplastics; synthetic clothes, which release minuscule fibres when they are washed; tourism and beach use; and urban sewage and stormwater drains that carry plastics into the sea. "Simply put, everyday plastic use on land eventually reaches the coast," Dr. Selvam said. After reaching the coast, they reenter human bodies via seafood contaminated by microplastics, among other pathways. Seafood in particular can ferry both harmful chemical substances and disease-causing bacteria and other microorganisms into the body, causing tissues to become inflamed and affecting the hormonal and immune systems over longer periods.

Mitchell Marsh looking to be the 'best possible support' for Rishabh Pant at LSG: 'We've got some really good leaders'



GNS News Agency, March 31

Rishabh Pant had a bit of a false start last season as the Lucknow Super Giants' captain and main man. Pant ended the season with a century that pretty much encapsulated the best facets of his sheer batting talent but despite that 61-ball 118, he ended the season with a season's tally of just 269 runs in 13 innings. He will be looking to make amends this year while trying to regain his spot in the Indian limited overs sides and he has a couple of international captains to bank in the LSG squad, one of whom is Australia's Mitchell Marsh.

"It's just about contributing as best you can, being the best support possible for Rishabh. He's a great young guy who leads his team really well. He's always open to feedback, suggestions, and takes on board whatever you say,"

Marsh told PTI in an interview. "We've got some really good leaders within the group, which you need. And for me, it's about contributing where needed."

Marsh said that he finds it easy to work with Aiden Markram, the other important international captain in the LSG squad under whom South Africa made it to the final and semifinal of the 2024 and 2026 T20 World Cups respectively. Marsh scored 627 runs and Markram contributing 445 runs in IPL 2025. "I absolutely loved my time last year with Aiden. We've obviously played against each other a lot in the past. And it's not until you're in the same team that you get to know someone. And obviously, when you go in together, you need to have a strong relationship both on the field and off the field. Last year showed that we became good friends off the field and were able to be a consistent partnership for this franchise."

Lucknow Super Giants start the 2026 season with a match against the Delhi Capitals at home at the Ekana Stadium on April 1. Marsh recalled last season's batting-friendly surfaces at the Ekana Stadium. Yeah, I actually thought the wicket last year was beautiful. We had multiple 200 scores here. And it was nice to be able to, I guess, play seven games at home and understand the conditions. It's obviously a bigger ground than quite a few in India, which is probably why there's a few lower scores. But the ground and the wicket itself last year was fantastic and I expect it to be the same this year," Marsh concluded.

Chess Candidates: Eight players, one crown and a wide-open battle to challenge world champion Gukesh

GNS News Agency, March 31

Chess can sometimes be a funny sport, but it's the math of it that has always been brutal. If you want to become the World Champion, being one of the best is only an entry ticket. The actual path to the summit is a labyrinth of endurance where, in simple terms, you must first qualify for the qualifying event of the qualifying event.

While the World Championship match is the ultimate showdown between two players for the glorious title, the Candidates Tournament is the real engine that drives the biennial chess cycle. It is fueled by a gatekeeping system so exclusive that the prestige of the Candidates Tournament often rivals that of the world title itself.

To get there, you must survive one of two gauntlets. You could play the long game to test your supreme consistency and maintain an elite rating across every format for an entire year, which guarantees a spot in the Candidates through FIDE Circuit Ratings. Or, you plunge into the chaos of the Grand Swiss, where a hundred players fight through nine enervating but non-elimination rounds for just two available spots. For those who failed, there is the World Cup. A month-long, single-elimination marathon panning eight rounds with 206 players, it is a tournament without a safety net. One off-day, and you're done for the cycle. Alongside them, the highest-rated player by average rating over a set period also earns a ticket, rounding out a field where every seat has been earned through an ordeal.

While such is the ordeal to be one of the eight players in the Candidates, the final field still missed some of the most promising names, such as Arjun Erigaisi, Nodirbek Abdusattorov, and Vincent Keymer. Starting Sunday, the 2026 iteration of the Candidates begins in Cyprus with India's R. Praggnanadhaa as the sole representative. No longer the wide-eyed teenager of his first Candidates, he is now a seasoned campaigner of the grind. Pragg has built his game on a combination of dynamic aggression and has an uncanny ability for damage control, meaning even on his off days, he remains a threat to the elite. And now that the nerves of his debut have evaporated, Pragg should feel ready to own the field.

Taking nothing away from the extraordinary efforts of China's Ding Liren and India's D. Gukesh, both of whom fought through their own hardships to claim the title ever since Magnus Carlsen relinquished his crown, winning the championship has become a relatively less arduous battle. Yet, the absence of a single dominant force in the mould of Carlsen, or before him, Vladimir Kramnik and Viswanathan Anand, has opened a door that once felt firmly sealed. Former world champion Garry Kasparov has often pointed to this shift, noting that the era of a singular, long-reigning champion has given way to a more volatile and open landscape. Nonetheless, the task remains challenging for all eight players. The certainty in this Candidates lies in the uncertainty itself that no one enters as an overwhelm-



ing favourite in this event. Among them, Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura stand apart. Caruana is playing his sixth Candidates, while Nakamura's appearance in Cyprus marks his fourth. While to call them clear favourites at this stage would still be an overstatement, the duo is certainly experienced enough and well-equipped to weather the storm imposed by a varied and hungry field.

With Caruana, there is also a certain degree of pedigree attached. He has carried the tag of being a "nearly man" for the better part of a decade, yet he possesses the ability to shed his inhibitions. He only needs to look back at his performance in the 2018 Candidates, where he notched up five wins and finished a full point ahead of Shakhriyar Mamedyarov and Sergey Karjakin before giving Carlsen a run for his money in the world championship. Even if not at his absolute prime, Caruana remains the man to beat in this tournament. For Nakamura, the question is how committed and serious he is about giving himself a genuine chance at this tournament. The American was one of the first players to reach Cyprus, setting up his base well in advance, and a well-focused Nakamura could prove to be a nightmare for any opponent in the event.

For China's Wei Yi, this is a chance to bring back some lost glory after Ding Liren's defeat to Gukesh. If anyone can replicate what Ding achieved, it is Wei. With a monk-like demeanour, he is an extremely solid and hard-to-beat opponent, built for the long grind of a Candidates tournament. Uzbek sensation Javokhir Sindarov is a complete mirror image of Wei. The youngest player in the lineup, Sindarov is a tricky, energetic force and a master in disguise. Riding the high of winning the World Cup, he arrives with momentum and is as big a threat as anyone. Anish Giri, the chirpy, humour-loving Dutch grandmaster, steps into the arena as the winner of the Grand Swiss 2025. Playing his fourth Candidates, he brings a wealth of experience. Alongside Germany's Matthias Bluebaum, Giri could well be the dark horse of the tournament. The Russian representative is not Ian Nepomniachtchi this time but Andrey Esipenko. While Nepomniachtchi had broken the code of how to win the trickiest of events as a two-time winner, Esipenko could take inspiration from his compatriot if he hopes to be anywhere close to contention.

Tejaswin Shankar falls short of 8000 Mark in Decathlon amid wind-assisted performance

GNS News Agency, March 31

Decathlete Tejaswin Shankar started his outdoor season with a solid outing at the David Noble Relays 2026 in Texas on Friday. Competing for the first time in Decathlon this season, Shankar scored 7947 points falling 53 points short of 8000m mark in a wind-aided competition. While Tejaswin bettered his previous personal best of 7826 points, this performance won't be eligible for any records as three events (100m run, 110m hurdles, and Long Jump) were wind aided. The wind assistance in 100m and Long Jump were on the higher side with +4.7 m/s and +4.5 m/s while the 110m hurdles had +2.5 m/s reading. As per the rule of World Athletics, a combined events score is eligible for record if the average wind assistance for 3 events — 100m, long jump, 110 hurdles is less than 2m/s but in Tejaswin's case it is 3.9m/s. Tejaswin registered personal best in 100m (10.59s), 110m hurdles (14.09s), Long Jump (7.66m), Shot Put (13.98m), and Pole Vault (4.35m) with the later two being without wind assistance. Despite the wind assistance, Tejaswin had a great outing overall ending his day one on 4454 points. On the second day, he didn't lose the momentum and started with wind-assisted personal best in 110m hurdles (14.09s) and then a lifetime best of 4.35m in pole vault. He accumulated 6759 points from the 8 events, and the 8000 was looking inevitable, but then a sudden momentum dip in last two events stopped him from achieving that figure.

"Not quite the 8000+ we were all hoping for as the oxy-



gen ran out towards the end," said Tejaswin via a social media post after missing out on 8000 points. Last month, Tejaswin won a gold medal in the Heptathlon event at the Asian Indoor Championships making it his first major combined events gold medal. Tejaswin scored a total of 5993 points breaking his own national record of 5650 points from 2021 and the championship record of 5928 points from 2012. He aims to be the first Indian to break the 8,000-point barrier and has been training with a group of competitive decathletes as an advantage. "The idea is to be among 8,000-point calibre athletes so I can break that barrier. There are two guys here who are around 7800-7900 points. So it's a very strong group. Pole vault is one of their stronger events and one of my weaker ones."

R Ashwin picks CSK's playing XI without MS Dhoni: 'This should be ideal'



GNS News Agency, March 31

Former India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin picked his Chennai Super Kings playing XI without MS Dhoni after two weeks of IPL 2026 on Saturday. The 39-year-old picked Kartik Sharma to bat at number 7, a slot that Dhoni may have occupied had he been fit and ready to play the first match against Rajasthan Royals (RR) in Guwahati on Monday. They will play their first home match of IPL 2026 against the Punjab Kings on April 3. "So!! This should be ideal. Ruturaj, Samson, Urvil, Brevis, Dube, Sarfaraz/Ayush, Kartik Sharma, Akeal, Noor, Henry, Khaleel, Kamboj/Ghosh/

Rahul/Gopal. After 2 weeks, there will be enough info available to tweak if needed," Ashwin wrote on X (formerly Twitter) on Saturday.

Dhoni's absence from the first two weeks of the tournament should clear the path for Sanju Samson to take the gloves for the five-time champions. The 31-year-old was swapped from RR ahead of IPL 2026, in exchange for Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran in one of the most high-profile transfers in recent history. CSK also splurged big at the 2025 auction on two youngsters — Kartik Sharma and Prashant Veer — spending Rs 14.2 crore each on both players, and in Dhoni's absence, both players could have key roles to play for the franchise in the initial matches of IPL 2026.

Dhoni had led CSK for a major part of IPL 2025, after Ruturaj Gaikwad was ruled out of the tournament due to a fractured elbow. The five-time champions endured a torrid season, finishing 10th on the points table. A few months after the season finished, Ashwin announced his retirement from IPL cricket in a bid to play overseas leagues. He was set to become the first male player to feature in the Big Bash League last season, having signed up to play for Sydney Thunder, but had to withdraw after undergoing a knee operation.

Indian relay teams qualify for World Athletics Relays with record-breaking performances

GNS News Agency, March 31

Chandigarh: The Indian relay teams qualified for the World Athletics Relays in Gaborone, Botswana, this May with record-breaking efforts by India B in men's 4x400 and in Mixed Team 4x100 relay competitions in the 1st International Invitational Relay / 3rd National Open Relay Competition 2026 in Chandigarh on Saturday. The India B quartet clocked a stunning 42.30 seconds to win gold and shatter the previous 43.44s mark, while India A took silver at 42.34s—both securing spots at the World Athletics Relays in Gaborone, Botswana, this May. The two squads featuring athletes like Gurinder Singh and Tamilarasu produced seamless baton passes and explosive pace that had the crowd cheering heartily. The Indian teams faced competition from Nepal, the Maldives, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka in the 1st International Invitational Relay.

India A claimed senior mixed 4x400m gold over Sri Lanka in 3:18.90, with youth squads from Tamil Nadu and Chandigarh adding more victories in a meet that highlights the nation's relay surge. India's 4x100m mixed relay team clocked 42.30s to set a new National Record at the National Open Relay 2026. The quartet of Lalu Prasad, Unnathi, Harita, and Jayaram came up with perfect baton exchanges, explosive speed, and a historic finish. In the junior section, Tamil Nadu women dominate the U20 Women's 4x100m relay, clocking 48.38, while Chandigarh clocked



45.44 to win the U20 4x100 Mixed Relay. Competition in Botswana will be held in six relay events—4x100m (men and women), 4x400m (men and women), and mixed relay (4x100m and 4x400m), the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) said in a statement on Friday. As per World Athletics guidelines, the qualification period started from January 1, 2025, and will end on April 5, 2026. Teams within the top-24 World Rankings on the Road to Gaborone will be eligible to compete in Botswana.

The chief national athletics coach, Radhakrishnan Nair, had on Friday expressed confidence in a good show on Saturday, and the teams lived up to that. "We are hopeful other four national relay teams will be successful in achieving the target time to board the flight to Botswana," Nair added.

Andhra Pradesh win 7th IDCA Women's T10 National Cricket Championship for Deaf



GNS News Agency, March 31

Gurugram: The 7th IDCA Women T-10 National Cricket Championship for Deaf 2026 wrapped up, with Andhra Pradesh Women's Team crowned as champions and Delhi Women's Team finishing as runners-up. In the final played on Friday, Andhra Pradesh Women's Team, batting first, scored 73/4 in 10 overs. Delhi Women's team put up a strong fight but fell short by five runs, ending their innings at 68/4 in 10 overs.

The Championship trophy was later awarded by former Indian cricketer Gursharan Singh, who attended the closing ceremony as the chief guest. He was accompanied by Santosh Kumar Rai, Special Commissioner of Trade & Tax; Ompal, a Ranji player; Dev Dutt, Head Coach of the Indian Deaf Team Men's team and Certified BCCI Coach; Susheel Gupta, Coach of the Indian Deaf Team Men's team and in-charge of Bharat Nagar Cricket Ground; and Chander Prakash Kirodiwal, SSE / SP / SSB, DRM, all of whom

served as guests of honour.

Talking about the successful completion of the Championship, which was hosted by the Haryana Deaf Cricket Association, Sumit Jain, President, IDCA, said, "Over the past five days, we have witnessed exceptional talent, determination, and true sportsmanship displayed by our incredible deaf athletes, and it was truly a commendable performance we saw here today by both the Andhra Pradesh and Delhi Teams, who gave it their all. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Chief Guest and former Indian Cricketer, Gursharan Singh ji, for giving us his valuable time and being present here for this event."

"I would also like to thank Dhiraj Kumar, President, HDCA, for being such a wonderful host for this event. Your presence here at this event will help us motivate more players, especially women players, to take up cricket as a career. I would also like to extend a special thanks to Cyrus Poonawalla for his blessings and encouragement; the IDCA Women's seventh T10 National Cricket Championship for the Deaf has been a grand success only because of his continued support and commitment to promoting inclusive sports," he added. The Indian Deaf Cricket Association (IDCA), supported by the BCCI and recognised by the Deaf International Cricket Council and Asian Deaf Cricket Association, is organising the championship. D. Kanthamma from Andhra Pradesh was the standout player in the tournament, earning multiple accolades. She was named Woman of the Match in the final, as well as the Best Batswoman of the Series. Additionally, she was crowned Player of the Series for her consistent performances. Priya Dixit from Uttar Pradesh was recognised as the Best Bowler of the Series for her exceptional bowling efforts.

JioStar unveils multi-language coverage plan for TATA IPL 2026

GNS News Agency, March 31

Hyderabad: JioStar, the official broadcast and digital partner of the TATA IPL, announced its presentation for the 2026 season, replete with T20 champions, former internationals, world-class presenters, accomplished experts, seasoned broadcasters, and language and innovation options that will elevate fans' viewing experience.

For the first time, fans will watch along with TATA IPL champions through a dedicated digital feed as the action unfolds on JioHotstar. JioStar's presentation of over 20 feeds will be brought to viewers by more than 150 presenters and experts across JioHotstar and Star Sports Network. Star Sports Network will present the world's greatest T20 carnival in English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada, while JioHotstar will offer fans as many as 12 language options, including English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, and Malayalam. These will be enhanced by two audience-inclusive feeds — Indian Sign Language and an audio descriptive feed.

In addition, JioHotstar will once again bring MaxView in Hindi and English, and also allow fans to choose a vantage point from which they can experience the game through a multi-cam experience featuring five camera angles such as Hero Cam, Stump Cam, Batter Cam, Field View, and a

multi-view angle.

For the first time ever, former India spin maestro and CSK legend Ravichandran Ashwin will pick up the commentator's mic in JioStar's studios. Ashwin, an accomplished storyteller and analyst of the game, will bring his insights to live action for the first time. He will be joined by India and TATA IPL legend Virender Sehwag, RCB legend AB de Villiers, ICC Men's T20 World Cup champion Irfan Pathan, CSK's TATA IPL winners Suresh Raina, Harbhajan Singh, and Faf du Plessis, and former RCB captain and mentor Anil Kumble. JioStar's expert panel will be bolstered by seasoned broadcasters and former international legends such as Ravi Shastri, Sunil Gavaskar, Michael Clarke, Eoin Morgan, Aaron Finch, Dale Steyn, and Kevin Pietersen, among many others.

JioStar will also introduce a dedicated digital feed in Hindi that will feature former TATA IPL champions, legends, and some of the best analytical minds in the business for a unique watch-along experience. Ravichandran Ashwin, Suresh Raina, Harbhajan Singh, Virender Sehwag, Irfan Pathan, Umesh Yadav, Cheteshwar Pujara, and Aakash Chopra will come together on the feed to regale viewers with first-hand dressing room stories, never-heard-before tales about TATA IPL players, and decode the players' mindset as live action unfolds.

Anupam Kher pays Mahesh Bhatt Rs 25,000 for every film he does, says it's a 'ritual': 'Started with Rs 250, he says there's inflation'



Anupam Kher made his debut in the movies back in the 1980s with Mahesh Bhatt's film Saaransh. And in a recent interview, Anupam revealed that he continues to pay his dues to the director for giving him his first break. Anupam shared that after every film that he does, he gives Rs 25,000 to Mahesh, and revealed that they started this ritual back in the day with just Rs 500, which has now increased to Rs 25,000. Anupam, in a chat with Pinkvilla, was also asked if he would want to work in a remake of any of his 550 films and the actor said that if given a choice, he would like to do an action version of Saaransh. "I want to do Saaransh 2 as an action actor. I spoke to Mahesh Bhatt a month ago. I told him Bhatt saab, 'I really want to

do action because I am working on myself'. I do display my body at the risk of being laughed at. I feel very happy about it. I would want my character to save people via action. Like in Taken, so I want to do something like that," he said. Anupam then recalled how he first started honouring his 'guru' Mahesh Bhatt in his early days and shared, "He gave me my first break so back then I would give him Rs 250 for every film. Now it's Rs 25,000. He says this is the result of inflation. It went from Rs 250 to Rs 500 to Rs 1000 to Rs 5000 and now is Rs 25,000. I just gave him an envelope last week. Now he just holds the envelope and he knows how much is in it. But I really like it. It's more of a ritual than anything else. It's a comedy."

Anupam Kher had previously shared that when Mahesh Bhatt decided to recast him in Saaransh, and cast Sanjeev Kumar in his place, he "cursed" the director. In an earlier chat with ANI, he had shared that he had been rehearsing for his part for months when he got to know, just days prior to the shoot, that he was going to be replaced by Sanjeev Kumar. This news broke Anupam, and he decided to leave the city of Mumbai, with all his belongings. But, before he left, he paid a visit to Mahesh Bhatt. "I took the cab to his house, and I walked up the stairs. He praised me for taking the news sportingly, but I told him to look out of his window and see the car that was standing there. It had all my belongings, and I told him that before leaving, I wanted to tell him what a fraud he is... I wanted to make final climactic statement, and I told him that as a Brahmin man, I was cursing him," he recalled. Upon seeing his dedication, Bhatt changed his mind and decided to cast Anupam in this role.

'This is outrageous': Gabriella Demetriades hits back after Shobhaa De slams Arjun Rampal's 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' speech

Arjun Rampal is receiving widespread acclaim for his performance in Dhurandhar: The Revenge, where he plays Major Iqbal, an ISI officer in Aditya Dhar's spy thriller. However, his recent gesture at an awards event, where he ended his speech with 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', did not go down well with writer Shobhaa De, who criticised it in her latest column. Rampal's partner, Gabriella Demetriades, has now responded to her remarks.

What Arjun Rampal said At the HELLO! Hall of Fame Awards, Arjun Rampal spoke about his experience working on Dhurandhar 2 and also opened up about witnessing the 26/11 attacks firsthand. He said, "On my birthday, I saw the horrors of 26/11 play out. In the morning, when I drove back home, I had to stop at least three times because I felt like I was going to be sick. When Aditya Dhar narrated the 26/11 sequence to me, I knew I was going to have my revenge, and that's what I did with Dhurandhar. All I want to say is, Bharat Mata Ki Jai." Arjun Rampal's closing remark at the awards show sparked criticism from writer Shobhaa De, who addressed it in her column for The Print, titled 'Why Arjun Rampal saying 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' should worry Bollywood audiences.' In the piece, she raised concerns about what she described as a shifting ideological tone within the industry.

"The takeover of Bollywood by Right-wingers is scary in the long run. The agenda is no longer hidden—it is brazenly out there. The narratives are being manipulated and rescripted to exclude all those who don't subscribe to the ideology. Conversely, those who do are richly rewarded," she wrote. She further added, "When stars start using platforms such as awards nights to display loyalty and demonstrate allegiance to filmmakers creating political myths for public consumption, it's time for alert audiences to assert their rights and call out the manipulators." "Until then, perhaps movie awards will come with a caveat: Actors will be mandated to chorus 'Bharat



Mata Ki Jai!', glittering trophy victoriously held up to catch the spotlight." The column soon drew a response from Arjun Rampal's partner, Gabriella Demetriades, who reacted sharply in the comments section, writing, "This is outrageous." Demetriades had earlier praised Rampal's performance in the film with an Instagram post. She wrote, "Dhurandhar day ... saw it last night and have to say, it's my favourite Hindi film of all time. @rampal72 patience, persistence and positivity, you're always inspiring and always raising the bar. #adityadhar is a legend and @ranveersingh you're a star. The casting is a masterpiece @castinghabra each and every person in the film is epic." According to Sacnilk, the Ranveer Singh-starrer collected Rs 47.70 crore in India on Wednesday, taking its domestic gross to Rs 744.58 crore and net collections to Rs 623.42 crore. Internationally, the film has earned Rs 61.92 crore so far, pushing its worldwide gross to Rs 1,006.50 crore. With this, Dhurandhar 2 has crossed the Rs 1,000 crore milestone within just a week of release, becoming the fastest Hindi film to achieve the feat.

Lucky is back: Race Gurram returns to theatres on Allu Arjun's birthday

Before Pushpa made Allu Arjun a pan-India name, there was Race Gurram's Lucky: carefree, unstoppable, and entirely his own kind of hero. The film is set to return to theatres on April 8, 2026, coinciding with Arjun's birthday, and the re-release trailer, unveiled on Thursday, serves as a reminder of why it has never truly left audiences' minds. How Race Gurram started Race Gurram, directed by Surender Reddy, and starring Allu Arjun and Shruti Haasan in the lead roles, originally released on April 11, 2014. The film, with music composed by S Thaman, was produced by Nallamalupu Bujji under Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Productions. The cast included Brahmanandam, Prakash Raj, Ravi Kishan, Kick Shyam, and Saloni in key supporting roles.

The story follows two brothers who could not be more different. Ram, played by Shaam, is a sincere cop trying to bring down a factionist politician named Siva Reddy, played by Ravi Kishan. Lucky, played by Allu Arjun, is a happy-go-lucky guy who gets pulled into the conflict when he accidentally intercepts evidence against Siva Reddy. What follows is part action film, part comedy, and entirely Allu Arjun doing what he does best. Race Gurram became the highest grossing Telugu film of 2014, becoming Allu Arjun's first film to gross over Rs 100 crore. It also became the first Allu Arjun film to earn one million dollars in the United States. What made it work was not any single element but the way everything fit together. Allu Arjun's energy as Lucky was perfectly calibrated for mass entertainment. Surender Reddy kept the tone loud and fun without losing the emotional thread between the brothers. S. Thaman's background score gave the film a pulse that fans still associate with its best moments. Songs like "Cinema Chooipistha Mava" and "Boochade Boochade" became instant favourites and have never really left Telugu playlists.

The Brahmanandam factor

If there is one element from Race Gurram that has truly outlasted the film itself, it is Brahmanandam's por-



Before Pushpa made Allu Arjun a pan-India name, there was Race Gurram's Lucky: carefree, unstoppable, and entirely his own kind of hero. The film is set to return to theatres on April 8, 2026, coinciding with Arjun's birthday, and the re-release trailer, unveiled on Thursday, serves as a reminder of why it has never truly left audiences' minds.

trayal of Kill Bill Pandey. The character appears in the second half and effectively takes over the narrative, delivering a string of scenes that had theatres in uproar. The film's comic sequences went on to inspire parodies and spoofs across television and online platforms, particularly its over-the-top moments, including the Kill Bill-inspired track. Clips of Brahmanandam from the film continue to circulate on social media over a decade later, which says everything about how deeply that performance lodged itself into the collective memory of Telugu film fans. Race Gurram released across 11,550 theatres worldwide in its original run. The re-release will not match that scale, but it does not need to. For the generation that saw it in theatres the first time and has been rewatching it on streaming since, seeing Race Gurram on a big screen again is reason enough. For younger viewers who only know it through clips and memes, this is a chance to experience it the way it was meant to be seen.

When Rani Mukerji paid an emotional tribute to Sanjay Leela Bhansali after winning Best Actress at Screen Awards: 'You are the light in my career'



Ahead of the Chetak Screen Awards 2026, set to take place on April 5 in Mumbai, we look back at some of the most memorable moments from past editions of the awards. One such highlight came during the 2006 edition

of the Screen Awards, when the critically acclaimed film Black emerged as the biggest winner of the night. While Black won Best Film, Best Director (Sanjay Leela Bhansali), Best Actor (Amitabh Bachchan), Rani Mukerji took home the Best Actress trophy, marking a dominant sweep for the film at the ceremony. Along with Rani Mukerji, Juhi Chawla (My Brother... Nikhil), Konkona Sen Sharma (Page 3), Preity Zinta (Salaam Namaste), and Sharmila Tagore (Viruddh... Family Comes First) were nominated in the Best Actress category. To do the honours, Tabu took the stage along with child actor Rucha Vaidya. Rani Mukerji followed to a round of applause.

In her acceptance speech, Rani Mukerji said, "Firstly, thank you everybody for acknowledging Black and my performance. It's a very special film for me. And I can't go away before thanking a few people. Firstly, Sanjay, thank you for giving me Michelle. This is the brightest gift you could have ever given me. And you are the light in my career. I love you, Sanjay. And Sangeeta, who taught me the sign language. I couldn't have done even one shot without Sangeeta. Thank you so much for being with me and being patient with me. And also for not letting Sanjay okay the take until I do my sign language properly." Rani concluded by saying, "And above all, Amit uncle, I really miss you here today. Thank you for being the best co-star and helping me. Thank you."

Aamir Khan says he is yet to watch Dhurandhar 2: 'I believe it is doing well'

Dhurandhar 2 is currently on a box office rampage. After rewriting records with its massive opening weekend, the film has continued its strong momentum into the weekdays, pulling in impressive collections even on working days. Several prominent voices from the film industry have taken to social media to share their reviews, with many praising the film's scale, ambition, and cinematic spectacle. However, one notable absence from the conversation has been Aamir Khan, who is yet to watch the film.

Speaking about the Ranveer Singh-starrer at a recent event, Aamir said, "I believe it is doing really well. I have not seen the film yet. But I hear only praises. Dhurandhar 1 and now Dhurandhar 2—both films have done exceptionally well, and my very best wishes to them." Interestingly, unlike the first installment, several Bollywood stars have maintained a visible silence this time around. Among them is Hrithik Roshan, who had earlier acknowledged that while he did not align with the film's politics, he admired its scale and execution.

Adding another layer to the ongoing debate, Imran Khan—Aamir Khan's nephew—recently made headlines for his candid remarks on the rising trend of hyper-violent protagonists. During a Reddit AMA session, Imran stated, "Yeah, no interest in playing a hairy, angry man covered in blood. I think that genre is generously represented."



Expanding on his views, he expressed concern over how such films often glorify unchecked aggression, writing, "I'm disturbed by the way these films coddle every violent tantrum thrown by emotionally immature man-children who can't accept rejection." He further drew a clear distinction between depiction and endorsement, adding, "There's a significant difference between portraying violence and validating it. I see this as people chasing a trend without consideration. My own sensibilities wouldn't permit me to be part of a narrative I consider irresponsible."

Years before Rs 1000 cr Dhurandhar, Ranveer Singh had to face casting couch: 'He tried to negotiate with me'

Ranveer Singh has delivered the highest grossing Hindi film of all time with the Dhurandhar franchise, and the actor, who was once known for being extravagant with his fashion choices, has completely mesmerised the audience with his performance as Jaskirat Singh Rangil/Hamza Ali Mazari. While Ranveer might be one of the most successful people in the Hindi film industry today, the actor went through his share of struggles before he got his first break with Yash Raj Films back in 2010. In some of his earlier interviews, Ranveer had opened up about facing casting couch where he was inappropriately propositioned by a casting agent.

In a chat with NDTV, Ranveer had shared that a "sleazy gentlemen" who was a casting agent, called him to his residence and when Ranveer handed over his portfolio, he barely looked at it. "He kept it on the side and he said, 'You have to be smart, you have to be sexy. Whoever is smart and sexy, they move ahead. I can send you to a lot of offices, then you will tell me, take, touch...'" Ranveer recalled. The Dhurandhar actor said that he was in "complete shock" with whatever was happening. "He had the gall to try and negotiate with me. He said, 'Okay,

we won't do anything, just let me touch it'. Then he said, 'Okay, I will only see it'. I was like 'no'. He was heartbroken when I said no and left that place, like a jilted lover," he shared and added that he later got to know that the same agent had tried to be inappropriate with another struggling actor as well. "It's a very real thing that happens. I have experienced it first hand," he said. In another chat with Zoom, Ranveer said that when he was sitting across from this casting agent, he had many thoughts in his head. "There were many thoughts running in my head when he was propositioning me in his sleazy way. I thought I will just storm out of here or I am going to punch this guy in the face or I am going to yell at him," he shared and added that he decided to turn it into an "acting observational exercise" and so he continued to sit there. "I observed this conversation as a third party. I was observing him as a sleazy casting agent so in the future, after having observed him, if I was to ever play a character like that, I would model it on him. I would base my character on him," he said and summarised it as a "crazy experience." Ranveer Singh has been in the movies for 16 years now. His latest release Dhurandhar 2 has earned over Rs 1000 crore at the global box office in a week's time.

'The memories will stay forever': Vijay Deverakonda, Rashmika Mandanna pen tribute to three women behind their wedding

Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna are celebrating one month of marriage today, March 26, exactly a month after they tied the knot on February 26 in Udaipur. The ceremony honoured both their cultures, with a traditional Telugu wedding in the morning and a Kodava ceremony for Rashmika in the evening. The celebrations stretched over several days, ending with a star-studded reception at Taj Krishna in Hyderabad on March 4. To mark the one month milestone, Vijay and Rashmika posted something on Instagram that stood out. Not wedding photos, not a romantic tribute for each. Instead, they took the time to name and thank three women who, in his own words, made sure he and "Rushie" had the most joyous wedding. It is the kind of post that people do not always think to write, and that is exactly why it has been getting the attention it deserves.

Vijay posted, "There are a few big moments in all our lives, we will all reach those moments at some point and stand face to face with it, and before you know it you would have passed through it," he wrote. "But if you do it right, the memories from it will stay forever with you, bringing

you and all joy. And this I want to ensure always." The first person he thanked was his jewellery designer, Arpita. He described her as someone who made the word "not possible" disappear entirely. "I asked them things that I saw in my head that nobody was even making, and they came back with the most beautiful sketches, more artistic than even my dreams and brought them to reality," he wrote. "You did something special, Arpita, and I have immense love for you." The second was his friend Aishwarya, whom he calls ICU. He described her involvement in the wedding not as that of a helper but of someone who showed up before she was even asked. "Even without me asking, she was there from the moment I decided to get married to make sure me and Rushie had fun, from trips to selecting the venue to tasting food, getting drunk doing it, getting the clothes to reality, the jewellery, invites, decor, travel," he wrote. To honour her, Vijay said he made a decision about what he would wear at the reception. "On the final day of the celebrations, all jewellery I wore would be hers. So I wore her anklets as my necklace,