



SPECIAL EDITION: INTERNATIONAL **WOMEN'S DAY 2025**



Govt. Initiatives for Women Safety Continue to Falter Pg. 3

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Forged in Grit: Shyamli Vijay Jadhav's March to Glory Pg.2

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Women-Centric Welfare Schemes: Empowerment or Political Strategy?

Schemes, including BJP's Lado Lakshmi Yojana and Congress' Gruha Lakshmi Yojana, are viewed as important measures to increase women vote shares.

By Kashifa Wisal & Aditi S Bade

PUNE: India witnessed the rise of women-oriented welfare schemes in recent times with political parties unveiling economic support and schemes to empower women. The schemes, including the BJP's Lado Lakshmi Yojana and Congress' Gruha Lakshmi Yojana, are viewed measures important to help them increase their women voters. Yet, the question remains: are these schemes really helping women, or are they mere instruments for political advantage?

On the national stage, Minister Narendra Modi's Subhadra Yojana in Odisha, which offers ₹10,000 annually to women aged 21 to 60, follows a similar approach. Benefiting over a crore women, this scheme aims to ensure financial independence through regular cash flow.

BJP has released the Lado Lakshmi Yojana, in the 2024 Harvana assembly election manifesto. Women of Haryana will be given ₹2,100 every month under the scheme, with the intention of launching it next financial year. Haryana BJP chief Mohan Lal Badoli highlighted the BJP's dediation to enhancing women's economic independence.

Other states, like Madhya



Karnataka's Gruha Yojana introduced financial aid schemes cater to women. acknowledging them as critical

The Ladli Behna Yojana in Madhya Pradesh, introduced months ahead of the 2023 assembly elections, pays ₹1,250 per month to women who are eligible through direct bank transfer. Karnataka's Gruha Lakshmi Yojana, which offers ₹2,000 per month to women heads of BPL families, played an important role in winning over women's votes, and over 1.33 crore women benefited. A few other states have implemented similar schemes. West Bengal's Lakshmi Bhandar Scheme and Maharashtra's Mukhyamantri-Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana providing ₹1,500 per month) offer financial support, with Maharashtra also providing

Pradesh's Ladli Behna Yojana incentives such as free LPG cylinders. These schemes are not just about money but also about empowering women by training and assisting them, such as Guiarat's Sakhi Mandal Scheme and Kerala's Jwala Scheme, which encourage women entrepreneurs-

> Political commentator Sajjan Kumar says that even as these programs add to the woman's voice in decision-making, their real test of empowerment is their ability to bring about sustainable change. "If empowerment is about empowering women to control household expenditure and spur entrepreneurship, such schemes can serve as a catalyst," he says. Despite the benefits, the true effectiveness of these schemes in empowering women remains unclear. While many women receive financial aid, questionable whether such shortterm relief leads to long-term empowerment. These schemes

often overlook broader needs like skill development, healthcare, and education.

For instance, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao program in Haryana and Rajasthan's Rajshree Yojana emphasize the education and welfare of girls but should be a part of a more comprehensive framework that addresses child marriage, gender discrimination, and hazardous work. Financial assistance alone might not be sufficient without addressing these underlying issues.

Swati Dyahadroy, an academician at the Women's Studies Center of Savitribai Phule University, critiques programs such as Maharashtra's Ladki Bahin Yojana.

She says, "Ladki Bahin scheme has a short-run political agenda and was shortsighted in the sense that it provided no real relief to women. The state must improve basic infrastructure, provide safety, and remove barriers such as underpaid labor and patriarchal constraints that women's participation," she said, adding:

"Rather than providing money, schemes should work towards changing women's status and filling the gap between strategic and substantive gender needs. Schemes such as Ladki are ineffective and Bahin counterproductive for the poor."

INK BRIEFS

Amarnath Yatra in Jammu & Kashmir to be held from 3rd July to 9th August

The holy 38 day annual Hindu pilgrimage Amarnath Yatra which is of 3,880 meters to the holy cave shrine in south Kashmir will start on 3rd July. The decision was taken into effect after the 48th board meeting of Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) under the guidance of chairperson Lt Governor Manoj Sinha at the Raj Bhawan. During the meeting, the increasing flow of pilgrims were also discussed along with the measures to be taken to control the crowd.

Prashant Kishor predicts yet another switch by Nitish Kumar, after Bihar polls

Election strategist - turned politician Prashanth Kishor has claimed that the JD(U) president Nitish Kumar will contest the upcoming assembly election in Bihar in alliance with the BJP but he has also mentioned that he may switch sides later, with expectations for another term as the Chief Minister.

Jaishankar, UK PM Starmer discuss Ukraine crisis, bilateral ties during London

The External Affairs Minister of India, S. Jaishankar met the British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on 4th of March, and discussed the ongoing Ukraine conflict and UK's take on the war. The meeting happened almost days after Starmer hosted an emergency gathering of European leaders who are in support of Ukraine and its President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, after a tense public gathering between Zelenskky and US President Donald Trump and vice President JD Vance at the White House

'I was a Saree': Stitching Together Sustainability, Empowerment, and Tradition

By Krishika Dinesh Rathod



PUNE: In the bustling streets of Mumbai, discarded saris that once embellished girls with grace find a new reasonone which empowers different girls and promotes sustainable fashion. 'I was a Sari', a social employer founded in 2014 by Italian entrepreneur Stefano Funari, is revolutionizing the fashion industry via upcycling vintage saris into current garments and add-ons while presenting meaningful employment to ladies from marginalised groups.

Breathing New Life into old Sarees

The initiative takes used sarees vibrant pieces of India's cultural historical past and transforms them into fashionable accessories consisting of scarves, luggage, earrings, and clothes. Instead of letting these fabrics contribute to fabric waste, I

as a Sari repurposes them, giving every piece a new story. By doing so, the initiative champions gradual fashion, encouraging moral and sustainable purchaser choices. "In each piece we create, there's a record, a beyond life of the cloth. But more importantly, there's a destiny for the woman making it," says founder Stefano Funari. His vision goes beyond sustainability—he aims to provide solid employment, monetary independence, and selfbelief to women who formerly had limited opportunities.

Empowering Women, One Stitch at a Time

At the heart of I was a Sari are the ladies who meticulously craft these unique fashion portions. Many of them come from deprived backgrounds, where monetary independence becomes an inconceivable dream. Through and layout, they now earn a strong income, permitting them to aid their families and reshape their futures. For years, I had no way to make a contribution to my family earnings. Now, I now not most effectively earn my own cash but also sense reputable and independent," stocks Meera, one of the artisans. "I by no means imagined I'd be operating with an international logo, however these days, our paintings are identified as international."

A Sustainable Approach to Fashion

With the fashion enterprise being a prime contributor to pollutants, I was a Sari promotes an extra accountable opportunity. repurposing pre-cherished fabric, the initiative extensively reduces textile waste, proving that sustainability and style coexist. "Our challenge is to

schooling in sewing, embroidery, assign the short-style mind-set. We need to reveal the arena that fashion may be ethical, round, and empowering at the same time," says Funari.

International Recognition and

Gucci Collaboration

What started out as a small initiative in Mumbai gained global popularity once I was a Sari partnered with the luxurious style house Gucci. Through this collaboration, Gucci's professional artisans educated the women in superior embroidery strategies, in addition refining their craftsmanship and improving the best of the products. This partnership opened new doorways, positioning I Was A Sari as a globally identified moral logo. "The schooling with Gucci became life-converting," says Sita, some other artisan. "I in no way conceive of paintings on embroidery that is sought after the world over. It makes me happy with what I do."

A movement toward deliberately consumerism

As the demand for moral fashion increases, I was a Sari, for example. Consumers today have the power to make a difference by choosing brands that affect people and planets.



Forged in Grit: Shyamli Vijay Jadhav's March to Glory

From a Mechanical Engineer to an Indian Army Officer, Jadhav's Journey Exemplifies Strength, Resilience, and Breaking Barriers



OTA Cadet Shyamli Vijay Jadhav proudly decked up in her army uniform

By Prachi Mishra and Chanakya Ch

sounds boots marching across the parade ground, the crisp slap of a salute, and the glittering stars waiting to be pinned on the freshly commissioned shoulders-this is a moment of pride, sacrifice, and triumph. Among the many cadets preparing to step into the ranks of the Indian Army on March 8, 2025, one name stands out-Officer Cadet Shyamli Vijay Jadhav. A 27year old BTech in Mechanical Engineering from Thane, Maharashtra, Jadhav is not just getting commissioned; she is stepping into the realm of history and will carry on the legacy of women who blazed trails in the armed forces.

The journey to the Indian Army for Jadhav was not only about putting on the uniform, but, more importantly, it was also about proving that any barrier can be pushed through by zeal and grit. The cadet was fascinated since childhood by the armed forces, but it was the Army's discipline and commitment to service that drew her to it. The momentum

to join was from her dual passion for engineering and an ethos of governance by the spirit of the Indian Army, which naturally made her head Training at the academy was anything but a cakewalk. Coming from a batch of 180, only 18 were women. underscoring the truth of the challenge into an environment whose men have been patrons for years. Physical endurance was definitely among the toughest. When Jadhav first attempted the standard 2.4 km run, she struggled to complete it. Yet, by the final stages of training, she found herself taking part in the 'Run Back'-a grueling 40 km endurance exercise. carrying a 13 kg backpack in full combat gear.

The transformation was not just physical but mental.
"It proved that the body follows where the mind leads," she reflected.
Challenges lay in the way.

Challenges lay in the way, more than physical ones. Military training puts cadets through their limits of endurance, but the physiological encumbrances come naturally for women cadets. The training and rigorous workout schedules

"affected their well-being, such as irregular cycles among female cadets. But all of that, for Jadhav, mitigated by sheer grit and a robust support system.

There were moments of doubt, but seeing my fellow cadets push through inspired me to do the same," she said. The Indian Army boasts a long tradition of trailblazing women who have forged paths for those after them. In 1992, the Army began the induction of women officers into non-medical roles, marking a significant push toward gender inclusion.

Pioneers like Major Priya
Jhingan, commissioned in 1993
among the first 25 women
officers, have stood up as
advocates for women's equal
share in the Army. Her
movement from Lady Cadet No.
1 to becoming a Major in the
Judge Advocate General
Department exemplifies the
changing dynamics in the armed
forces.

The gradual opening of the doors of combat roles for women is what Jadhav terms something needed and an inevitability. "Women have already proved their capabilities in grave military operations. them opportunities will only make a stronger armed force," she said. With only hours left before her graduation. Shyamli is prepared to say her final goodbyes to the training ground.



Urban Company's Video-Proof Policy: An Ethical Concerns for both Customers and Workers?

Technicians along with clientele raise concerns regarding UC's video-proof policy that many believe is an invasion of privacy

By Janhvi Ahuja and Naysa Shrivastava



The city of Pune witnessed a crucial staged by technicians of Urban Company. Hundreds of employees gathered around the areas of Baner and Bavdhan demanding reforms in company policies while revolting against better wages. A pivotal point put forth by the workers was the company's video-proof policy designed to check AC repairs. This became a decisive part of the protest as many customers reported against this approach, calling it an invasion of privacy.

These complaints from customers, unfortunately, directly affect the technicians as the clientele can provide negative feedback and reviews employees, indefinitely limiting chances further employment. In regards to this issue, the Pune-based Gig Workers' Union initiated the submission of a formal letter that addressed their concerns of disservice against the company and the Baner Police.

While reporting on the protests initiated by the AC technicians, The Ink Reporters witnessed the workers raising their concerns while demanding fair wages. They delved into discussion with one of he workers from Urban Company who explaine the reason behind the protests and talked about the measures taken by the company workers from Urban Company who explaine the reason behind the

protests and talked about the measures taken by the company to meet the demands of the AC technicians, "Our company has issued some more stringent rules for the benefits of customers but these rules are not working in favour for the technicians as it is hampering their commission," he said.

He emphasised that the new policies have increased their work and in return they are not getting enough salary. The policies have included video-proof submission to the company after repairing the AC's, 12-14 videos should be taken and any not less than that."They have to go to different places and every household has their own privacy concerns, some people don't allow them to click pictures or videos and this can impact their rating negatively, commission and job security is dependent on the ratings and the new policies are a threat to their job safety," he added.

"We have minimized some of the restrictions but they want us to completely demolish the policies and we are not going to do that because there are other factors we have to take into consideration. We can't remove our safety policies because anything can happen to our customers, we respect their safety concerns."

The protest raises ethical concerns as the video-proof policy could also invade the privacy of the customers.

She Lodge: An Initiative by Cochin Municipal Corporation for Women

By R. Rakendu, Thamanna Sadique & Shubhangi Chauhan

'She Lodge', one of the biggest enterprises put forth by Kudumbashree, a governmentrun women empowerment and eradication programme, was a project put forward Cochin Mayor Corporation Welfare Anilkumar and Standing Committee Chairperson Sheeba Lal.

Lone women travellers face difficulties at some point in their journey, especially when it comes to finding a safe place to stay. But that is not the case for women travelling through Kochi—'She Lodge' is now a reality.

The lodging establishment provides 96 accommodation spaces at two different dormitories, alongside features that give access to round-the-clock defense service and library access, together with uninterrupted electricity and water supplies.

More than 192 individuals stay daily at the facility, mostly because every available room fills up each weekend. She Lodge began operations after the corporation renovated Libra Hotel into its current

She Lodge officially welcomed the public on Women's Day, through its official opening performed by Minister M.B.

Rajesh in November of the previous year. Women have used the service at She Lodge more than 2,500 times during its initial six-month period of operation.

The project was supposed to come into action in 2017, but it gained momentum only after 2020. It was opened to the public only on March 8, 2023—Women's Day—though it was inaugurated by M.B. Rajesh, Kerala Local Self Government Minister, in 2022.

Sheeba Lal has been given the responsibility of overseeing the lodge's operations. The lodge is located near Samrudhi, a hotel run by Kudumbashree itself, where tasty meals are served at cheap rates. The organisation made a profit of twenty-four lakh rupees in less than a year.



She Lodge provides 96 accommodation spaces at two different dormitories

More than 3,500 women have experienced the stay and hospitality at She Lodge. In an interview with The Week, Sheeba Lal stated that even if the rooms are unavailable, they allow women to stay for a night if they feel unsafe. Located near Ernakulam Town Railway Station, Kacheripadi, the lodge is even more accessible for travellers.

Rooms are available only for

women at a low cost. Sheeba Lal also added that the lodge has enough staff and security personnel available 24/7.

Their accommodation facilities prevent them from taking in students, as they will not be able to provide rooms for 2 to 3 years, which is the general duration of academic courses. Instead, he says, She Lodge accommodates students who are doing internships, as they do not require rooms for long durations.





Government Initiatives for Women Safety Continue to Falter in Pune

BJP's Lado Lakshmi Yojana and Other State Initiatives Targeting Women's Financial Independence, Enough to Drive Long-Term Empowerment?

By Nethra Sailesh & Sidhiam Choudhary

PUNE: On Tuesday, March
25, a woman hospital
counsellor was raped in a
stationary store in
Maharashtra State Road
Transport Corporation
(MSRTC)'s Shivsahi bus at the
Swargate bus stop in Pune.

The SafeCity app, an initiative by the Red Dot Foundation of India, crowdsources data about harassment and abuse that occurs in public spaces, identifies the hotspots across the states, and makes the data accessible for users.

Data until 2024 shows that over 72.9% of the cases went unreported. A regional breakdown indicated that Kasba Peth (174 reports), Shivajinagar (103 reports), and Hadapsar (79 reports) had the highest number of reports on the app for Pune.

When asked about these jarring numbers, ElsaMarie D'Silva, Founder, Red DotFoundation India, told the Times of India that they



Women's safety struggles as government initiatives fall short. Representation Photo: Times of India

represent the city's shortcomings in urban safety. There is a lack of civic facilities, such as proper lighting on the streets, a quick and effective redressal system in place, and adequate security in public spaces.

Months after INK's initial report on operational gaps in the Government Women's Initiatives, where it was revealed that there were various troubling gaps in the system, it was found that, of the 733 functional One

Stop Centres listed by the National ommission of Women (NCW), OSCs in Mumbai City, Mumbai Suburban, Nasik, agpur, and Satara were unreachable. Calls frequently went unanswered, led to incorrect numbers, or connected to the wrong numbers. In response to this issue, INK reporters did a follow-up to see if the problem persists.

When asked about the OSC network, Jyoti Pathania, a

ormer lawyer and founder-director of Chaitanya Mahila now associated with the government-led scheme Shakti Sadan, claimed that one functional OSC is working in Mundhwa, Pune, which, for the record, has not been mentioned in the 733 functional OSCs listed by NCW. Despite various attempts, INK reporters failed to connect with the centre, as calls went unanswered.

The women's helpline numbers (181 & 1091), set up to provide a 24-hour immediate and emergency response to women in distress, also went unanswered, with no efforts made to call back.

When asked about the helpline numbers, Jyoti added, "The women's national helpline number 112 works. But they cannot provide results immediately." While government initiatives continue to show problems in functioning within the city, Pune also sees a rise in private NGOs filling the shoes of the government.

Organizations like Snehadhar, Wings for Dreams, Listening Post, or even the initiatives by the Red Dot Foundation offer aid and help in different ways to people—either through shelter, rehabilitation, upskilling, or counselling.

ENTERTAINMENT BRIEFS

Nayanthara asks fans to stop calling her a lady superstar.

In an extremely sincere note written to her fans, Naaynthara has requested them to not call her by the name "lady superstar" and instead call her by her original name. The actor expressed her gratitude towards her fans for their love and affection and also explained that these kinds of titles can sometimes create a distance between her and her work

Ayesha Takia breaks silence after husband Farhan Azmi's arrest in Goa.

Recently an FIR has been registered against Ayesha's husband Farhan Azmi in Goa. He has been booked for negligent driving. According to reports, he has been accused of creating chaos in Candolim and fought with the locals there. After the news, Ayesha wrote on her official insta story that the night was scary for the family, her husband was brutally threatened and feared for their lives as local goons of Goa surrounded them and harassed them for hours.

Chhaava box office collection

The historical 2025 Indian drama Chhaava, starring Vicky Kaushal as the lead, has evolved as one of the biggest Hindi language films of all time. The movie is in its third week now and making the most out of it. Soon the film will pass the Rs 500 crore mark domestically, becoming one of the rarest films to do so.

Pink Autos: Unfulfilled Promises and Unmet Expectations on Women's Day

Pune's Pink and Orange Auto Scheme Faces Low Participation, Delayed Implementation, and Unmet Promises of Women's Economic Empowerment and Safety

By Swastika Chowdhary & Sucheta Roy

PUNE: Maharashtra's
Women and Child
Development Department
sought to empower women
and achieve economic
independence.

In collaboration with the Pune Municipal Corporation's Social Development Department (PMC), the government proposed giving away 2,800 pink e-rickshaws to women in Pune. Despite giving financial and government support, the scheme is still struggling to attract women drivers in Pune.

As the government had aimed at empowering women and their safe travel for female passengers, it has received a very unenthusiastic response.

As the response is very low, the district Women and Child (WCD) Development department, the implementing agency, has listed out for the help of aanganwadi workers, Maharashtra Arthik Vikas Mahamandal (MAVIM) and UMED (acronym for State Rural Maharashtra Livelihoods Mission) workers to raise awareness among the beneficiaries. As per the scheme, Pune had set the target of 4,000 women under the scheme but as

of now, only 2,000 have applied, while only 1,110 got approved as per the eligibility criteria.

The eligible women were required to pay only 10 percent of their e-rickshaw cost, and the state government would contribute 20 percent and the rest of 70 percent would be provided as a bank loan; the beneficiaries must repay the bank in five years.

This initiative was focused on promoting women's economic status and empowering them while ensuring safe and reliable transport services for female passengers. Following a elephonic conversation with

Shekhar Chauhan, an officer o labour Public Relations, he informed that there are no updates on the autos at present, and their services will not be commencing anytime soon in Pune.

However, despite the government's effort to promote women empowerment and a safe travel for female passengers the scheme is still on hold in Pune as women, especially from rural areas, are hesitant to take up auto driving, as it still remains as a male dominated profession.

A very few have come forward to benefit from the scheme, while other selected beneficiaries are still undergoing driving awareness.





"Empower a woman, and you uplift an entire community." ~ Savitribai Phule

Bangles in hand, faith in heart: A beautiful blend of culture (right, at Camp) and spirituality (left, at Pandharpur Yatra) Photos: Kashifa Wishal







TATA WPL 2025: Women's cricket in **India continues to grow** as investments increase

This season features significant enhancements, such as expanded team lineup and home-and-away format; it aims to promote league's stature and cricket talent

PUNE: The 2025 Women's Premier League (WPL), officially known as TATA WPL 2025, marks the third season of India's premier women's T20 cricket tournament, which follows a similar format to that of IPL, the male counterpart of the same. Organized by strategically been made similar to that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), this season features significant enhancements, including an expanded team lineup and a home-and-away format, aiming to elevate the competition's stature and provide a platform for emerging cricket talent.

Elysse Perry, the winner of the player of the match award from the previous season finale of WPL, continues to bring more light to the RCB, with 295 individual runs. The player auction from 2025 edition witnessed a 19 million rupees auction of player Simran Shaikh, the team Gujarat Giants, highlighting the growing investment in this league. According to a BBC research conducted in March 2020, 18% of Indians watch the women's sports in

person. The streaming of WPL 2025 on an OTT platform like JioHotstar, which has a 500 million user base has increased awareness as well as fandom for the women's cricket tournament.

The team names have of IPL to amass a greater audience, such as Delhi Capitals, Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bengaluru, while it is implied that this league serves as a teaser to the next season of IPL to come.

While previous seasons were held at single venues, the home and away format allows each team to play the other twice, leading to an increased number of matches in the tournament, with 5 teams competing against each

This commercialisation of women's cricket in India has led to an increase in their audience base. Mithali Raj, former captain of the Indian women's cricket team, has emphasized the importance of women's games



being televised regularly for a significant change to appear in the

She said in an interview to New Indian Express, "We should be paid from the profit or revenue that we generate as women cricketers through our own matches. It can only happen if it is marketed well. If we play a good brand of cricket, the board makes an effort to market it well, televise it, and we have people turning up. Then, there is revenue coming in and then yes....I would expect that to be shared."



RCB'S CAPTAIN SMRITI MANDHANA

CT 2025: A Recap to Cricket's Ultimate ODI Battle

Super Sunday Clash will see India vs Kiwis for the Champions Trophy title



By Chanakya Ch

PUNE: The Champions Trophy 2025 has taken cricket enthusiasts on a roller-coaster ride. The ninth edition the Champions Trophy tournament is being conducted from the 19th of February to the 9th of March. The Champions Trophy is being conducted in Karachi, Lahore (Rawalpindi) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Eight international teams are eligible to compete in the Champions 2025. those Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, England, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and India. Sri Lanka was unable to advance to the qualifying round. The teams were later divided into two groups - Group A & Group B.

India, New Zealand, Bangladesh and Pakistan were the teams of Group A while South Africa, Australia, Afghanistan and England were the teams of Group B. ndia was the most dominating team in the Champions Trophy. They were in total control in the three league matches they played against the oldtime rivals Pakistan who were defeated by 6 wickets. Pakistan were put to bat first and bowlers of India were charged and took early wickets and restricted them to 241/10 in 49.4

overs. India comfortably won the match with Virat Kohli securing his century. India was throughout the league

They've defeated the Kiwis and Bangladesh by 44 runs and 6 wickets respectively. The one bowler who has turned things around was the mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy who has taken a 5-wicket haul against the which made qualification for the semi-final easy.

New Zealand were equally powerful. With losing only one game out of three games, they have qualified for the semis. When it comes to Group B South Africa had the upper hand. They've won 2 out of heir 3 games against England Afghanistan and respectively.

The game against Australia was washed out due to rain. Afghanistan were overpowered and couldn't qualify. England have lost all three matches and have not qualified for the semis.

The tournament has witnessed great spin dominance, teams with strong spin attacks more notably India were in great favour. Brilliance of performances from Virat Kohli, Kl Rahul, Kane



youngsters such as Rachin Ravindra, and Varun Chakravarthy have showcased their skill. Afghanistan's performance despite not getting into the qualification stage has been commendable.

The Champions Trophy 2025 has provided a massive opportunity for youngsters to show their skills. It has provided a platform for nailbiting matches and most anticipated face-offs. As the final of the Champions Trophy is approaching on 9th March 2025 India and New Zealand will face each other. The tension and the anticipation are electrifying and the world is watching for the one final battle