

INDIAN CHRONICLE

9 February, 2025 | Sunday | Volume No:10 | Issue No: 310 Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹ 3

Telangana ECET notification on Feb 25

Hyderabad: A notification for lateral entry admissions to BE/BTech and BPharmacy programmes via the Telangana Engineering Common Entrance Test (TG ECET) 2025 will be released on February 25.

As per the schedule finalised by the TG ECET committee, which met here on Saturday, the online submission of applications will be open from March 3 to April 19. The registration fee is Rs.500 for SC, ST and PH candidates and Rs.900 for remaining students. The computer-based test will be conducted on May 12 from 9 am to 12 noon.

The ECET is conducted for diploma and BSc Mathematics degree holders for lateral entry admissions to undergraduate engineering and pharmacy programmes offered by colleges in the State.

SCR to continue provision of additional stoppage at Eluru in Vizag Vande Bharat Express

Hyderabad: To facilitate the passengers, the South Central Railway (SCR) will continue the provision of additional stoppage at Eluru station for Train No. 20707/20708 Secunderabad – Visakhapatnam – Secunderabad Vande Bharat Express trains for a period of six months.

The additional stoppage at Eluru Railway Station for Train No. 20707 Secunderabad – Visakhapatnam will be effective from February 25 and for Train No. 20708 Visakhapatnam – Secunderabad, from February 26.

Kapil Mishra wins Karawal Nagar, says 'Modi Ki Guarantee' triumphed over AAP's 'lies'



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

New Delhi : BJP's Kapil Mishra has secured victory from the Karawal Nagar Assembly constituency with a margin of over 23,000 votes, defeating AAP's Manoj Kumar Tyagi and Congress' P.K. Mishra. Following his win, Mishra celebrated with BJP workers, crediting the party's success to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and vision for Delhi. "The people of Delhi have placed their trust in 'Modi Ki Guarantee'. When PM Modi asked for a chance from Delhiites, they made up their minds to vote for the BJP. Today, the people of Delhi have thrown Kejriwal's deceit,

corruption, and lies into the Yamuna," Mishra told IANS, recalling AAP's allegations of Yamuna's "poisoning."

"Delhi will now move forward on PM Modi's model," he added. Mishra, earlier an AAP MLA, was fielded from Karawal Nagar after the BJP replaced five-time MLA Mohan Singh Bisht, who was then given a ticket from Mustafabad. Bisht also secured a win from his new constituency.

Speaking about the election results, Mishra said, "Everyone on the ground was saying that Kejriwal and Sisodia would lose. People of Delhi have cast their votes for clean water, a clean Yamuna, and better roads -- they have voted for PM Modi's model of governance." According to the Election Commission data the BJP has officially won 44 Assembly seats and is leading in 4 others. The AAP has secured 21 seats and is ahead in 1 more. Several prominent BJP leaders have won with significant margins, including Parvesh Verma (New Delhi), Satish Upadhyay (Malviya Nagar), Kailash Gahlot (Bijwasan) and Tarvinder Singh Marwah (Jangpura). On the other hand, several top AAP leaders, including the party's National Convenor and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Saurabh Bharadwaj (Greater Kailash), and Satyendar Jain (Shakur Basti), suffered major defeats. Meanwhile, the Congress party failed to open its account once again in the national Capital.

Jana Shakti is paramount: PM Modi thanks voters for BJP's resounding victory



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed deep gratitude to the people of Delhi for the BJP's decisive victory in the Assembly elections, asserting that his government will spare no effort in enhancing the quality of life for the city's residents. Taking to social media platform X on Saturday, the Prime Minister hailed the party workers for their relentless efforts in securing this triumph. "I am so proud of each and every BJP karyakarta who has worked tirelessly, leading to this outstanding result. We will work even more vigorously and serve the

wonderful people of Delhi," PM Modi said. Emphasising the power of the people's mandate, PM Modi stated, "Jana Shakti is paramount! Development wins, good governance triumphs. I bow to my dear sisters and brothers of Delhi for this resounding and historic mandate to BJP. We are humbled and honoured to receive these blessings." Reiterating his commitment to transforming the national Capital, he added, "It is our guarantee that we will leave no stone unturned in developing Delhi, improving the overall quality of life for its people, and ensuring that the city plays a pivotal role in building a Viksit Bharat." The BJP's landslide victory has been seen as a strong endorsement of the party's governance model, policies, and leadership, with PM Modi's popularity continuing to be a driving force in electoral success.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also expressed her gratitude to Delhi's voters for their overwhelming support to the BJP. "Thanking the Delhi voters for reposing their faith in the BJP. Under PM Narendra Modi's guidance and BJP President J.P. Nadda's leadership, we dedicate ourselves to serving the aspirations of the people of Delhi. I also deeply appreciate the hard work and dedication of every karyakarta," Sitharaman stated. The BJP stormed back to power in the national Capital -- for the first time in over two decades -- after routing Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party.

BRS, Congress exchange words over Delhi election results

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

The recent election results in Delhi have ignited a fierce political exchange between leaders of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and the Congress Party in Telangana. K.T. Rama Rao (KTR), a prominent BRS leader, took to social media platform X to satirically congratulate Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for what he termed "making BJP win," suggesting that the Congress's actions against the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) ultimately benefited the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the capital.

Former minister Harish Rao joined the fray, accusing Rahul Gandhi and the Congress's Telangana chief Revanth Reddy of playing pivotal roles in the defeats faced by the party in Haryana, Maharashtra, and now Delhi. He emphasized that Congress must hasten to implement its six guarantees and 420 promises, warning that without tangible action, the party is likely to face similar adverse outcomes in future elections. In response, Minister Ponnampati Prabhakar countered KTR's assertions, suggesting that the BRS leader seems to derive more satisfaction from the BJP's victory than from Congress's loss. He accused KTR of being a supporter of the BJP, positing that his allegiance stems from a desire to have



legal cases against him dropped. Ponnampati further criticized the BRS for its alleged collusion with the BJP during its time in power, questioning the whereabouts of the party that had vowed to ascend to national governance during the recent elections. As the debate continues, the political landscape in Telangana remains charged, with both BRS and Congress leaders trading barbs in the wake of the Delhi election results.

AP, Telangana BJP Celebrates Victory in Delhi Assembly Elections

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is in high spirits following its anticipated victory in the Delhi Assembly elections, sparking celebrations across the country. Party members were seen bursting firecrackers and distributing sweets, particularly in regions of the Telugu states, including Hyderabad, Warangal, Khammam, Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Eluru, and Guntur. This victory is significant as it marks the first time in 27 years that the BJP flag will be raised at the Delhi Fort.

In response to the party's success, Andhra Pradesh Medical and Health Minister Satyakumar Yadav praised the overwhelming win as a reflection of the public's unwavering faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He expressed gratitude towards Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for his campaigning efforts within the alliance, which he credited as instrumental in achieving the victory. Yadav stated that the electorate has issued a clear message of disapproval towards corruption, as evidenced by the defeat of top leaders from the Aam Aadmi Party, including Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. He highlighted this as a lesson against dishonesty, framing the outcome as a mandate for development and progress. Union Minister Pemmasani Chandrashekhara also commented on the election results, stating that Kejriwal failed to uphold the trust placed in him by the people of Delhi. He accused the AAP



chief of misleading the electorate with false promises regarding welfare initiatives. Chandrashekhara noted a visible shift in sentiment among voters during the campaign, which he attributes to the BJP's promise of change.

He expressed satisfaction that areas where Chandrababu Naidu campaigned saw significant victories for BJP candidates, and he criticised Kejriwal for his inability to provide basic amenities such as clean water and good roads. Emphasising accountability, he stated that Kejriwal's failures to fulfil his earlier promises ultimately led to his defeat, while dismissing the credibility of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi among the public.

Adding Muslims to the BC List is a Threat to Hindu Society: Bandi Sanjay



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, has once again made sensational comments alleging a major conspiracy behind including Muslims in the Backward Classes (BC) list. He warned that the inclusion of Muslims in the BC list could prevent the Hindu community from winning in competitive seats in Telangana in the future. He cited the results of the recent GHMC (Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation) elections as evidence for his claims, stating that the implementation of a 4% reservation for Muslims during Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy's government led to Muslim victories in seats that should have been won by the BCs. He criticized the ongoing caste census survey, claiming it is reducing the BC population percentage and harming the interests of the Hindu community. He questioned why BC organizations have not responded to what he termed an egregious conspiracy that would hurt the entire Hindu community. He also expressed concern over the silence of intellectuals and educated individuals on this issue, calling it a misfortune for society.

As part of the campaign for the upcoming MLC (Member of Legislative Council) elections, the BJP organized a "Graduate Resolve March" in Karimnagar from Rammangar Chowrasta to Geeta Bhavan Chowrasta, which saw a large turnout of youth, employees, and BJP workers. Alongside Bandi Sanjay, MPs Raghunandan Rao and Godam Nagesh, MLAs Payal Shankar, Katapalli Venkatanarasimha Reddy, Palvai Harish Babu, Ramarao Patel, and others also participated in the march. During the event, Bandi Sanjay unveiled the BJP manifesto for the MLC elections. He mocked the Congress Party in Delhi, stating that voters rewarded them with "donkey eggs" for what they consider a lack of genuine governance and accountability. He mentioned that

promises of a monthly unemployment allowance of ₹4,000 have gone unfulfilled for 14 months, leading to a total of ₹56,000 owed to each unemployed individual. He criticized Congress's promises to provide financial support to students, claiming they have failed to deliver on commitments totaling 5 lakh. He accused Congress and its leader, Revanth Reddy, of failing to uphold commitments, likening them to a "broken record." Bandi Sanjay alleged that Congress and its rival BRS are colluding and that by voting for Congress, citizens were inadvertently supporting a party that has historically betrayed them. He further declared that the inclusion of Muslims in the BC list represents a significant injustice to the BC community, asserting that such moves could jeopardize Hindu representation in the state. He expressed concern that BC groups have been silent amidst these developments, questioning their engagement in advocating for their rights. In recounting the statistics surrounding caste census surveys, he called on the educated class to focus on the injustices faced by BCs, especially when it comes to appointments and benefits that have not materialized.

Government making all efforts to restore peace in Manipur, says CM Biren Singh

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Saturday (February 8, 2025) said his government has been making all efforts to restore peace in the strife-torn northeastern State and to ensure that people live together as before. "The State government has been making all possible efforts to restore peace and to ensure that people live together peacefully as before," the Chief Minister said. More than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur in May 2023. Speaking at the closing ceremony of DGAR Men & Women Polo Championship 2025, Mr. Singh appreciated the Army and the Assam Rifles for organising various tournaments and said these would play an important role in promoting polo and protecting ponies in Manipur.

Harish Rao asks Revanth Reddy to ensure justice to Mallanna Sagar oustees



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

HYDERABAD: Demanding Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to fulfil the promises made to Mallanna Sagar oustees, former Minister T Harish Rao wanted the Congress government to complete the balance relief and rehabilitation (R&R) package works at the earliest. The senior BRS MLA, in a letter to the Chief Minister on Saturday, reminded the latter that he had staged a protest at Kishitapur and assured to support the displaced people. During the BRS tenure, about 90 per cent of the R&R package, including construction of rehabilitation colonies, house plots and basic amenities were completed and provided to the oustees. It has been one year and the remaining 10 per cent of the works were pending, he said. As per the 2013 Land Acquisition Act, which was implemented by the Congress government, there was a provision to provide only 121 yards of house plot and Rs 1.25 lakh to the displaced people during the construction of the Mallanna Sagar reservoir.

However, BRS president K Chandrashekhara Rao had decided to provide better compensation to the displaced people. Under the R&R package, each displaced person was offered 250 yards plot near Gajwel town, Rs 5.04 lakh for house construction and Rs 7.50 lakh as compensation. Along with the package, R&R colonies were built and almost all the facilities were provided in phases by the BRS government continues. Towards this, Rs.1,260 crore was spent, he explained. Further, the High Court had recently ruled that widows in the flooded villages should also be considered as families and extended benefits under the pack-

age. Mallanna Sagar reservoir provides irrigation water to lakhs of acres and aids in addressing the drinking water issues of many areas, including Hyderabad. This apart, the State government was also relying on Mallanna Sagar to divert River Godavari waters into the River Musi. It is also learnt that tenders were also being floated to divert 20 TMC of water from the reservoir to Hyderabad, the former Minister said. "You (Revanth Reddy) criticised that Kaleshwaram project was useless. But the State government is relying on Mallanna Sagar reservoir, which is an integral part of the Kaleshwaram project, for water," Harish Rao said. "While in the opposition, the Congress had demanded better compensation for the displaced people. Now, as the Chief Minister, it is your responsibility to fulfil the promise made to the displaced people and offer more compensation," he demanded.

BSF nabs 7 Bangladeshi nationals for illegal entry; three Indian agents were also apprehended

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

The Border Security Force (BSF) arrested seven Bangladeshi nationals for illegally entering India and three Indian agents for enabling the process. Multiple operations were carried out on February 6 based on credible intelligence. BSF officials said that this operation has dealt a significant blow to the cross-border infiltration networks.

The operation was carried out by the 146th Battalion of the BSF South Bengal Frontier along the international borders along Nadia and Murshidabad districts of West Bengal.

On February 6 morning at around 5 am, the BSF patrolling party near Jalangi border outpost noticed seven infiltrators attempting the cross the border from the Indian side and head into Bangladesh. Though the BSF acted swiftly, five of them escaped in the darkness of the night and two were caught.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Lawless in Dhaka

THE hope of a new dawn in Bangladesh, kindled by PM Sheikh Hasina's ouster in August last year, lies extinguished today. The vandalism witnessed this week in many parts of this young country is nothing short of self-immolation — restless protesters are actually harming Bangladesh's present as well as future while trying to erase its past. Houses of Awami League leaders were torched, while murals of the nation's founder and Hasina's father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were demolished or defaced in several districts. It was apparently a backlash against the ex-PM's online address, in which she urged her supporters to confront the interim government, whom she accused of seizing power in an unconstitutional manner. Unfortunately, the government is itself fanning the flames. Justifying the attack on Mujib's Dhanmondi residence, chief adviser Muhammad Yunus' press office termed it a response to Hasina's 'violent behaviour'. The new rulers seem to believe that they can create Naya Bangladesh on the bedrock of hatred and vengeance. This disturbing mindset will only push the vulnerable nation deeper into chaos and instability. The government as well as protesters are obviously frustrated that Hasina continues to make her presence felt six months after she fled and took refuge in India. And New Delhi has stood its ground so far, giving the Yunus dispensation no assurance on the demand for her extradition. The fresh spate of violence makes it evident that Hasina will not get a fair trial if at all she is sent back to Bangladesh. Moreover, Dhaka is making things worse for itself by antagonising New Delhi, which has been its all-weather friend right from the days of the 1971 war of liberation. Hasina's long tenure was no doubt marked by autocratic excesses, but that is not reason enough to destroy the nation's heritage. Bangladesh must rein in hate-mongers and law-breakers for its own good; otherwise.

20,000 cr R&D push in Budget 2025: A case for corporates tying up with private universities

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

In a pioneering move poised to reshape India's innovation landscape, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in the Union Budget 2025-26, has allocated ₹20,000 crore to the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to initiate a private sector-driven research and development (R&D) fund. The government has also committed funds for fostering innovation in deep tech and emerging sectors, aiming to bolster strategic autonomy in critical technological domains. On the specific point, the minister in the Budget presentation under R and D and Innovation, said "...To implement private sector driven Research, Development and Innovation initiative announced in the July Budget, I am now allocating ₹20,000 crore." This should be seen as a direct response to the private sector's historically modest engagement in R&D activities. Despite various incentives, private enterprises have been reticent in committing substantial resources to research endeavours. One innovative idea for fostering R and D in private sector is strengthening its connect with high quality private universities to ensure clear outcomes for the new initiative. Let us see how: The Economic Survey preceding the budget highlighted concerns over this reluctance, noting that while the government contributes approximately 50% of the nation's total R&D expenditure, business enterprises account for only 41%. Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran emphasized the need for the private sector to enhance its investment in research to drive innovation and economic growth.

For years, India's innovation ecosystem has suffered from a disconnect between industry and academia. While private companies struggle with the high costs and risks associated with in-house R&D, universities remain underutilized despite possessing world-class faculty and research infrastructure. The newly allocated fund is designed to invigorate private sector participation by providing financial support for R&D in deep tech and sunrise industries. By incentivizing private companies to collaborate with universities, the initiative aims to employ the strengths of both sectors. Companies will definitely be able to gain access to cutting-edge research and a skilled talent pool, while academic institutions will benefit from practical applications of their research, increased funding, and enhanced industry relevance. Research that once remained confined to academic journals could find tangible expressions in the form of patents, prototypes, and market-ready products. Moreover, faculty members engaging in industry projects can bridge the often-lamented 'curriculum-industry gap,' ensuring that students graduate with skills that align with contemporary business needs.

Private sector organizations in India, ranging from homegrown conglomerates to nimble startups, have undeniably built strong capabilities in manufacturing, IT, and pharmaceuticals. Tata Motors has developed indigenous electric vehicle (EV) technology, Biocon has emerged as a global leader in biosimilars, and Bharat Forge is pushing the boundaries of aerospace engineering. However, these success stories need to be made a norm than an exception in the whole ecosystem. According to the Department of Science and Technology, India's gross expenditure on R&D hovers around 0.7% of GDP—significantly lower than China (2.4%) and the United States (3.1%). Even within this, private sector contributions are disproportionately small, with most research being publicly funded. More worryingly, private universities — many boast world-class faculty and infrastructure — remain underutilized in this endeavour. There are several instances of Deemed and privately funded universities producing world-class innovations and patents; quite a few have the potential (or have been in the real world) to be commercialized. If the new funding initiative is used for forging deeper ties between private enterprises and private universities in India, it presents a mutually beneficial opportunity. Companies struggling with resource-intensive research can leverage university talent, while academia, often isolated in theoretical explorations, can gain exposure to real-world challenges. Globally, some of the most innovative breakthroughs have emerged from robust academia-industry collaborations. The Silicon Valley model, for instance, was built on Stanford University's close ties with tech entrepreneurs, spawning giants like Google and Tesla. In Germany, the Fraunhofer Institutes serve as dedicated research hubs where academic knowledge is transformed into commercially viable technologies. Even in China, where state-driven investment in R&D is formidable, universities have been instrumental in shaping the country's dominance in artificial intelligence and semiconductors.

'Climate doctors' necessary to tackle climate change-related health risks, says expert



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

With climate change increasingly affecting public health, the need for 'climate doctors' has never been more urgent, said Jay Lemery, Professor of Emergency Medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, U.S. In a discussion with Jaya Shreedhar, Senior Health Media Advisor, Internews, Dr. Lemery said healthcare professionals working across specialisations must be trained to address the health risks linked to rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and shifting disease patterns. The discussion was organised by the U.S. Consulate General, Chennai, in partnership with the Press Institute of India.

Dr. Lemery explained how climate change is turning what was once a predictable weather system into a volatile one. "It's not just climate change, it's climate energising," he said, comparing the planet to a toddler given too much sugar — resulting in chaotic, unpredictable behaviour that strains both the environment and human health. He also pointed out how rising temperatures and extreme weather events are already straining public health systems globally. Dr. Lemery said that these environmental shifts are not just causing physical health issues, such as respiratory diseases and heat strokes, but are also exacerbating mental health challenges, food insecurity, and displacement due to natural disasters. One of the alarming trends Dr. Lemery discussed was the rise in extreme heat events. He said that while wealthier nations may have resources like air conditioning, low-income communities and regions with limited infrastructure face the highest risks. From a public health perspective, Dr. Lemery suggested that issuing heat warnings and sharing localised information can help handle heat-related illnesses. "For example, cancelling events like children's sports due to extreme heat, and advising people to take precautions like going out early for groceries..." he said, adding that in more severe cases, cooling centres can be set up to help vulnerable populations, such as the homeless, find relief.

Union Budget 2025-26: Key allocations and initiatives for education



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Focussed on the theme of "Sabka Vikas," the Union Budget 2025-26 emphasizes the importance of investment in people, economy, and innovation as a significant engine on the journey to reach the goal of "Viksit Bharat." Accordingly, to minimize the skill gap in the country by making quality education accessible, the Ministry of Education has been allocated ₹1,28,650 crore, 6.22% more than the budget estimate of 2024-2025. In the total budget for the MoE, ₹78,572 crores (61.07%) has been allocated to the Department of School Education and Literacy, the highest-ever amount allocated to the department. The remaining 50,078 crore (38.93%) is allocated to the Department of Higher Education to be used across scheme (6,990.88 crores) and non-scheme (₹43,087.07 crores) expenditures. Some notable initiatives that have been rolled out for strengthening the education, research, and innovation ecosystem include: Integrating broadband connectivity under the Bharat Net project

The benefits of the government's telecommunication initiative Bharat Net, which is focused on providing broadband connectivity to rural India, will also be directed towards enhancing broadband connectivity in government secondary schools. In today's technology-led world, this is a timely initiative for bridging the digital divide between urban and rural education systems. The Union budget proposes the establishment of 50,000 ATIs in government schools to foster an innovative and scientific mindset in young people. According to the Economic Survey tabled in the Parliament on 31st January 2025, 50% of 24.8 crore students served by India's school education system are enrolled in government schools. Exposing such a vast majority of students to innovation skills of the 21st century, like design mindset, computational thinking, and adaptive learning, is a laudable effort. The initiative is a step forward in empowering the

At BGBS, Mamata Banerjee urges British delegation to establish direct flight connection between Kolkata and Europe



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee urged the British delegation at the Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) 2025 on Thursday to consider starting direct flights to Europe from Kolkata, citing the long travel time. During an international session on Wednesday, she expressed her fondness for London saying, "I have visited so many times, but it is so time-consuming. I am also going to Oxford University in October, I have been invited. I will request you to hold a business meeting and discuss these important matters."

The Chief Minister's request comes at a time when discussions are on regarding the addition of more international flights and the upgradation of facilities at the Kolkata airport. An airport official said, "Talks are on regarding the addition of more international flights. Facilities in the airport are also being upgraded." Kolkata's direct flights to London were discontinued on March 20, 2022, with the last flight being that of Air India. The weekly service, which often operated near capacity, was terminated. This service had been reintroduced in 2020 after a 13-year hiatus, initially offering two weekly flights, which was later reduced to one flight per week. Despite recent improvements in passenger loads, the service was withdrawn, leaving Kolkata without a direct European connection. At present, travellers have to rely on connecting flights to reach the US and Europe from Kolkata.

Banerjee also expressed her interest in fostering a business relationship with Thailand. She directly informed

youth who will be at the helm of bolstering India's position as a knowledge economy in the global world.

Increasing the capacity of IITs and medical colleges Another positive step is providing infrastructure support to the five IITs—Tirupati, Dharwad, Palakkad, Jammu, and Bhilai—founded after 2014 to accommodate an additional 6,500 students. This will enable the new generation of IITs to catch up to the previous generation in capacity. Additionally, it is indicated that 10,000 seats for undergraduate and graduate programs will be added to medical colleges during the upcoming year, which will eventually increase to 75,000 seats over the next five years. This is a crucial step in reducing the strain on the current medical school system, beset by a glaring disparity between the supply and demand for admittance from prospective candidates. Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Education Recognizing the significance of skill development, creating a Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence for Education with a total budget of ₹500 crore is proposed. The three AI centers for sustainable cities, healthcare, and agriculture that were established in 2023 are expanded upon by this project. Incorporating AI into education will improve learning outcomes while equipping students to confidently and competently navigate an AI-driven economy.

Bharatiya Bhasha Pustak scheme The budget also announced the implementation of the Bharatiya Bhasha Pustak plan to provide students from distinct linguistic backgrounds equitable access to digital resources and educational materials. This initiative will be crucial in promoting and integrating Indian languages into the education ecosystem. Enhancing research capacity Finally, the provision of 10,000 fellowships under the PM Research fellowship scheme is proposed to turbocharge the research environment. Further, 20,000 crore will be directed to private sector-driven research and innovation. This is a significant boost for creating innovation-led jobs as new products and technologies will be fuelled by enhanced support to the R&D endeavors of the private sector. The above initiatives are expected to go a long way in improving access to quality education and building a skill-based economy. Further, a comparative analysis with the previous year indicates positive growth from the budget estimates for 2024-2025 in most departments and education schemes. The efforts were welcomed by the Education minister, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, who believes that implementation of the outlined schemes will advance India on the path to achieving the goal of "Viksit Bharat".

the Thai representative at the trade conference about her desire to strengthen these ties. "I want to go to Thailand," she said, encouraging the Thai representative to organise business summits and invite West Bengal. After the Thai representative, Thirapath Mongkolnavin, Acting Ambassador of the Thai Embassy in Delhi, delivered his speech, the Chief Minister added, "Thai food is very famous. Do you organize any such business summit there?" Amit Mitra, the Chief Minister's financial advisor, noted that ASEAN country summits are held in Thailand. Banerjee further shared a personal connection, saying, "I have relatives in Thailand." Kolkata is hosting a two-day business summit, BGBS 2025, on February 5 and 6 to attract investments in the state.

Inspired by Nagpur model, Bengaluru flyovers, Metro pillars to be illuminated

D K Shivakumar announces illumination of Bengaluru infrastructure as part of the 'Brand Bengaluru' initiative. D K Shivakumar announces illumination of Bengaluru infrastructure as part of the 'Brand Bengaluru' initiative. Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar Thursday announced Metro pillars, carriageways, flyovers, and medians, among other structures, will be illuminated across the state capital as part of the 'Brand Bengaluru' initiative. He made the announcement after inspecting several roads and other infrastructure projects in the city. Shivakumar also stated that the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) and the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) will jointly facilitate advertisement billboards on Metro pillars. "BBMP will float the tenders and BMRCL will provide space on its pillars for the advertisement billboards.

Delhi High Court asks NIA: 'Can Baramulla MP Engineer Rashid attend Parliament sessions on custody parole?'



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

The Delhi High Court Thursday sought a response from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on whether Lok Sabha MP from Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla, Abdul Rashid Sheikh alias Engineer Rashid, can be permitted to attend Parliament sessions, scheduled until February 13, on custody parole. The Delhi HC was hearing a plea by Rashid, who is seeking custody parole as an immediate interim relief for attending the ongoing Parliament session. The MP, who is currently in Tihar jail in a 2017 terror funding case, submitted that without his presence in Parliament, his constituency would remain unrepresented.

Justice Vikas Mahajan directed the NIA counsel on Thursday to come up with instructions on the specific aspect on whether Rashid can be considered for custody parole release on Friday for attending Parliament sessions. NIA orally opposed Rashid's demand, and informed the court that "the NIA officers say there is a security issue too, he can't be taken inside Parliament". Justice Vikas Mahajan, however, observed that Rashid was taken to Parliament, while being in jail, for taking oath as an MP after winning the Lok Sabha elections in 2024. Rashid was arrested in 2019 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. According to the NIA, he used various public platforms to "propagate the ideology of separatism and secessionism", was closely associated with various terrorist organisations, and wanted to "legitimise" the United Jihad Council, a platform of anti-India militant groups in Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier this week, the HC was also informed that the Delhi High Court on the administrative side through its registrar general that it had moved an application before the Supreme Court seeking clarification if a specially designated NIA court can also be designated as an MP/MLA court, and if such a court will have jurisdiction to try NIA cases not involving MP/MLAs. The counsel for Delhi HC Registrar General Kanhaiya Singh told Justice Mahajan that a clarification from Supreme Court is required as a 2016 judgment of the apex court designates MP/MLA court to solely try cases involving MP/MLAs. Singh also informed the court that their application is likely to be listed on February 10 or 11, and they shall be mentioning the matter for consideration on Friday before the SC. Rashid's bail plea has been pending at the trial court as the trial court is awaiting instructions on whether an NIA court has jurisdiction to decide his plea or a designated MP/MLA court.

1 dead, 30 on company bus injured after collision with dumper truck in Surat

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

A 50-year-old man died and 30 others were injured after the company bus they were travelling on collided with a dumper truck loaded with coal in Surat on Thursday morning. The deceased was identified as Suryadev Bihuiyan, a resident of Hazira in Surat, who worked at AM/NS Hazira, under the contract of Neo Structo Construction company.

The injured — workers under the company's contract and the drivers of both vehicles — were shifted to New Civil Hospital and a private hospital. Police have registered a complaint against the dumper driver, Shanker Kacher, 45, who was also admitted to a private hospital. The company bus was carrying over 40 workers from different destinations and was on its way on the Hazira main road to company premises. A speeding, loaded dumper, coming from the Adani port, allegedly hit the luxury bus from the opposite direction near the L&T company gate while trying to avoid a cyclist, police said. Speaking to The Indian Express, Hazira police sub-inspector P K Devmurari said, "The dumper was loaded with coal from Adani port and was on its way to Mora village, while the bus carrying workers was on its way from Mora to Hazira. On the way, the dumper driver tried to avoid a cyclist, as a result of which he lost control over steering and the bus changed its route to the opposite direction and hit a speeding luxury bus. The luxury bus driver, Viky Kumar, is also injured." Both the dumper and bus were overturned. Hazira police reached the spot and carried out a rescue operation. The company said it was in touch with the families of the injured and deceased.

'BJP offered 7 AAP candidates Rs 15 crore': MP Sanjay Singh alleges 'Operation Lotus' in Delhi

sanjay singh operation lotus The BJP, he further claimed, was used to employing both money and the fear of investigation agencies to exert pressure on legislators to break away from their parties. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Thursday alleged that the BJP had embarked on 'Operation Lotus' in Delhi and was bribing AAP leaders to jump ship so that it could form the incoming government in the national capital. Singh told a press conference that the BJP had "already conceded defeat" a day after polling for the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections concluded with a majority of exit polls giving an edge to the saffron party. "The party which believes in trampling upon democracy, the buying-selling of legislators, breaking and toppling governments... the Bharatiya Janata Party has conceded its defeat in the Delhi Assembly elections," Singh alleged.

'If only healthcare facilities were good...': For many Delhi voters who lost loved ones to Covid, the wounds are still fresh



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

"Last time, he was there..." Waiting for her turn to vote at an MCD primary school in Delhi, Krishna Mandal, 40, chokes up as she remembers her younger brother, Prasanjit, whom she lost to Covid four years ago. He was 22. As Delhi residents lined up outside various centres to cast their vote on Wednesday, the Covid pandemic — which killed 26,000 people in Delhi alone, according to official figures — was a distant memory. No one seemed to remember the time when virtually no hospital beds were available for patients, how people were scrambling to get oxygen cylinders and oximeters. No one, except those who lost their loved ones. "In five days, everything was over," said Krishna, who works as a house help in Mehrauli. It was on May 16, 2021, that she learnt that her brother had contracted Covid.

"We took him to Madan Mohan Malviya Hospital and the doctors kept telling us to get the receipt. We are poor people; we did not know what to do. Doctor told us that we would need an oxygen cylinder and for that we had no money," she told. "My brother worked as a cleaner at a private company. His manager arranged an oxygen cylinder illegally for Rs 3,000," she added. "But, there was no mask to supply the oxygen from the cylinder. We were running mad on the roads, calling everyone that we knew. In all

this, we lost five days and on May 22, he died," said Krishna.

"No one came to see us; no BJP, no AAP and no Congress," she said, her eyes welling up. Having grown indifferent to politicians, she had a practical reason for casting her vote this election. "I was told that if I do not vote, they will remove my name from the voter list. So, I came," said Krishna, who hails from West Bengal's 24 Parganas district and has been living in Mehrauli for the last 25 years. At the same voting centre, mother-son duo, Praveen and Kanchan Bali, are seated on the stairs. "I lost my father, Prakash Bali," said Praveen, 34, a mass-media graduate who now runs his own business. "My father was a liver patient. His health started deteriorating in July 2021, during the second wave. We took him to a hospital but the administration refused to take him in, asking us to get a Covid test done," said Praveen.

"The entire thing (tests, admission, oxygen mask) would have cost us Rs 1 lakh. We did not have the money and so, they didn't admit him. The hospital asked him to be put under observation for three days but he needed immediate help... We kept running around... and finally, we were able to get him a hospital bed on October 1. Two days later, he was no more..." said Praveen. "Had the healthcare facilities been good, my husband could have been saved," said Kanchan. "I blame the system," said Santosh Kumar Chaubey, 40, a resident of Chhattarpur, whose 50-year-old uncle succumbed to the infection in 2021. "We stay in a joint family. I was already infected. So, once he started showing the symptoms, we thought that it was viral fever," he added. "It was a tough time... There was no space in any of the Covid centers in Delhi," said Chaubey, standing outside the Rajkiya-sah Shiksha Varishtha Madhyamik Vidyalaya in Sanjay colony, Bhati Mines. His uncle died within two days of being admitted to a private hospital in Noida. Chaubey, who hails from UP's Mirzapur, said, "In all these years, we could not get the number of hospitals we needed. Even on regular days, people fail to find a bed in the hospitals... No government can build a hospital overnight but they failed to do so in even 10 years!"

Punjab deportee on how 'ghost' travel agents work: 'Multiple names, WhatsApp calls, full payment before crossing border'

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

A man from Dubai who introduced himself as Sabu. This is all that Rakinder Singh, a 41-year-old from Thakarwal village in Punjab's Hoshiarpur district, knew about his travel agent who took Rs 45 lakh from him and "promised" him he would reach the United States "legally". Six months after he took the leap of faith and started his journey from Punjab to the US in August last year, Rakinder is among the 104 Indians deported from the US for entering the country illegally. "Once you start this journey, there is no looking back," says Rakinder, who was among the 30 people from Punjab to be sent back from the US in a military flight, handcuffed during the entire journey back home.

Without meeting him, seeing his picture, or knowing his address, Rakinder's faith in Sabu, a 'ghost' travel agent, began to falter as the truth unfolded, bit by bit, during the treacherous journey, he says. As more men joined Rakinder on the way, he says he realised he had been conned. "They were also getting calls from their agents from the same WhatsApp number as mine. And then I realised that the man who introduced himself as Sabu to me was not just Sabu. He was also Raja, Lio and whatnot. This agent was using multiple names with different people and promising them safe entry to the US," says Rakinder. "Sabu, who spoke Punjabi, never met me or even put a display picture on his WhatsApp. He would only talk via WhatsApp calls from multiple international numbers. He never came to collect money himself but sent his middlemen. As the journey towards the US progressed, his men would collect money in instalments from my family in Punjab. He had men in every country we passed. He took the entire sum of Rs 45 lakh before we reached the border. His men also confiscated our passports so that we could not return to India," he adds. Rakinder, who currently stays in Jalandhar, spent 12 years working in Australia where he had gone on a student visa. After returning to India in 2020, he thought of going to the US for "a better future" for his three children.

Rakinder says he spent all his savings from Australia to accumulate Rs 45 lakh and took some loans from family and friends for the US trip. But once they reached Brazil, their passports were taken away by the agent's middlemen, and never returned, he says. His journey from Amritsar to the US-Mexico border spanned six months, only to end in deportation. "I spent my entire savings on this US trip. I took a flight from Amritsar to Dubai on August 8 last year. After reaching Dubai, we went to South Africa where we landed in Johannesburg. We were then taken to Brazil where we were given asylum for 11 days but later had to live in a hotel. Our passports were taken away in Brazil by the middlemen on the pretext that they needed them to get visas for the US approved. We never got those passports back," Rakinder told Travelling in groups of four, Rakinder says they were joined by at least 500 more men in Brazil who too were promised "legal entry in the US". Once their passports were taken, the entire journey ahead was via



roads, or on foot, as they crossed several countries, including dense Panama jungles, he recounts. "The agent would seldom speak directly. Mostly his men would call on WhatsApp, sometimes from a Spain number or Dubai. We then crossed Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama jungles, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala before finally reaching Mexico. We crossed the border by jumping over the fence using a ladder. We were held on January 15 and taken to a detention centre in the US," Rakinder adds.

Rakinder says that the middlemen lied that a ship would take them across Panama jungles. "When we reached, there was no ship. Then they said we have to cross it by walking on foot. We had no other option. There was just a dense jungle, snakes and water around. Chadd ditia jungle vich jhooth bolke (They left us in the jungle by lying)," he says. Surviving on some bread and dry foods he had carried along, Rakinder says: "In the jungle, we would walk in the day and sleep in tents during the night but there was always a sense of fear. Our phones had stopped working. The agent said a ship would be waiting for us but it never came." "The agent's men would give us some food every few days but we would be hungry for 2-3 consecutive days. All that we used to get was a handful of rice and rajma. We crossed 14 countries surviving on minimal food. I did all this only for my three children for whom I wanted a better life," says Rakinder.

"At the detention centre in the US, there were 32 rooms, each having 50-60 occupants from several countries such as Peru, Pakistan, Nepal etc. When we tried to call the agent, his phone was switched off. He never contacted us again. Now even as I want to file a police complaint against him, I have no proof of his real identity — name, address, photo — nothing. Even his middlemen never revealed their identities to us," says Rakinder. "When we reached Guatemala, we were taken hostage by the agent's middlemen who told us that we would not be allowed to cross the border till we paid the pending payment. My family then arranged the last instalment of Rs 20 lakh and gave it to his men in Punjab. We never got any receipts for the money paid. Another man from Amritsar was kept hostage in Ecuador till his family paid Rs 7 lakh," he adds.

usual practice, according to the nephew, whom she had adopted because she had no children. He told the police that his wife went to wake the woman up at around 5.30 Thursday morning and found her lying in a pool of blood. She wrapped the body with a blanket and called her husband. They informed the police, who arrived and sent the body for postmortem. "We have lodged the FIR against unidentified assailants. The local residents and family members have expressed apprehension that she might have been raped before being killed. The details of the postmortem will be known later," said the station house officer of the local police station. The police said the victim woman's husband died in 2020 and she was living with the family of her adopted nephew. They added that she had already declared her nephew as the legal heir of her property. "We have yet to collect any concrete evidence from the site.

80-year-old UP woman killed while sleeping in her cowshed, family suspects rape

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Police investigate the murder of an elderly woman found in a cattle shed in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, killed, 80-year-old Police investigate the murder of an elderly woman found in a cattle shed in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh. An 80-year-old woman was allegedly killed with sharp-edged weapons by unidentified assailants while she was asleep in a cowshed outside her house in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras district late Wednesday night. The police said the body with multiple injury marks was lying on a cot with no clothes. The family members and local residents have not ruled out the possibility of rape, though the police have neither denied nor confirmed it. According to the First Information Report (FIR) filed at the local police station by her nephew, she had dinner last night and went to sleep in the cattle shed. She slept there to protect her livestock, as was her

Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico: Deportee woman who paid Rs 1 crore to agent recalls 25-day 'dunki' route, detention in US



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

On January 2, Lovepreet Kaur and her 10-year-old son began a journey to the United States from Punjab filled with hopes of a better future. More than a month later, all those hopes were shattered as she and her son were among the 104 deportees who landed in Amritsar Wednesday on a US Air Force flight. To make matters worse, she had allegedly paid an astronomical sum of Rs 1 crore to an agent for what was promised to be a direct route to the US. Speaking to The Indian Express, Lovepreet, 30, a resident of the Bholath area of the Kapurthala district, narrated how she and a few others were forced to undertake a 'dunki' route, traversing several countries. "The agent told our family they would take us directly to the US. But what we en-

dured was far from what we expected," Lovepreet said as tears rolled down her cheeks.

"We were flown to Medellin in Colombia and kept there for nearly two weeks before being moved to San Salvador (capital of El Salvador) in a flight. From there, we walked for over three hours to Guatemala, then travelled by taxis to the Mexican border. After staying in Mexico for two days, we finally crossed over to the US on January 27," she said. The ordeal took a turn when the US authorities detained Lovepreet and others after crossing the border. "When we arrived in the US, they asked us to remove our SIM cards and even small ornaments like earrings and bangles. I had already lost my luggage in the previous country, so I had nothing to deposit with them. We were kept in a camp for five days, and on February 2, we were chained from the waist to our legs, with our hands cuffed. Only the children were spared," she recalled. Lovepreet was particularly disturbed by the lack of communication during the 40-hour journey in the military aircraft, during which the deportees were not informed of their destination. "No one told us where we were being taken, and when we finally arrived in India, it was a shock. We were told at the Amritsar airport that we had reached India, but it felt like our dreams were shattered in an instant," she said. For Lovepreet, she was desperate to move to the US for a better future for her son. "I had hopes for my son's future and a new life in the US. My family took a huge loan to pay the agent, hoping we would have a better future. Now, everything is destroyed. We were told we would be with our relatives in California soon, but now, I am left with nothing but pain." Lovepreet and her family own 1.5 acres of land in India, where she lives with her husband and elderly parents-in-law. She firmly believes that the government should take action against the unscrupulous travel agents who duped her and many others. "The government needs to get our money back from these criminals who promised us a new life but left us stranded in foreign lands."

Opposition protests govt's silence on deportation of Indians staying illegally in US

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

A US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal Indian immigrants landed in Amritsar on Wednesday, the first such batch of Indians deported by the Donald Trump government as part of a crackdown against illegal immigrants. The deportees claimed their hands and legs were cuffed throughout the journey and they were unshackled only after landing at the Amritsar airport.

Opposition parliamentarians, including Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and SP leader Akhilesh Yadav, protested the treatment meted out to the Indians by US authorities by staging a demonstration in Parliament complex. Some of the opposition leaders protested while wearing handcuffs. Carrying placards like "Humans. Not prisoners", the opposition leaders said they would not tolerate the insult to India and raised slogans against the government like "Indians insulted. India won't stay silent". "We, the INDIA parties, shall not tolerate the humiliation of Indian nationals. Modi Government must come out with a detailed statement on the deportation and why did we not send our own planes to bring back the Indians, with dignity and respect, instead of a military plane landing on our soil," Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said in a post on X.

Sharing a video of a deportee who was narrating his ordeal, Rahul Gandhi said on X, "Prime Minister, listen to this man's pain. Indians deserve Dignity and Humanity, NOT Handcuffs". "For 40 hours, we were handcuffed, our feet tied with chains and we were not allowed to move an inch from our seats. It was worse than hell!" Harvinder Singh Talking to reporters in Parliament complex, Congress Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said Prime Minister Modi should answer why such treatment was given to those deported. "I would say that a lot was talked about PM Modi and (Donald) Trump's friendship. Couldn't we send our plane to get them all back? PM should answer," she said. "We have been hearing that Modi and Trump are good friends... Why did he allow this to happen? Is this how you treat people, that you send them back in chains. Prime Minister should answer, this is not the way," the Congress general secretary said. Congress MP Gurjeet Singh Aujla with Samajwadi Party MPs Akhilesh Yadav and Dharmendra Yadav at a protest over the deportation of Indian immigrants from the US, at Parliament House complex during the Budget session, in New Delhi, Thursday, Feb. 6, 2025. (PTI Photo/Kamal Singh) Congress MP Gurjeet Singh Aujla with Samajwadi Party MPs Akhilesh Yadav and Dharmendra Yadav at a protest over the deportation of Indian immigrants from the US, at Parliament House complex during the Budget session, in New Delhi.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav asked why these people were forced to leave India. "The question is not just about these



Indians being sent back in inhuman conditions. They showed people a dream that India is going to be Vishwaguru. Now they are all quiet," Yadav said. "What is our External Affairs Ministry doing? The government did not do anything to save women and children from being treated inhumanly..." "Why were these people forced to leave India and go? SP and opposition wants the government to give clarification," he said. Amid attacks by the opposition, Union minister Chirag Paswan said the government will put forth its views at an appropriate time. "It is a policy decision and it should not be politicised by the opposition," he said. Shiv Sena (UBT) Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said the treatment given to the deported Indians was "unacceptable".

"The way those Indians were sent back with handcuffs is shameful. This is an insult to India... Those illegal immigrants were not criminals, they went there for a better life because our government failed to provide opportunities. They are coming back because of the unsuccessful foreign relations and policies..." she said. "This is not acceptable, the prime Minister, home minister, finance minister, external affairs minister should all answer. They are being sent back because of your policies," she added. Hitting out at the government, Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi said the way Indians were brought back shows the "weakness" of the government. "The way women were treated and brought back hand cuffed like criminals... we will not tolerate the insult to the country," he told reporters in Parliament complex. He alleged that for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his personal image is more important than the standing of the country. "It is a black day... the prime minister is silent," he said. Another Congress leader K C Venugopal wondered why diplomatic relations between India and the US were not coming handy to avert such situations. "We have moved a notice for an adjournment on this issue in Parliament," the Lok Sabha member said. Former Union minister and Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said the US has a legal right to deport people living there illegally. But we are protesting the way they were sent back. He suggested a civilian aircraft could have been used for the purpose.

Punjab CM Mann reacts to handcuffing, shackling of deportees from US, says great shame for India

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Thursday sharply reacted to the handcuffing and chaining of Indians deported by the United States. Mann took to X to express his anger at the way the deportees were treated. He also criticised the Haryana government for taking deportees in prisoner vans from Amritsar, after they landed in a US military aircraft. Mann wrote, "What America has done is deeply regrettable. It is a matter of great shame for our country that America sends our citizens in handcuffs and shackles. Instead of applying balm on the wounds of Indians deported from America, who are mentally and economically broke, Modi's Haryana government is taking them in police prisoner vans. It is like rubbing salt in their wounds." the United States Customs and Border Protection (USBP) force released a video showing "illegal immigrants" handcuffed and shackled.

Michael W Banks, Chief, USBP, shared the video of the deportation on X, saying, "USBP and partners successfully returned illegal aliens to India, marking the farthest deportation flight yet using military transport. This mission underscores our commitment to enforcing immigration laws and ensuring swift removals. If you cross illegally, you will be removed." The Punjab government had deputised its NRI Affairs Minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal at the Amritsar air-



Mann took to X to express his anger at the way the deportees were treated. He also criticised the Haryana government for taking deportees in prisoner vans from Amritsar, after they landed in a US military aircraft.

port when the deportees had landed. Dhaliwal spent many hours at that airport on Wednesday and met the youths from Punjab. He had assured them of government support. Dhaliwal had stated that the government would leave no stone unturned to help these youths, who had returned after spending lakhs and would find it difficult to pay off their loans.

Minor girl who crossed border from Bangladesh on foot was fleeing after 'threats from fundamentalists', say relatives



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

A 17-year-old girl from Bangladesh, who was intercepted by the BSF after she crossed the border into Uttar Dinajpur district of West Bengal on Tuesday night, had fled the neighbouring country after her family got "threats from fundamentalists", said her relatives. The BSF has handed her over to West Bengal police, who will produce her before the Juvenile Justice Board. Police have contacted her relatives who live in Jalpaiguri. The relatives said the girl's family in Bangladesh are followers of ISKCON, and had received threats.

"She took the desperate step to save her life. They (her family) are residents of Panchagarh district of Bangladesh. The family are followers of ISKCON. Recently,

the family received threats from fundamentalists. Miscreants also threatened to kidnap her and kill the family. Her parents then decided to send her to India. They called and informed me that she is coming to India, but did not tell me when and how," her relative told reporters. Joby Thomas K, superintendent of Islampur police district, said: "We got a complaint from BSF regarding a girl who is 17 years old having entered India illegally from Bangladesh through the border. We have lodged an FIR and due process is being followed. Details of what made her take the step and enter India will be revealed during investigation." According to police and BSF sources, the girl bypassed Bangladesh Border Guards and crossed the border on foot to the Indian side. The BSF spotted her at Fatehpur Border outpost in Chopra block of Uttar Dinajpur district, and handed her over to Chopra police station. Later, police called in the relative of the girl, who resides in Jalpaiguri district. The relative said: "With the help of some locals, she came to the border and somehow bypassed Bangladesh Border Guards. Her father, who works as a medical representative, is ill. I got a call from Chopra police station last night and came here. I told police whatever I know and the reason for her taking this step." There have been widespread protests in Bengal and other parts of India against alleged atrocities faced by minorities in Bangladesh, and the arrest of ISKCON monk Chinmoy Krishna Das in Dhaka on November 25. Das, who has organised multiple rallies in Bangladesh to condemn the alleged atrocities, was charged with treason.

'Supari' of Rs 5 lakh paid to murder BJP MLC Yogesh Tilekar's uncle, key suspect among 4 held: Pune police

GNS News Agency, Feb 8 The Pune police said Wednesday the murder of the maternal uncle of BJP legislator Yogesh Tilekar was a contract killing for which a "supari" of Rs 5 lakh was paid to assailants. A former neighbour of the victim is among the four suspects detained by the Pune police so far and is believed to have given the order for the killing, said officers.

Satish Sadba Wagh, 55, a resident of Manjari Budruk, was kidnapped sometime around 6.20 am on Monday when he was on a routine morning walk near his house. Around Monday evening, around 12 hours after he was kidnapped, his body was found in Shindavane village near Yavat, around 50 km from Pune city. Wagh, who was a farmer and also owned a small eatery, is survived by wife Mohini and sons Omkar and Abhishek.

"We have till now detained four suspects in the case. The probe suggests that this was a contract killing. A former neighbour of the deceased paid a supari of Rs 5 lakh to the assailants. The prime suspect, the former neighbour, is among those detained. He had a personal grudge against the deceased. The others are the suspected assailants. They are being questioned. We are probing the exact rea-



son behind the personal grudge," a senior officer from Pune City police said. The investigation has revealed that around 6.15 am on Monday, Wagh left his house. A few minutes later, he met Nilesh Sodnar, a resident of the same area, who was also on a walk. Within moments, Sodnar heard Wagh's screams as he was forced into an SUV by some people. They fled the spot with Wagh. Sodnar ran to inform the family about what happened and subsequently the police were alerted. The family did not receive any ransom demand.

Former Maharashtra DGP Sanjay Pandey appears before Thane police in extortion case



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Former Maharashtra DGP Sanjay Pandey appeared before the Thane police crime branch on Wednesday in connection with an extortion case registered against him and other police personnel in August. He enjoys protection from arrest granted by the Bombay High Court till January 3. The case was registered at the Thane Nagar police station on a complaint lodged by one Sanjay Punamiya, against whom two FIRs had been registered during the Maha Vikas Aghadi government, when Pandey was first the DGP and then the Mumbai police commissioner. After the Mahayuti government came to power, the cases registered against Punamiya were transferred to the CBI, which filed a closure report in the FIR in which former Mumbai police com-

missioner Param Bir Singh was also named as an accused.

An officer from the Thane police said that Pandey would be allowed to go after his statement is recorded. Punamiya alleged that Pandey had misused his position, initiated an illegal probe against him and extorted money from him and other businessmen by threatening to book them in false cases. Others booked in the case are Shyamsundar Agrawal, a builder and rival of Punamiya, two other members of his family, and two police officers—Sardar Patil, who retired as an assistant commissioner of police, and inspector Manohar Patil. In his statement to the police, Punamiya claimed that when he was admitted to Saifee Hospital in 2021, Sardar Patil and two police officers visited him to record his statement. The police officers told him that Pandey, then director-general of police, had sent a message for him, saying his name would be cleared from the criminal case if he gave a statement implicating Eknath Shinde, Devendra Fadnis and Param Bir Singh in an urban land ceiling scam. He had flatly refused the offer, he had claimed before the police. Pandey, who retired as Mumbai police chief on June 30, 2022, was earlier arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case and later granted bail. The CBI has also registered a case against him and his firm, iSEC Services Pvt Ltd, for allegedly tapping phones of National Stock Exchange employees illegally for around eight years. Pandey was granted anticipatory bail by the high court after a Thane court rejected his application for the relief on October 24.

Maharashtra medical university to send MBBS question papers via email after claims of exam paper leak

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Following allegations of exam paper leak, the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS) has decided to send the remaining question papers of the ongoing second-year MBBS examinations by email to colleges only after the students are seated in exam halls. The development comes after MUHS received two instances of emails claiming paper leak in an ongoing MBBS examination. Considering that the new practice is going to take longer for printing of question papers and distribution among candidates, all colleges have been asked to make required arrangements in advance and provide adequate time to students. The ongoing MBBS examination began on December 2. On the same day MUHS received an email claiming potential leak of the question paper of second year Pharmacology paper, hours before the start of the examination. Soon after, MUHS declared a re-exam for the paper on December 19. The MUHS again received a similar email on December 9, when Pathology examination was scheduled to be held. Instead of a re-exam, MUHS decided to change the question-paper and sent a different question paper to all colleges via email. Colleges were asked to not use the hard copies of question papers sent in advance.

Whether this will now be a standard practice to send question papers is yet under consideration of MUHS, an official said. "Emailing question papers on the spot is a good option, but it is more time consuming and also can be met with issues such as internet and electricity shortages with



Whether this will now be a standard practice to send question papers is yet under consideration of MUHS, an official said.

few colleges located in remote areas. Varsity is evaluating all options to avoid any future paper-leaks. "The medical university has ordered a high-level inquiry committee to probe the claims of question paper leaks. "At the same time, MUHS has approached Cyber Cell of Police for a detailed investigation. But considering all the situations, in a meeting of the examination board held on Tuesday it was decided that questions papers for remaining exams will now be sent via emails to all exam centres," said Dr Sandeep Kadu, Controller of Examination (COE) at MUHS. Over 7,900 students from 50 exam centres are appearing for the ongoing second-year MBBS examination of winter session.

Pune airport sets new record with 204 flight movements in a day



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

The Pune International Airport (PIA) recorded its highest-ever flight movement on Sunday, with 204 flights operating within 24 hours—102 departures and 102 arrivals, according to airport officials. Airport director Santosh Dhoke attributed this achievement to the commencement of the winter schedule on October 27, which included the addition of several regional and international flights to the airport's

fleet. This was the first time in the airport's history that it surpassed 200 flight movements in a single day. Previously, the airport recorded exactly 200 flights on two occasions: September 16 and October 14, before the start of the winter schedule.

With expanding national and international connectivity offered by various airlines, the Pune airport continues to witness a steady rise in both passenger traffic and flight operations. Dhoke stated that the rise in local and national connectivity, driven by airline companies and supported by slot distribution from the Airports Authority of India, has been a key factor behind the rise in operations. "With the start of the winter schedule, we introduced flights to various local destinations such as Bhopal and Indore, added two flights to south India, and increased services to Delhi. Additionally, the merger of Vistara and Air India has encouraged better slot utilisation," he said. "Slot utilisation refers to the specific time allotted to airlines for their operations. However, in some cases, airlines fail to fully utilise these slots due to factors like low passenger traffic, a shortage of crew members, or aircraft unavailability," added Dhoke.

'Change ant-paced, need a revolution': Vedanta Group Chairman Anil Agarwal

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

At the inaugural session of Rising Rajasthan Investment Summit, Vedanta Group Chairman Anil Agarwal said that Rajasthan is "India's sweet spot". His industries have invested `1 lakh crore so far in the state and contribute `50,000 crore to the national exchequer of which `10,000 crore goes to Rajasthan annually. Now, he plans on tripling those figures. For years now, he has also been emphasising how the state needs more underground exploration. He spoke to Hamza Khan on his plans for the state, the "ant-like" pace of change, the need for "self-certification" and his experience with Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma.

First of all, we make 1 million tonnes of Zinc and will now make 2 million tonnes of it; we will make 300,000 barrels of oil in Cairn; and we will create 10,000 Megawatts of solar (energy). Put together, there will be `1 lakh crore investment. And I am very focused on silver too and want to double its capacity too. Today we are making 800 tonnes of silver and want to make it to 1,600 tonnes. We wish that all that is produced is consumed in Rajasthan itself and more industries are set up. We believe that 500 industries can be set up for the raw materials we produce. And we are trying to triple the oil and gas production. We have also announced a Zinc Park which is not-for-profit. If someone is looking for a job, then you should invest in the industry. There is an opportunity here.

What are the areas in Rajasthan which you think have a lot of potential?

Mainly what's below the ground, the minerals, oil and gas, they have not been explored. It can feed the whole of India. The whole world has progressed due to gold and silver. What Hindustan Zinc has done, Hindustan Copper can also do. But according to me, the government companies cannot do it. You will have to take a view.

When Bhajan Lal became the CM last year, you said that the government machinery needs to be completely overhauled and that it should be based on certain principles spoken by the Prime Minister. What was your experience that led you to say this?

I am not saying this. The whole world is saying this. The Prime Minister is also saying this... he himself gave a statement on red-tapism a few days ago. Our people are very able. But the time has come for self-certification. Like for income tax and sales tax, we deposit what we think is due, and the assessment happens later. It should be the same in every work.

If you have to set up a factory, you should not have to go and get permission. You already know that you have to follow these norms. You set it according to those norms and file its return. If the government has any objection, it will come and talk. (The government can) certify all the rules and regulations. The biggest thing is to get land. If you want to set up an industry, it takes time to get land even for a small industry. How to get land? Is it possible to get land digitally? With these things, the industry will move forward.

Lifts to computers: 4 of 10 Govt tenders can't comply with Make in India rules

Rules framed under the Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order prohibit tenders that restrict or discriminate against domestic suppliers either by specifying foreign brands or setting eligibility conditions around turnover or production capability that may put domestic firms at a disadvantage. However, over the last three years, an estimated 40% of over 3,500 high-value tenders, which accounts for Rs 64,000 crore, floated by Government departments were flagged as "non-compliant" with these rules by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the nodal agency for the 'Make in India' push, according to records reviewed.

From lifts to CCTV cameras, medical supplies to desktop computers, records show, departments were turning to foreign brands arguing that these made better economic — and quality — sense than their domestic counterparts. Many departments have also underlined that some foreign brands specified in their tenders have manufacturing operations in India. In February 2023, DPIIT found that of the 1,750 high-value tenders — above Rs 1 crore for services, Rs 50 crore for goods, and Rs 100 crore for works — floated since October 2021 by Central government procuring entities, 936 tenders valued at Rs 53,355 crore were non-compliant with the 2017 rules. Lifts to computers: 4 of 10 Govt tenders can't comply with Make in India rules

The DPIIT's analysis, presented to a Committee of Secretaries (CoS) chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, showed that when these "violations" were flagged to procuring entities and respective ministries, corrective action was taken in 180 tenders and "no response" was received in 706 cases, records show. In 2020, the 2017 order was further tightened by introducing a method of classification: as a norm, departments should only source from local suppliers with local content more than 50% if there is sufficient local capacity and competition; if not, then they can also source from suppliers with local content between 20-50%; suppliers whose local content is below 20% were classified as "non-local suppliers" and allowed only in exceptional cases, like a global tender. By November last year, soon after the 10th anniversary of the flagship 'Make in India' initiative, the number of high-value tenders that didn't conform to the 2017 order increased to 1,502 out of 3,590 tenders

scrutinised (42 per cent), amounting to Rs 63,911 crore.

A total of 982 tenders (65 per cent) were found non-compliant for not incorporating provisions of the 2017 order; 450 tenders (30 per cent) for specifying foreign brands; and 152 (10 per cent) for having restrictive turnover requirements. In 2019, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and DPIIT Secretary had instructed top bureaucrats across ministries to "advise their procuring agencies to desist from such practices," records show. The departments of Military Affairs and Atomic Energy were yet to update their procurement policies to align with the 2017 order, DPIIT told a review committee in November 2024, records show. As of April 1, 2024, the Department of Telecommunications, along with the ministries of Electronics and Information Technology, Civil Aviation, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Textiles, and Steel, had not updated their procurement rules to incorporate the 2020 amendments to the 2017 order.

The DPIIT and the listed departments and ministries did not respond to requests for comment. In 2022, DPIIT compiled common tendering practices across ministries that it called restrictive and discriminatory toward local suppliers. For example, foreign brands such as Cisco, NEC, Alcatel, and Siemens were being specified in tenders for telecom products; while HP, Dell, and Lenovo were being specified for IT products. Similarly, tenders for the supply of lifts were specifying foreign brands like Otis, Kone, Mitsubishi, and Schindler. Even though these companies have manufacturing capacities in India, as noted by some procuring entities in meetings with DPIIT, specifying brand names in tender documents violates the 2017 order for being restrictive and discriminatory through exclusion of other domestic brands. In 2019, the Container Corporation of India Ltd (Concor) justified limiting a bid for procurement of lifts from just three companies—Schindler, Otis, and Thyssenkrupp—as they needed to replace old lifts on "an urgent basis". Concor noted that these are "established brands and all have their manufacturing units in India" The clarification came after Gujarat-based Omega Elevators filed a grievance against the bid and "requested that they must also be given fair and equal opportunity to participate in the tender," records show.

Trump's birthright citizenship order is put on hold by a second federal judge



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

A federal judge on Wednesday (February 5, 2025) ordered a second nationwide pause on President Donald Trump's executive order seeking to end birthright citizenship for anyone born in the U.S. to someone in the country illegally, calling citizenship a "most precious right." U.S. District Judge Deborah Boardman said no court in the country has endorsed the Trump administration's interpretation of the 14th Amendment. "This court will not be the first," she said. She added: "Citizenship is a most precious right, expressly granted by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution."

Ms. Boardman said citizenship is a "national concern that demands a uniform policy," adding that "only a nationwide injunction will provide complete relief to the plaintiffs." After reading her ruling from the bench, the judge asked a government attorney if they would be appealing her decision. The attorney said he didn't have the authority to immediately take a position on that question. Trump's inauguration week order had already been on temporary hold nationally because of a separate suit brought by four states in Washington state, where a judge called the order "blatantly unconstitutional." That temporary hold is set to expire on Thursday (February 6, 2025). Boardman's preliminary injunction puts the executive order on hold until the merits of the case are resolved, barring a successful appeal by the Trump administration. In total, 22 states, as well as other organizations, have sued to try to stop the executive action. Further hearings, similar to the one Boardman conducted on Wednesday, are due later this week in other birth-

right citizenship cases. Rights groups and expectant mothers brought the suit. Ms. Boardman, nominated by former President Joe Biden, agreed to the preliminary injunction after a hearing federal court in Greenbelt, Maryland. Immigrant-rights advocacy groups CASA and Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project, and a handful of expectant mothers brought the suit before Boardman. At the heart of the lawsuits is the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1868 after the Civil War and the Dred Scott Supreme Court decision that determined Scott, a slave, wasn't a citizen.

"The principle of birthright citizenship is a foundation of our national democracy, is woven throughout the laws of our nation, and has shaped a shared sense of national belonging for generation after generation of citizens," the plaintiffs argued in the suit. The Trump administration asserts that children of noncitizens are not "subject to the jurisdiction" of the United States and therefore not entitled to citizenship. "The Constitution does not harbor a windfall clause granting American citizenship to, inter alia: the children of those who have circumvented (or outright defied) federal immigration laws," the government argued in reply to the Maryland plaintiffs' suit. The 14th Amendment was added in the aftermath of the Civil War to ensure citizenship for former slaves and free African Americans. It states: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." In addition to the 22 states with Democratic attorneys general seeking to stop the order, 18 Republican attorneys general announced this week that they're seeking to defend the president's order by joining one of the federal suits brought in New Hampshire. The U.S. is among about 30 countries where birthright citizenship — the principle of jus soli or "right of the soil" — is applied. Most are in the Americas, and Canada and Mexico are among them. During his first week in office, Mr. Trump signed 10 executive orders on immigration and issued edicts to carry out promises of mass deportations and border security. Some actions were felt immediately. Others face legal challenges. If they happen at all, other orders may take years to happen but have led to fear in immigrant communities. Whether Mr. Trump can enact his agenda could come down to money. Congress is expected to consider funding support soon. Trump may use emergency powers to tap the Defense Department, as he did for a border wall during his first term.

U.S. deportation of Indian migrants: Insult to India, says Shashi Tharoor on treatment of deported Indians

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Thursday (February 6, 2025) said the manner in which Indians staying illegally in the U.S. were deported was "an insult to India and the dignity of Indians". He also asserted that the government needed to issue a message to the U.S., making it clear that it had no right to do this in such an "insulting manner". A U.S. military aircraft carrying 104 illegal Indian immigrants landed in Amritsar on Wednesday (Feb. 5), the first such batch of Indians deported by the Donald Trump administration as part of a crackdown against illegal immigrants. The deportees claimed their hands and legs were cuffed throughout the journey and that they were unshackled only after landing in Amritsar.

Asked about the deportation of Indians, the Thiruvananthapuram MP said, "We are protesting the way in which this was done. They have every legal right to deport people who are illegally in their country and we, if they are proven to be Indians, have an obligation to receive them ... But to send them like this abruptly in a military aircraft and in handcuffs is an insult to India, it's an insult to the dignity of Indians and we should certainly protest."

The former Union Minister of State for External Affairs recalled how Colombia had refused to accept suspected immigrants of Colombian origin under similar circumstances and officially protested when people were sent back in handcuffs. "You send people in a civilian aircraft, you send



them normally, we will accept them if they are our citizens but you can't do this," Mr. Tharoor told reporters outside Parliament. "The Modi Government needs to issue a message, making it very clear that we accept the right of Americans to send illegal people away but they have no right to do it in such an insulting manner," he said. "It is a humiliation that we don't have to witness it here in India," he added. The government should take action so that this is not repeated and demand an explanation for this "atrocious behaviour", Mr. Tharoor said.

Over 10,000 aid trucks have entered Gaza since ceasefire: UN

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

More than 10,000 aid trucks have crossed into Gaza since a fragile ceasefire took hold on January 19, the United Nations humanitarian chief said. "We've moved over 10,000 trucks in the two weeks since the ceasefire, a massive surge," Tom Fletcher said on X. The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator added that he himself was "about to cross into northern Gaza with a convoy of aid". "Thank you to the many people making it possible to get these trucks of vital, life-saving food, medicine and tents through," he said. His comments come as Israel and Hamas prepare to negotiate the second phase of the ceasefire agreement, which has paused 15 months of relentless fighting and bombing, unleashed after Hamas's deadly October 7, 2023 attack.

That attack resulted in the deaths of 1,210 people on the Israeli side, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures. Israel's retaliatory response has killed at least 47,518 people in Gaza, the majority of them civilians, according to the Hamas-run territory's Health Ministry. The UN considers these figures to be reliable. With just a trickle of aid coming into the territory before the



ceasefire deal, international aid organisations repeatedly reported crisis levels of hunger in the Israeli-besieged Gaza Strip and warned of looming famine. The truce has led to a surge of food, fuel, medical and other aid being allowed into Gaza, and enabled people displaced by the war to return to the north of the Palestinian territory. Under the Gaza truce's ongoing 42-day first phase, 18 hostages have meanwhile been freed so far in exchange for some 600 mostly Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.

ChatGPT faces global outage; users flood social media with complaints

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

New Delhi: ChatGPT, one of OpenAI's most popular Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, faced a global outage as millions of users were unable to access the service. Many frustrated users took to social media platforms like X on Thursday to report that ChatGPT was not working for them. The complaints indicate that the issue is widespread, with reports coming in from different countries. According to Downdetector, a platform that tracks online outages, thousands of users have been affected by the outage. The website's data showed a sudden spike in ChatGPT outage reports early this morning, and the numbers continue to rise as more people face issues. Some users are struggling to log in, while others say the AI is not responding to commands at all. The heat map (a technique that uses colour to represent data values) on Downdetector confirms that the outage is based on user-submitted complaints. So far, nearly

90 per cent of users have reported problems with the ChatGPT app, while others are facing issues on the website as well. Meanwhile, frustrated users are flooding X with posts and memes about the situation. One user humorously wrote, "Today, I lost access to ChatGPT for 20 minutes, and it felt like it was 2015 and Google Search had gone offline for a couple of hours." Another user added "Everyone coming to X to confirm chatgpt down" with a meme. "ChatGPT down again ??! surprised not surprised !!!," a user said. Another X user also chimed in, "Chatgpt is always down in the middle of doing my assignment." "Watching everyone freak out when chatgpt is down and they have to use their brains we truly r doomed," another user added. Meanwhile, today's outage is not the first time ChatGPT has faced technical issues. Recently, on January 23, the AI chatbot experienced a similar global disruption, preventing users from accessing it on both the web and the app.

Middle East crisis must not undermine India-Middle East Economic Corridor: Greek Foreign Minister



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Greece fully supports the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) as a "project for peace", Minister of Foreign Affairs George Gerapetritis said, admitting that the project's planning has been delayed since its launch in September 2023 due to the conflict in West Asia, and the Israel-Gaza war in particular. In an exclusive interview to The Hindu, Mr. Gerapetritis, who has arrived in Delhi for Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Thursday, said his visit to India follows a series of meetings in Qatar, Israel, Ramallah, and Jordan, which will be discussed during the talks.

He said Greece is working towards doubling trade and investment initiatives with India and plans to open two new consulates in Mumbai and Bengaluru. It also wants direct flights to begin and more visas to be issued. "The ongoing crisis in the Middle East has delayed the project's planning, but it must not be allowed to undermine the powerful rationale behind IMEC. It is our resolve — that of India, Greece, and our partners in between — that we will bring this project of peace and prosperity to pass," Mr. Gerapetritis said in written responses to questions from The Hindu about the viability of the IMEC that was launched on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit in Delhi by India, the U.S., the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Mauritius, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia, for a trade route from Western India to an European port via the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel. Despite the memorandum of understanding stipulating that the stakeholders would meet "within 60 days", they have been unable to meet even once more than 16 months later due to the West Asia conflict. "The ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon and the opening of the crossing in Rafah, combined with the new conditions in Syria, represent a significant turning point and leave room for hope that the conflicts will subside," Mr. Gerapetritis said, adding that Greece would pursue "peaceful settlement of disputes" during its current two-year elected term as a member of the United Nations Security Council.

During a visit to India in February 2024, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis had pitched Greece as the "gateway to Europe" for Indian trade over the IMEC. Initial IMEC project proposals had mentioned Greece's Piraeus port, along with Italy's Messina and France's Marseille, as possible ports on the IMEC route. More recent reports have also suggested that the Adani Group, which runs other ports on the proposed IMEC route, including Mundra port in Gujarat and the Haifa port in Israel, was seeking terminals in Greek ports like Kavala and Volos. Mr. Gerapetritis sidestepped a specific question on whether a deal for those ports was in the works. "Greece welcomes potential interest from Indian companies in investing in Greek ports, as we expect this to lead to the modernization and expansion of our country's port infrastructure. This aligns with Greece's aspiration to be the gateway of the groundbreaking IMEC Corridor into the European market," he replied. Trade between India and Greece stood at \$1.9 billion in 2022-23. Both countries have committed to "doubling it by 2030". Greece is particularly interested in Indian commerce in the areas of "construction materials, food & beverages, renewable energy", Mr. Gerapetritis said, indicating that trade would pick up at a faster pace if the long-pending India-European Union FTA talks are concluded. There are no direct flights between India and Greece despite an Air Services Agreement coming into force in 2022. "We welcome plans from Indian and Greek airlines to connect Indian and Greek cities with direct flights, and we look forward to their commencement," the Greek Foreign Minister said, adding that the Greek Embassy in Delhi had issued more than 30,000 visas to Indian visitors in 2024, and that opening the new consulates in Mumbai and Bengaluru would be a "gamechanger".

Asked about the issue of illegal immigration, with thousands of undocumented Indian migrants using the sea route to reach Greece each year, he said that Greece and India are negotiating a memorandum of understanding on migration and mobility. "Overall, we apply a strict but fair migration policy. What we are trying to do is to turn irregular migration into legal and orderly pathways of human mobility," Mr. Gerapetritis said. What is on your agenda during your upcoming visit to India and what do you hope to achieve in terms of bilateral cooperation during the visit, which comes a year after PM Mitsotakis was here?

The Greek Prime Minister's visit to India one year ago did in fact demonstrate our firm commitment to enhancing our Strategic Partnership. This year, in 2025, we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of our diplomatic relations. Tomorrow (Thursday, February 6, 2025), I will meet with my counterpart, the Minister of External Affairs, Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, to discuss the significant opportunities for further developing our bilateral relations in various areas, including maritime security, shipping, trade & investments, culture, and tourism. India and Greece are pillars of stability in their respective geographical regions, namely the Indo-Pacific and the Mediterranean. Greece, as the oldest democracy, shares strong ties with India, which is the largest democratic nation in history. Our two countries share the characteristics of great nations rooted in ancient civilizations that have profoundly influenced and enriched humanity.

Trade between India and Greece remains very small compared to other partners and potential, with a declared ambition of doubling it only by 2030. What are the main challenges in growing this figure of approximately \$1.9 billion [in 2022-23], and which areas have the most potential?

Economic and trade relations between Greece and India present great unexplored potential. We wish to further enhance commercial two-way flows. Areas of particular interest include construction materials, food & beverages, renewable energy. As agreed during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Athens in 2023, our countries are committed to doubling our bilateral trade by 2030. Upgrading EU-India relations to a strategic partnership enabled us to jointly address international issues. When trade cooperation between India and the EU advances with establishing the Free Trade Agreement (BTIA), we expect bilateral trade to record significant growth.

How has the Israel-Gaza war affected plans for the India-Middle East Economic Corridor? How viable is this corridor today and what will it take to start the IMEEC in the present Middle East conflict, given that the founder countries involved have not even been able to hold a meeting since September 2023?

Greece fully supports the visionary India Middle East Economic Corridor project and aspires to be India's natural doorstep to Europe and beyond. Given our geostrategic position, our status as a regional energy hub, and our leadership position in global merchant shipping, we envision playing a vital role. However, we also see IMEEC as more than just an economic corridor. It has a pronounced geostrategic component and holds the potential to become a corridor of peace, stability, and prosperity. This will greatly enhance cooperation between the participating countries, healing the wounds in the broader region and helping us increase our solidarity and resilience to future challenges. The ongoing crisis in the Middle East has delayed the project's planning, but it must not be allowed to undermine the powerful rationale behind IMEEC. It is our resolve — that of India, Greece, and our partners in between — that we will bring this project of peace and prosperity to pass.

How will India and Greece increase connectivity, given there are no direct flights at present?

Direct flights between India and Greece would undoubtedly function as a catalyst for bridging our two countries, advancing people-to-people contacts, and deepening our economic and commercial relations. The entry into force of our bilateral Air Services Agreement in 2022 has created the necessary framework for developing direct air operations. We welcome plans from Indian and Greek airlines to connect Indian and Greek cities with direct flights, and we look forward to their commencement. Is Greece in talks with Indian groups for ports to facilitate trading routes? Reports suggest that the Adani group has been in talks to acquire a terminal at Kavala or Volos. Could you confirm these reports? Greece welcomes potential interest from Indian companies in investing in Greek ports, as we expect this to lead to the modernization and expansion of our country's port infrastructure. This aligns with Greece's aspiration to be the gateway of the groundbreaking IMEEC Corridor into the European market. Regarding port infrastructure, Greek ports are strategically positioned at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and Asia, which render them ideal transport hubs for connecting these three continents. Several Greek ports are already logistics centers, and we aim to enhance their capacity, increasing connectivity and promoting sea transport services further.

Your government has promised to apply stricter controls on illegal migration - do you plan to discuss this issue during your visit to India, and how can Greece and India cooperate?

As a front-line state, Greece is committed to protecting its borders, which are also borders of the European Union. Greece has been at the forefront of the fight to dismantle the networks of traffickers who take advantage of human suffering. At the same time, we have improved the condition in migration camps and have accelerated the process of asylum seekers' applications.

Overall, we apply a strict but fair migration policy. What we are trying to do is to turn irregular migration into legal and orderly pathways of human mobility. In this respect, the Memorandum of Understanding on Migration and Mobility between Greece and India, which is currently under negotiation, is an essential step towards strengthening our cooperation in this field. Many visas are issued annually to Indian travelers for visits to Greece. In 2024, the Greek Embassy in Delhi issued more than 30,000 visas to tourists, students, workers, and business executives. And we want to expand our consular cooperation. To this end, I am glad to confirm our intention to open two new Greek Consulates in India, in Mumbai and in Bangalore. This will be a game changer in upscaling our bilateral ties and bringing our peoples closer.

What are priorities for Greece given its position in the UN Security Council this year? You are one of the few leaders to have visited both Tel Aviv/ Jerusalem and Ramallah after the conflict began - what is your prediction for this crisis and the Russia-Ukraine war in 2025?

As an elected member of the United Nations Security Council, Greece assumes an essential role in co-shaping international politics for the global security architecture. During its two-year term, 2025-2026, Greece will be vigorously promoting the six priorities it has set, namely peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for international law, women peace and security, climate change and security, children in armed conflicts and maritime security.

Regarding the Middle East, since the start of the conflict I have visited the area many times. In fact, I am now visiting India right after a series of meetings in Qatar, Israel, Ramallah, and Jordan, witnessing first-hand the situation on the ground. The ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon and the opening of the crossing in Rafah, combined with the new conditions in Syria, represent a significant turning point and leave room for hope that the conflicts will subside. Regarding the war in Ukraine, as we approach the third anniversary, it has proved that Russia's aggression has been the bloodiest conflict in Europe since World War II. We firmly oppose any form of aggression and we support a just and sustainable peace in Ukraine, that will meet the aspirations of the Ukrainian people for independence and security.

Trump says 'no soldiers by U.S. would be needed' in his Gaza proposal

President Donald Trump said that "no soldiers by the U.S. would be needed" in his Gaza proposal, days after he announced that the United States could "take over" and "own" the Gaza Strip. Also Read: Palestinians accuse Israel of 'ethnic cleansing' as 70 killed in West Bank

"No soldiers by the U.S. would be needed! Stability for the region would reign!" he said in an early morning post on his Truth Social platform. Earlier this week, Mr. Trump had announced while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was visiting that "the U.S. will take over the Gaza Strip." "We will do a job with it, too. We'll own it," he said to audible gasps during the press conference, offering few details on how the United States could remove more than two million Palestinians or control the war-battered territory.

His administration appeared to backtrack on this proposal by Wednesday (February 5, 2025) after facing a wave of criticism from Palestinians, Arab governments and world leaders.

India is second-biggest market for OpenAI, tripled users last year: Sam Altman



INDIA IS the second-biggest market for ChatGPT creator OpenAI, where it has tripled its user base in the last year, the firm's founder and CEO Sam Altman said. Altman is on a whirlwind world tour and landed in India late Tuesday night. On Wednesday, he met IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, along with a number of the country's start-ups and venture capital funds. He is also expected to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "India is an incredibly important market for AI in general and OpenAI in particular. It is our second-biggest market, we tripled our users here in the last year," Altman said during a discussion hosted by OpenAI. Vaishnaw was also present at the talk, and spoke about India's three-pronged approach to AI, where the country is focusing on designing chips, building foundational models, and AI applications. "But mostly seeing what people in India are building, the stack, chips, models, all the incredible applications — India should be doing everything, India should be among the leaders of the AI revolution. It's really quite amazing to see what the country has done..." Altman said. Altman's Asia tour also coincided with the meteoric rise in popularity of DeepSeek, a foundational model created by a Chinese AI lab at a fraction of cost of OpenAI's which is said to match the firm's models on many fronts. DeepSeek's model has shown to the world that cutting edge foundational models could be built at cheaper costs, unlike the huge investments that have gone into making OpenAI's models.

Altman was in India last in June 2023, and his latest

world tour is being seen by many as a rush to counter the impact of DeepSeek's achievement.

"We are now in a world where we have made incredible progress with distillation. We have learned to do small models and these reasoning models in particular... It's not cheap, it's still expensive to train them, but that is going to lead to an explosion of really great creativity. India should be a leader there, of course," Altman said, addressing a question on the lowering costs of building AI models. "There are two different ways to look at the cost of the models: to stay at the frontier, we believe, those costs will continue to rise on this exponential curve. But also the returns to increase the intelligence are exponential..." he said. "On the other side of it, the cost of a given unit of intelligence one year later seems to fall by 10x... but I don't think the world is going to need any less AI hardware," Altman said. During the discussion, Vaishnaw emphasised India's ability to develop cost-effective AI models, drawing comparisons to the country's low-cost space missions. "Our country sent a mission to the Moon at a fraction of the cost... why can't we do a model which will be a fraction of the cost... So yes, innovation will bring that cost down within applications in healthcare and education, agriculture, weather forecasting, disaster management..." he said. Following the discussion, Vaishnaw said in a post on X, "Had a super cool discussion with @sama (Altman) on our strategy of creating the entire AI stack — GPUs, model, and apps. Willing to collaborate with India on all three". During his earlier visit to India, Altman had quoted controversy when he said that companies around the world, including in India, may find it difficult to build a product like ChatGPT. "It's totally impossible to rival us in training these core models, and we'll advise you not to even attempt it. But it's your responsibility to try anyway. I genuinely believe in both those aspects. I reckon it's quite a futile pursuit," he had said at an event. Following a backlash, Altman had later clarified that his comments had been taken out of context. "...this is really taken out of context! the question was about competing with us with \$10 million, which I really do think is not going to work. but i still said try! however, i think it's the wrong question," he had said in a tweet.

India's First Fully Digital Account Opening in Co-operative Banking: Krishna Masure Leads Venkatesh Multistate's Digital Revolution

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

In a groundbreaking achievement, Venkatesh Multistate Credit Co-operative Society has become India's first multistate co-operative to offer fully digital account opening. This revolutionary initiative, led by Youth Chairman Krishna Masure, has ushered in a new era of paperless, efficient, and customer-friendly banking, setting a benchmark for the cooperative sector. At the helm of this transformation is Krishna Masure, a young and dynamic leader from a small village, who took charge as the Chairman of Venkatesh Multistate in 2022. In just two years, he has redefined co-operative banking, proving that age is no barrier to innovation and impactful leadership.

Traditionally, cooperative banking in India has been perceived as a sector resistant to change, operating with age-old practices that are heavily dependent on physical documentation and manual processes. However, Krishna Masure's entry into leadership challenged the status quo. With a strong understanding of the digital revolution in banking, he recognized the inefficiencies in manual processes that led to delays, unnecessary paperwork, and operational challenges for both customers and financial agents. His vision was clear: modernize Venkatesh Multistate Credit Co-operative Society with cutting-edge digital solutions, making banking simpler, faster, and more accessible to the masses. By leveraging his technological acumen, Masure transformed the society's core operations by introducing a seamless, paperless, and real-time banking experience. His leadership has proven that when youth take charge, innovation follows. Venkatesh Multistate: Pioneering India's First Fully Digital Account Opening in Co-operative Banking

The new system allows customers to open their accounts entirely online, with paperless Know Your Customer (KYC) verification. This transformation has been possible due to direct integration with authoritative platforms like NSDL for PAN verification and UIDAI for Aadhaar authentication. As a result, customers can now open their accounts within minutes, without visiting a branch or submitting physical paperwork.

This digital leap has resulted in significant time savings, making banking more convenient for individuals and businesses alike. Furthermore, it aligns with India's vision of a Digital Economy, promoting transparency, efficiency, and accessibility in the financial sector.

Beyond digital account openings for customers, Venkatesh Multistate has also revolutionized its Pigmy Account system, enhancing the efficiency and convenience of banking agents. Traditionally, pigmy agents were required to visit customers in person, collect cash manually, maintain physical passbooks, and spend hours reconciling transactions—a process that was time-consuming and prone to errors. Under Krishna Masure's leadership, a fully digital pigmy account system was introduced, allowing agents to manage deposits entirely online. Now, instead of physically collecting cash from customers on a regular basis, agents only need to assist in the initial digital account setup. Once the account is active, all transactions occur digitally and in real-time, eliminating the need for frequent in-person visits. This shift has enabled agents to work remotely, significantly reducing their travel time and operational workload. With instant digital transaction confirmations, the process is now faster, more secure, and highly efficient, benefitting both the agents and customers.

Supporting India's Paperless Banking Initiative and Driving Business Growth, Krishna Masure's digital-first approach has contributed significantly to the Government of India's initiative for a paperless banking ecosystem. By adopting technology-driven solutions, Venkatesh Multistate has aligned itself with the government's vision to reduce dependency on physical documentation and promote digital transactions. This digital transformation has not only benefited individual customers but has also played a crucial role in supporting businesses. Entrepreneurs and small businesses, who often face bureaucratic delays while opening accounts, now have a seamless onboarding experience. By eliminating unnecessary paperwork and reducing turnaround time, Venkatesh Multistate has enabled businesses to access financial services faster, helping them grow efficiently. Recognizing the success and impact of digital banking at Venkatesh Multistate, many other cooperative societies across India have begun to visit and study their



digital transformation model. Krishna Masure's leadership has set a benchmark for cooperative societies, proving that technology-driven banking is the future.

Several cooperative societies have shown keen interest in adopting similar digital practices and have approached Venkatesh Multistate for guidance. This exchange of knowledge and expertise is helping the entire cooperative sector move towards a more digitized, efficient, and customer-friendly banking system. Despite achieving monumental success, Krishna Masure remains focused on expanding digital banking solutions to rural India. His mission is to bring financial inclusion to the most remote parts of the country, where access to banking services is still limited. With his youthful energy, deep-rooted knowledge of cooperative banking, and forward-thinking approach, Krishna Masure is on a mission to bridge the gap between traditional banking and modern fintech solutions. At just 28 years old, Krishna Masure has transformed Venkatesh Multistate Credit Co-operative Society into a digital-first banking institution, making history in the co-operative sector. His journey from a small village to the chairman of a leading financial institution is a testament to the power of young leadership, vision, and innovation.

His bold decisions, technology-driven reforms, and unwavering commitment to progress have not only made banking simpler and more efficient but have also paved the way for other cooperative societies to follow. In an era where digitization is the key to growth, Krishna Masure has proven that when youth lead, miracles happen. His visionary leadership is shaping the future of cooperative banking in India, making financial services more accessible, efficient, and customer-friendly. As the banking landscape continues to evolve, one thing is certain: Krishna Masure is just getting started. His contributions to the sector will continue to inspire young entrepreneurs, financial leaders, and cooperative societies across India.

KTM launches 2025 KTM Adventure range in India starting at Rs. 2,59,850

Pune: KTM launched the highly anticipated 2025 KTM ADVENTURE range in India. This latest lineup redefines adventure touring with unmatched performance, versatility, and cutting-edge technology, the company said in a press release.

Built on an all-new platform, the 2025 KTM 390 ADVENTURE boasts a completely new chassis, enhanced long-travel fully adjustable suspension, and segment-first 21" x 17" tubeless spoke wheels. It has a 227 mm of ground clearance and a larger fuel tank for extended touring while effortlessly handling off-road excursions. Powering the new KTM 390 ADVENTURE is an enhanced LC4C 399cc engine, delivering 46 PS of power and 39 Nm of torque, the release said. On the other hand, the 2025 KTM 390 ADVENTURE X is designed for riders who prioritize road performance but also want off-road capability when needed. It comes with 19" x 17" tubeless cast wheels for road-focused touring comfort, a high ground clearance of 227 mm, and a low seat height of 825 mm. It will also feature a quick shifter for seamless gear changes. Built on the same platform as its larger siblings, the KTM 250 ADVENTURE is a lightweight yet highly capable entry into adventure motorcycling. With a powerful and efficient 250cc engine.

'Every electrified technology – hybrids, EVs – must receive policy support': Swapnesh Maru



Noting that India is still at a nascent stage as far as electric mobility is concerned, Swapnesh Maru, Deputy Managing Director — Corporate Planning, Green Field Project — at Toyota Kirloskar Motor, said that the country may have prioritised a few technologies in its push towards sustainability. In an interaction with Aggam Walia and Soumyarendra Barik, Maru emphasised that there should be a focus on eliminating cost disparities between petrol/diesel cars and hybrid cars. He also spoke about China's dominance in EVs, growing trade protectionism, and Toyota's partnership with Maruti Suzuki. Edited excerpts

How is the partnership with Maruti Suzuki playing out, and how do you see it evolve going forward?

If you look at both companies, and I'm talking specifically about India, there is a strong belief that we have a huge contribution to make to solving one of the biggest problems, which is about fossil fuels. In that sense, given the strengths that Toyota has in terms of the technologies and the excellence that Maruti has demonstrated sequentially in terms of bringing in small to medium cars at cost price points and technologies which are liked by the customers, I think these strengths have combined very well for the Indian consumer and for the companies. We believe this will only accelerate. This partnership will have a lot more to contribute.

Emissions is a big area of focus for the government. There are ongoing discussions on the CAFE 3 norms. How do you see compliance burden when sustainability is such a big area of concern?

We are witnessing one of the most landmark shifts, that is the massive energy transition every country is tackling. India has taken a lot of proactive steps, not just now, but for quite some time now in terms of leaping from Bharat Stage 4 to 6. And in that trajectory, I think the CAFE norms are just a normal extension. What these norms have already done with CAFE 2, and now with the planned CAFE 3, will be to align us closer towards meeting our national objectives of sustainability. The auto industry is extremely proactive in ensuring that these norms are digested. Of course, there are matters of detail and how we work out the compliances. Those things are still a work in progress. But overall, I believe these norms are extremely important for a country like India from a sustainability perspective and for integration into the global marketplace.

Many manufacturers are now exporting cars that are made in India. But China is also exporting a lot. There, the technology, especially for EVs, is understood to be among the best in the world currently. How can India-made products compete with Chinese exports globally?

The consumer of any particular market will choose a product which best fits their preferences, their recognition of the brands and the countries those come from. We must credit China for the excellence that they've had, not just now, but for many, many decades in terms of this. But I believe that given the geopolitical condition, the way in which a lot of balancing happens, globally, there is a lot of accommodation to look at opportunities along with China. So it's not about one country replacing another, but how countries other than China can also vie for a consumer's attention, and then through their manufacturing and quality assurances

All about stomach paralysis, and why diabetics are at a higher risk



The number of health terms and ailments we encounter daily sometimes scares us. A new one we learned about today is stomach paralysis, a functional disorder affecting the stomach nerves and muscles. "Stomach paralysis, medically known as gastroparesis, is a condition where the stomach muscles are weakened or unable to function properly, leading to delayed emptying of food into the small intestine," said Dr Prakruti Shah, associate consultant, department of gastroenterology, Paras Hospital, Gurugram. It disrupts the normal digestive process and can result in symptoms including nausea, vomiting, bloating, early satiety, and abdominal discomfort, said Dr Avinash B, HOD and consultant, department of medical gastroenterology, Ramaiah Memorial Hospital.

Gastroparesis can occur for several reasons. According to Dr Shah, one of the most common causes is damage to the vagus nerve, which controls food movement through the digestive tract. "This damage is often seen in individuals with diabetes, particularly if blood sugar levels have been poorly managed over time. Other potential causes include viral infections, certain medications that affect digestive muscle function, such as opioids or antidepressants, and underlying neurological conditions like Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis. In some cases, however, the cause may be idiopathic, meaning no specific reason can be identified," said Dr Shah. Dr Shah elaborated that managing gastroparesis involves a combination of dietary changes, medications, and sometimes more invasive treatments. "From a dietary perspective, patients are often advised to eat smaller, more frequent meals and

maybe gain some of the traction. In that sense, we need to work hard. We need to ensure that it's not just simply about matching China, beating China, but we must imbibe their core capabilities for a sustainable, competitive advantage not just on cost but also on quality and reliability.

How do you see protectionism in this industry going forward?

We were living in a world where globalisation was a trend for more than a decade. Now, it's more about individual countries. Businesses have to evolve and tailor to these realities. So for that matter, Make in India is also about a very powerful narrative about the growing consumption capability of India internally. And that may be true for many other countries, which is where India is excellently poised, given the depth of relationships that we have managed in a world which is widely conflicted. On one hand we continue to work with Russia, we continue to work with Europe, we continue to work with the USA and everybody recognises that India is being extremely deft at managing these relations. These are realities which we cannot change. How we work around them to ensure that we can offer our best is something that we should do more of, and I think India is doing it right.

The clear theme of this year's Auto Expo (January 2025) was EVs. Almost everyone has showcased their EV technology. But, globally, there is a slowdown in EV demand. Do you think that is a temporary blip, or a cause of larger concern?

The world is amidst a mega trend, which is about the shift from a fossil fuel to a sustainable energy mix. Every country is making its choices based on the energy mix, the infrastructure and of course the consumer preferences. And these are the trifecta which are manifesting — with a hybrid getting popular in a particular region or a BEV being more popular in European regions where sustainable energy consumption is a little more. These are trends which are kind of rooted in each country's conviction about their energy mix. So, we should not look at it as a technology preference, but rather as a policy preference. Finally, we should not forget that it is the consumer who has to make the final choice.

But overall, we believe that given the magnitude of what we are trying to solve globally and locally, there is no one single technology that can solve this problem. It's a mega trend and which is why an approach of multi pathway, a bouquet of technologies should contribute to reaching this outcome at speed and at scale.

In India, we are seeing a regional divergence. Some states are incentivising hybrids, while others are offering benefits for EVs. Do you think there is a need for a more unified approach?

We must again recognise that the problem that we are trying to solve is homogenous. No one technology can solve it at speed and scale. Our belief is that any technology, taking a very agnostic approach, which helps in reducing our fossil fuel imprint at speed at scale must get some kind of a recognition. I would just like to point out that the consumer should not get burdened and therefore alter his choices simply because a greener technology is slightly costlier than a fossil fuel driven vehicle. As long as these parities can be maintained, I think the movement towards sustainability will be very strong. In that context, and we must recognise that we are still a very early player on the electrified technology platform. States are making their policies, inadvertently, without really intending to, we might have ended up supporting one or two technologies, but not get the clear focus on other technologies which could have had an equal importance. So just to ensure that there is a level playing field for the consumer, we believe there is a cause to just remove this cost inefficiency for the customer on hybrid vis-a-vis ICE (internal combustion engines). We believe that every electrified technology must get recognised and supported.

to avoid high-fat or high-fibre foods, which can slow down digestion further. Liquids are generally easier to digest, so soups and smoothies may be recommended as part of the diet," said Dr Shah. Dr Shah further said that prokinetic medications like metoclopramide are commonly prescribed to promote gastric emptying, while anti-emetic therapies can help alleviate nausea and vomiting.

"If these approaches do not yield satisfactory results, endoscopic procedures such as gastric peroral endoscopic myotomy may be considered to ensure proper hydration and nutrition. Additionally, innovative treatments like gastric pacing and botulinum toxin injections are being explored to improve symptoms in selected patients. Ongoing research at leading medical centers continues to advance the understanding and management of gastroparesis, offering hope for improved outcomes," Dr Shah told indianexpress.com. Patients are encouraged to be more physically active and go for regular follow-ups. "Medications and lifestyle changes are the cornerstone. Early diagnosis and management are vital to improving quality of life, as the condition can significantly impact nutritional health and day-to-day functioning," said Dr Avinash.

Zomato CEO Deepinder Goyal hires 2 Chief of Staff. Did they pay Rs 20 lakh for the post?

New Delhi: Zomato Founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal, who recently faced online outrage for the eligibility criteria for a Chief of Staff vacancy, said on Wednesday that the company received over 18,000 applications, with 30 candidates offered various positions.

In a "hiring update" post on X, he shared that 18 out of the 30 selected individuals have already joined Zomato (and other group companies like Blinkit) in "high-impact roles" and "they're being handsomely compensated" for the value they bring.

In an unusual job vacancy posting for Chief of Staff, the Zomato CEO in November asked prospective candidates to pay Rs 20 lakh for the first year, which in turn will be donated to non-profit Feeding India with the company offering to contribute Rs 50 lakh to a charity of the candidate's choice. He had claimed that the role would provide "10x more learnings than a 2-year degree from a top management school, working with me and some of the smartest folks in consumer tech".

Pratik Gandhi reveals he endured cramps, quit carbs and only drank 1 litre of water a day for defined abs: 'Thought I'd never do that'

Dhoom Dhaam revolves around a newly married couple whose first night turns into a nightmare after they are attacked by a goon who mistakes them for someone else. While the trailer shows Yami Gautam's character as the bold one, protecting them from the thugs, Pratik recently revealed that he also has a standout moment in the film where he got to showcase his six-pack abs.

In a recent interaction with Bollywood Hungama, Pratik Gandhi was asked why he had been hiding his six-pack abs all this time. He responded, "I was always like this—maybe not with such sharp definition, but largely the same body frame. However, a lot of hard work went into achieving this look for the film. I ate a lot of protein, worked out intensely, and barely got any sleep. I drank very little water and endured cramps—all for this body."

He added, "I had read many actors' interviews where they talked about how difficult it is but I come from a different school of thought when it comes to fitness, so I used to think I would never do all this. But I ended up doing it. For four days before the shoot, I only drank one litre of water a day—including all liquid intake like tea and coffee. I also completely cut out carbs and salt. And when you don't consume carbs, you become irritable. I was just waiting for the sequence to get over so I could drink water properly again."

Pratik Gandhi, who rose to fame with his performance in Hansal Mehta's Scam 1992, has starred in various projects since then, including the dark comedy Madgaon Express, the romantic comedy Do Aur Do Pyaar, and the web series The Great Indian Murder. While Pratik has received praise for his performances in these roles, he hasn't really had a role where he gets to show off six-pack abs. However, in his upcoming film Dhoom Dhaam, Pratik finally gets that opportunity.

Inside Govinda-Sunita Ahuja's house with an 'angel table', Versace candle and Italian furniture.

Govinda's wife Sunita Ahuja, who has been quite candid about her personal life and Govinda's professional life in the past few months, recently gave a tour of her house in Mumbai. Sunita gave a tour of her "English-style" house that has largely been designed by her children, Tina and Yashvardhan. Sunita said that since they studied in London, they did not want to design a messy house that "looks like a home, not a showpiece."

Talking to Mashable India, Sunita shared, "I got married in this house. This was the second house Govinda bought. We got married in this temple and my two kids were also born and brought up in this house so I am very emotional about this house." She shared that different corners of her house were designed keeping Vaastu practices in mind. She also showed a statue of Santa Claus, an idol of Sai Baba and an angel that has been placed in the house. She shared that she owns a house in Kolkata as well as Darjeeling, and both those houses also have Sai Baba idols.

For her 'angel table', Sunita said that they "believe in angels" and light a candle on it every evening. She then showed a Versace candle placed on a nearby table. Sunita shared that they light diyas in their balcony to protect the family members from evil eye. Sunita said that all of their furniture was imported from Italy and because of that, it took them seven months to complete their house. She also addressed the recent accident when Govinda shot himself in his leg while showing the dance corner of the house and said, "I also dance but I don't know about Govinda since he got shot. No... he also danced on Netflix, I saw it. He dropped the gun. I wasn't even here. I was at Khatu Shyam temple and Yash was in Bangkok. I said 'why did you shoot in the wrong place? You could have shot here (points towards chest)'. Sunita concluded by saying that they are now planning to buy a bigger place and will hopefully by one soon. "Yash should have his own place once he gets settled, I also want a place. This house is there but I want a bigger



house. We're still deciding, let's see if we buy it this year or next year." Sunita had previously implied that Govinda and her don't live together anymore. "We have two houses, we have a bungalow opposite our apartment. I have my temple and my kids in the flat. We live in the flat whereas he gets late after his meetings. He loves talking so he'll gather 10 people and sit chatting with them. Whereas me, my son and my daughter live together, but we hardly talk because I feel if you end up wasting your energy by talking too much," she told Hindi Rush.

Shark Tank India pitchers tell Ritesh Agarwal they started out in 'kharab sa' OYO basement, took over entire guest house



Two founders pitched their coworking business on the latest episode of Shark Tank India. Founders Yogesh and Sarthak said that they faced difficulty finding work space when they felt like branching out while doing jobs, which is what gave them the idea of founding Alt F Coworking. Much to Ritesh Agarwal's surprise, they said that their first office was in a basement at an OYO property. "Wahan kharab sa table tha," one of the founders said. It turned out that Peyush Bansal knew them as well, and had used their services in the past. The founders asked for Rs 1 crore in funding, in exchange of .75% equity, valuing their company at a whopping Rs 133 crore.

Yogesh and Sarthak told the panel of 'sharks' that they negotiated a deal with the OYO landlord to lease out the

basement space, and soon, they were earning more through the basement than the entire guest house through its rooms. It didn't take them too long to convert every bedroom in the property into a coworking space, and the OYO became an Alt F. They said that they were earning Rs 3 lakh from the basement alone. Now, after nearly a decade in operation, they are projecting revenue of Rs 50 crore this year. They said that they also have deals in place for a further Rs 30 crore, effectively putting their current revenue at Rs 80 crore.

The founders told the 'sharks' that they want to expand into tier two and tier three cities next, but Namita Thapar wasn't sure about the demand for coworking spaces in such cities. She backed out of the deal, citing these reasons. Aman Gupta, on the other hand, felt that they don't need a 'shark' at all and are doing fine by themselves. Anupam Mittal said that he cannot justify the Rs 133 crore valuation, and felt that they are currently earning only around Rs 5 crore in profits every year. He backed out of the deal as well.

Ritesh said that he has already invested in a coworking company, and felt that he couldn't participate in the deal because of this conflict of interest. Aman joked that Ritesh was quietly taking down notes and will soon enter the space himself. "Itna chup yeh kabhi nahi rahe hain," Aman said, leaving Ritesh red-faced. Peyush Bansal, however, made the founders and offer of Rs 1 crore, but for 2%. Namita felt that this was unfair, but Anupam said that there is no fairness in Shark Tank. The founders respectfully declined Peyush's offer, and left without a deal.

Ram Kapoor dismisses claims of taking Ozempic for weight loss, promises 6-pack abs in 6 months: 'No shortcuts, no surgery'

Ram Kapoor recently made headlines for his amazing transformation journey. The actor who played the OG Ram Kapoor in the Ekta Kapoor show, Bade Ache Lagte Hai, lost about 55kgs. The photos of his transformation went viral when he shared them on his Instagram handle. While many praised the actor for his hard work and dedication, a set of people also trolled him and accused him of opting for Ozempic and surgery. The actor took to his Instagram handle to share a video and address these claims. In the video, the actor could be seen flexing his muscles and saying, "a lot more work is left", promising to have a six-pack in the next six months. He said, "Apparently after all this news has gone viral, lot of people are coming to me non stop and basically thinking that I have done something or taken Ozempic or other drugs or surgery. First there is nothing wrong in it but now is less than 30 seconds, I want to prove that I have done nothing." The 51-year-old actor added, "I have no best body. The point is, this kind of transformation requires hard work and long, long hours... no shortcuts, no surgery, no Ozempic. That only does weight loss, not this. Right? Within four to six months, I am going to get a rock solid six-pack with blocks. That has to be done the hard way. Get it! But anyone who has done Ozempic or surgery, so what? Good for you all." Ram Kapoor had addressed



these issues previously in a podcast with Cyrus Broacha. He said, "Twice I lost 30 kilos and twice it came back. This time, I have lost 55 kilos, and I have achieved a great level of health because I have learnt that any diet is temporary... The point is instead of dieting, you have to change your mindset."

Sanam Teri Kasam actor Mawra Hocane marries co-star Ameer Gilani in Pakistan.

Pakistani actor Mawra Hocane, known for her role in the 2016 Hindi film Sanam Teri Kasam, has announced her marriage on Instagram. The actor tied the knot with fellow actor Ameer Gilani, and the couple took to social media to share glimpses of their dreamy wedding.

Mawra shared stunning visuals from the ceremony. In the pictures, the couple is seen holding each other as they pose for the photos. While Mawra wore a light blue-green lehenga, Ameer was dressed in a classic all-black outfit. She posted the images with the caption, "And in the middle of chaos... I found you? BISMILLAH 5.2.25 #MawraAmeerHoGayi."

Another set of pictures reveals moments from the nikaah ceremony, with Mawra and Ameer signing the nikkahnama. Surrounded by their family members, the couple received heartfelt well-wishes. TV actor Mouni Roy congratulated Mawra, writing, "Heartiest congratulations. Wish you both the happiest, most meaningful journey ahead ?? ??"

Mawra and Ameer have previously worked together as co-stars on Pakistani TV shows like Sabaat and Neem. Their on-screen chemistry was widely appreciated by fans. Although rumours of them dating had been circulating for a while, fuelled by their social media posts and public appear-



ances together, the wedding announcement has now made their relationship official. Mawra has also been part of other popular Pakistani TV shows like Aahista Aahista, Ek Tamanna Lahsil Si, and Nikhar Gaye Gulab Sare, among others. Mawra is also known to Indian audiences for her role in Sanam Teri Kasam, where she starred opposite Harshvardhan Rane. The film received mixed reviews and was directed by Radhika Rao and Vinay Sapru.

When Mahesh Bhatt complained about Amitabh Bachchan's 'megalomaniacal and narcissistic' need to be loved

Filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt has occasionally hinted at differences between himself and actor Amitabh Bachchan. He has criticised Bachchan's film Silsila in the past, claiming that it inspired him to make the more realistic Arth. But as it turns out, he once wrote an article in the 2000s, when he ostensibly accused Bachchan of having a God complex. At the time, a temple had been erected in Bachchan's honour in Kolkata, leaving Bhatt perplexed at society's urge to bow down before Gods. "Human beings love to revere someone larger than themselves. I wonder why?" he wrote.

Bhatt continued, "What would make people in the east of Kolkata erect a makeshift temple near Mall Road on Guru Purnima day and then in an air filled with the fragrance of burning incense pray for hours with passion and folded hands to a wax idol of Amitabh Bachchan? What would make them turn the superstar into a living God? All these questions rushed through my mind when this happened recently because although this news was received with jubilation by the Mumbai film industry, it made me sad."

Bhatt said that he was disappointed about how deeply society had regressed into superstition despite the advance-

ment in science. In the article, he wrote that Bachchan's ego must've received a boost after the erection of the temple, and accused the actor of seeking validation. He continued, "Most of them might not have realised that this personal God was actually an idol carved in the image of themselves, a projection of their own limited needs, fears and desires. And by praying to this God, the followers hoped to establish a permanent link with the cultural phenomenon of their time. In the case of Kolkata too, one can see that the members of Amitabh Bachchan's fan club hope to get a sense of security for themselves and reinstate everything they stand for, by exalting him to the status of a God. Being a part of this belief system, this event must have inflated Amitabh's ego to monstrous proportions. And because disciples often attribute magical powers to their Guru, experts feel that this form of idealization is even more dangerous than falling in love. Because this love is often one-sided. All gurus are megalomaniacs and narcissists. Their only aim in life is to be loved rather than love anyone else. This need to be loved and to be the center of attention, together with the grandiosity which accompanies it shadows them till they die."

Vidaamuyarchi Movie Review: Magizh Thirumeni moulds Ajith Kumar into a different kind of star in a different kind of a film

Vidaamuyarchi Movie Review & Rating: In Vidaamuyarchi, Ajith Kumar's Arjun isn't a "hero" by any stretch of the imagination, especially in the Tamil cinema ecosystem. In fact, if the film wasn't a gripping action drama, Arjun would have been a certified loser with nothing going for him. In fact, even in this movie, for a really long time, Arjun is never a facilitator of action, but just a responder to the consequence. And that's what makes it all the more special because it is an action film featuring one of the biggest stars of Tamil cinema, and it features a star stripped of all his stardom... almost.

Magizh Thirumeni takes the premise of the 1997 film, Breakdown, and remains largely faithful to the plot, giving it a few necessary changes to suit Indian sensibilities. And the most important change is in the relationship dynamics between Arjun and his wife Kayal (Trisha), which adds gravitas to this equation that drives large portions of the film. The movie starts off by establishing the romance between the couple and the gradual falling out that happens over years of marriage. We are shown glimpses of their journey, right from the first meet-cute to falling heads over heels in love to the first cracks in the relationship, and the seemingly irreparable ones. And point to Magizh and editor NB Srikanth for deciding to tell all these through two beautiful Anirudh Ravichander numbers to ensure the pacing isn't sacrificed for showcasing the romance part.

But as soon as Magizh gets done with this aspect of the story, he shifts gears to enter into action thriller mode and there's no looking back. It is also here that we are introduced to the other players of this intense drama. Rakshith (Arjun), Deepika (Regena Cassandra), and Michael (Aarav) enter the lives of Arjun and Kayal, and what ensues is a mix of havoc and intrigue. It is also in these portions that Magizh does the seemingly unthinkable and makes Ajith play a 'normal' guy.

Ajith gets beaten up, slapped around, kicked to the curb, thrown like a rag doll, and twisted around by every character in the film. And it makes absolute sense because Ajith, in a really long time, isn't playing a 'powerful' role. He is not a cop or a gangster or a lawyer or a village chieftain, etc. He has a white-collar job, sizeable savings in his bank account, and is just tired with the cards life has dealt him. Even when all the chips are down and the entire world is against him, he doesn't react the way you'd expect a "hero" to. He doesn't pounce on villains at the drop of a hat. He waits, thinks, reacts, and even retreats. He doesn't randomly get hold of a gun and immediately gets around shooting people. He reacts like the character of Arjun, and that makes Vidaamuyarchi a refreshing addition to the star films of today. Magizh's strength is undoubtedly the detailing to each character, and certain minute additions in the narra-



tive that adds a lot of flavour to the film. Be it the way names are spelt in the Azerbaijan offices, the backstories to Rakshith and Deepika, and all the sequences involving Azerbaijani actors speaking the local language, all of these add authenticity to Vidaamuyarchi. On the other hand, this same detailing goes amiss in the last act that is super rushed. Even though these portions are elevated by Magizh's proclivity for gore, and it is actually interesting and borderline intentionally funny and grotesque, it sidelines the leads and dumps information about the baddies.

But till we get there, Magizh and Co deliver a film that ensures we are made aware at every scene of the film that it is he who is firmly at the helm. Obviously, there is servicing the star at times but it is never servicing the fans, and this makes all the difference. Even the music of Anirudh doesn't exist to just elevate Ajith, but instead chooses to do justice by the characters. Vidaamuyarchi also gets the stunts sequences right, and the decision to keep it minimalistic allows the makers to be inventive about the execution. There is close hand-to-hand combats and an exquisite looking fight inside the car that equals the visuals of the chase sequences on the sprawling empty dusty roads of Baku.

Another aspect of Vidaamuyarchi that really works is the performances. While the film is heavily revolving around Ajith, and he does a commendable job of dealing with anguish and perseverance, the film rides on the roles played by Arjun and Regena. They bring in a rather zany vibe to the proceedings and sell their roles with a conviction that is consistent through the film. The same holds good for Arav too. While Trisha is effective, she doesn't get enough to do in this film once it shifts gears. Vidaamuyarchi, existing in this form, is a fascinating addition to the evolving standards of superstar films in Tamil cinema. It shows that difference has to come from top down, and when superstars like Ajith decide to play roles rather than images, and surrenders to the vision of directors like Magizh who have a distinct voice of their own, the result is there for everyone to see.

England bank on Joe Root's 'measured approach' to unravel India's spin web

England lost 29 wickets to spin over the five games. All the England batsmen seemed to have the same mindset: attack the first ball of the over. Citing Harry Brook as an example, former England captain Michael Vaughan said the current generation of England cricketers disrespects spin while trying to whack every ball out of the park. "I'd love him (Brook) to watch Joe Root, who is a master of going back, hitting into the legside, nabbing a two, getting off strike," Vaughan wrote in a column for The Telegraph.

"Sweeps and reverse sweeps to manoeuvre the field and create gaps. Do not just think boundary, boundary, boundary all the time. If Brook marries his own game with a bit of Root, he will be much better for it." After the group-stage exit at the 2015 ODI World Cup, Eoin Morgan changed the template England were playing with over the years. They became the first team to smash 350 in ODIs on a regular basis. And Root's pragmatic approach, manoeuvring the ball into the gaps, allowed everyone else to be firecrackers. In the current England set-up, all the batsmen love to whack the ball out of the park. But to do well in this ODI series and the Champions Trophy, they need a fulcrum. Root will have to remind England's swashbucklers that the ODI game lasts more than double the time a T20 does. "I'll just say this in terms of execution. Whether you want to be aggressive, you want to be conservative, you want to be measured, you've still got to go out there and execute it and play it well," he said. "If I look back at that World Cup, the two teams in the final were playing a really positive and aggressive brand of cricket. You may think of the way Travis Head took that final with the bat. It can be successful. This can be a great part of the world to play that fashion of cricket." However, Buttler maintained that his team will stick to its ultra-aggressive style, despite current results not going their way. We want to play in exactly the same way. We want to find ways to put pressure on the opposition with the bat. We played well in phases in the T20s, never quite long enough to run away with games and end up getting the results. It's really important that we stay on track and stay on course with the way we want to play and try to execute that to the best of our ability in these games," he said.

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

There's something classy and stylish about the way Joe Root goes about his job. The sense of assurance he brings to the table is evident in the way he batted in the Nagpur nets on Wednesday. He looked at ease against the local spin bowlers. Instead of trying to hit every ball out of the park, he looked to use his feet and play it down the ground. He also showed his range of shots, including the conventional sweep and the 'reverse' version. The "cheeky smile," as mentioned by his captain Jos Buttler, never leaves his face, and he is probably the batsman the England team management will be banking on to combat their spin threat from India.

"He'll be at number three," Buttler revealed Root's batting position on the eve of the match. "He's one of the great players of the game and obviously a vital part of ODI cricket for England for a long time. I'm excited to see him in this phase of his career, when he's not had the captaincy. He is back with that cheeky smile on his face and really enjoying his cricket. I expect him to do exactly the same in this environment. He's obviously got loads of experience in ODI cricket, which would be great for some of the guys who haven't played as much in our group." Brendon McCullum, who was head coach of the England Test team, has been charged with turning around the white-ball team's fortunes as well. But his first series did not go well, as they were bamboozled by spin during a 4-1 series defeat in India.

'Didn't hit right lengths initially but got rewards once I corrected them': Harshit Rana reacts on ODI debut

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Harshit Rana debut ODI Harshit Rana of India celebrates the wicket of Liam Livingstone of England during the 1st ODI match between India and England held at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium, Nagpur, India on the Harshit Rana had an impressive debut outing in the ODI format, taking 3 wickets for 53 runs against England in the 1st ODI in Nagpur. But it did not start as swimmingly for the 23-year-old with Phil Salt marauding 26 runs off the 6th over. The Kolkata Knight Riders bowler would bounce back in style, however, when he sent back Ben Duckett (32), Harry Brook (0) and Liam Livingstone (5).

"I didn't hit the right lengths initially but got the rewards once I corrected them. They were looking to make some room (the batters), that's the reason I kept bowling on the stumps," Rana said about his change of strategy during the match. "It's a slightly two-paced pitch. Some of them are coming on nicely, some are stopping a bit. We bounced back in style. It's a good total and we can chase this down," he added. In the match, England blazed out of the blocks with electrifying intent after opting to bat, but India's disciplined bowling and razor-sharp fielding orchestrated a remarkable fightback as they bundled out the visitors for 248. Rana and the ever-reliable Ravindra Jadeja (3/26) shared



six wickets between them in a clinical display of bowling. Meanwhile, Buttler (52), Bethell (51) and Phil Salt (43) scored the major chunk of the runs for England.

Just when the visitors seemed poised for an onslaught, India struck back in sensational fashion. Shreyas Iyer produced a moment of brilliance in the field, running out the dangerous Salt with a bullet throw to KL Rahul following a mix-up between the two openers. While Rana's 26-run over gave England the momentum, his fourth over which yielded two wickets changed the complexion of the innings, putting India in control.



While it wasn't the most difficult run out Shreyas will effect, it was a reminder of how he has built back up to full fitness after his back surgery not so long ago.

very next over, a short ball from Harshit Rana drew a false shot from Duckett, with the ball hitting the top part of the bat. While it was obviously mishit, Yashasvi Jaiswal still had a lot to do, dashing backward from midwicket and putting in a full length dive to complete a stunner of a catch. It was Rana's first ODI wicket and Jaiswal's first catch in the format too. In his Test career so far, Jaiswal had already built a reputation as a safe catcher behind the wickets in the gully region (despite an off day in Melbourne recently) and this would go down as a special effort on his debut. India are without star batter Virat Kohli who missed out due to a "sore right knee" as young opener Jaiswal and seamer Rana earned their ODI caps. This is India's first ODI since August 2024, when they lost a three-match series 0-2 to Sri Lanka. Teams:

How sharp fielding helped India send back well-set England openers

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

For a while, it seemed like a brilliant toss to win for England in the opening One-day International of the three-match series in Nagpur on Thursday. India captain Rohit Sharma said he would have liked to bowl first anyway but Jos Buttler's decision to bat first had put the visitors on a great platform. But it all changed in quick time within the space of one over as Phil Salt and Ben Duckett were dismissed and India's fielding played a crucial part. Off the 5th ball of the 9th over, Salt played a late cut off Hardik Pandya to give Shreyas Iyer something to chase from backward point. While Shreyas did his due diligence to cut the ball back in before reaching the boundary and sent a solid throw over, the two openers had a massive mixup. Salt and Duckett were near each other at the non-striker's end and the result was an easy run out.

While it wasn't the most difficult run out Shreyas will effect, it was a reminder of how he has built back up to full fitness after his back surgery not so long ago. "When I underwent surgery, I thought this was completely going to change my body," Shreyas had told The Indian Express during an interview recently. "It was kind of difficult to come back into the same zone and agility that I had before the surgery. After a year, now I feel very comfortable and I feel strong that I can do basically what I intended to before the surgery. Yes, there were self-doubts. I played Asia Cup and World Cup straight after that. It's not easy to come out after a surgery. My body wasn't reacting the same way on the field. And I could literally feel it, especially while fielding. Batting was okay. But while fielding, I wasn't 100%." In the

Hyderabadi cyclist Aashirwad Saxena selected for Asian Road Cycling Championship 2025

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Hyderabad: Aashirwad Saxena, a professional cyclist of the Telangana State Cycling Association has been selected to represent the Indian Cycling Team to participate in the 44th Asian Road Cycling Championship to be held in

Phitsanulok, Thailand from February 9 to 16.

The tournament is slated to bring together nearly 500 excellent cyclists from the continent, including professional national teams, U23 and U18 youth teams, and senior athletes competing in the master category, a press release said.

Aashirwad, an international cyclist from Hyderabad, is one of the members of the Indian contingent who were trainees of VN Singh, coach of the Indian Team. He recently secured a Bronze Medal in the 38th National Games and performed well in that event as a Road Rider.



Punjab Kings coach Ricky Ponting says Shreyas Iyer, Arshdeep Singh and Yuzvendra Chahal were 'non-negotiables' for him



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Punjab Kings' head coach Ricky Ponting has explained his reasoning for why he pushed for the franchise to pursue three Indian stars – Shreyas Iyer, Arshdeep Singh and Yuzvendra Chahal – in the IPL 2025 auction. While Shreyas Iyer was picked up for Rs 26.75 crore, Arshdeep Singh and Yuzvendra Chahal cost the Kings Rs 18 crore each in the IPL auction. "There were three players that I wanted to bring in. One who has been at Punjab Kings for three or four years—Arshdeep Singh. I also wanted to bring in a captain who I have worked with before and who has had a lot of success. So, we went

after Shreyas Iyer. I also wanted to bring in Yuzi. So the Indian guys that we have are perfect," Ponting said in a recent episode of The Howie Games podcast.

"And then, we had to make a few tweaks as the auction went on to make sure we ended up with a really good squad. I am trying to make things different and rebuild and have the right people around me. But these three were non-negotiables," the former Aussie international added. Promising that the season will indeed see a big change, Ponting said, "It's going to be really different this year with the way that we are perceived, the way we present ourselves, the way that we train, the way that we play, and the way that we are led. Everything is going to be different from the previous years." "When you're in India, on most flights or when you check into a hotel, there are so many people around trying to have a picture or they wish to grab your bag to drop into your room. But it's part and parcel of an Australian cricketer's life when you visit India," he said. "You appreciate it more when you understand how much it means to them. There are people of all different ages. I think doing commentary gigs in India has allowed a lot of that, as I have spent a lot of time in the country now. I have also been able to work with a lot of players who have talked reasonably highly about me in the media. I think people have learned a lot more about me since my playing days," Ponting added.

Why Sunrisers Hyderabad's deal to take over Northern Superchargers is unique so far

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Sunrisers Hyderabad have acquired the Northern Superchargers for £100 million, becoming the third IPL franchise to own stakes in a team in the Hundred. But unlike the other two instances, Sun Group's successful bid is the first case of a 100% takeover as Yorkshire has become the first team to agree to sell their entire stake in The Hundred, according to BBC. Earlier, Mumbai Indians had bought 49% ownership of Oval Invincibles, while Lucknow Super Giants purchased a reported 70% in the Manchester Originals. "We are delighted to be entering into an exclusivity period with the SUN Group, and will be continuing our conversations with them in the coming weeks with a view to setting the Northern Superchargers up for long-term and sustained success," Yorkshire CCC's chief executive officer Sanjay Patel said in a press statement. "Having been in consultation with them for some time now, it is clear that they are aligned to the values and future direction of the Club and will play a huge part in ensuring we can go on to achieve great success in the coming years." It is clearly a huge milestone for Yorkshire CCC, the Northern Superchargers and the Sun Group, but it is worth stressing that there is a lot of detail to be discussed alongside further due diligence and legal processes before a contract can be



signed," he added. This is SRH's second overseas investment after owning the Sunrisers Eastern Cape in the SA20. Led by Aiden Markram, the Eastern Cape are two-time defending champions in the SA20. The SRH have also won the IPL once in 2016, when they defeated Royal Challengers Bengaluru by eight runs, and they are currently captained by Pat Cummins of Australia. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has so far sold London Spirit, Oval Invincibles, Welsh Fire, Manchester Originals and Birmingham Phoenix to various bidders while Trent Rockets and Southern Brave are up for sale. At least one more IPL team could still be in contention with the Delhi Capitals group.

Virat Kohli misses out; Yashasvi Jaiswal, Harshit Rana make 50-over debut in Nagpur

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

India vs England: Virat Kohli missed out due to a knee injury picked up on Wednesday, Rohit Sharma said at the toss before the first of the three matches between India and England in Nagpur. Yashasvi Jaiswal's long-awaited debut in One Day Internationals became a reality on Thursday in Nagpur, as he was handed his international cap in the 50-over format. Alongside Jaiswal, Delhi pacer Harshit Rana also earns his debut in the third format. Both Jaiswal and Rana have played in the other two international formats already.

Jos Buttler won the toss and opted to bat first, while Rohit Sharma – returning after a short break international cricket – said he would have bowled first anyway. The three ODIs against England are the only matches in the format before the Champions Trophy that starts on February 19. We have hardly played this format since the 2023 World Cup, so it's all important for us," Rohit said at the toss. "Jaiswal and Harshit are making their debuts for us, but unfortunately Virat isn't playing today, he had a knee problem last night." Jaiswal has played 19 Tests and 23 T20Is already for India. The swashbuckling Mumbaier made his international debut in the other two formats in West Indies



in July and August 2023. In List A cricket he has an average of 53.96 from 32 innings, scoring 5 hundreds with a highest of 203. Rana, meanwhile, made his Test debut during India's recent tour of Australia. In the recent T20 series he made a rather controversial appearance in the shortest format when he played in place of Shivam Dube after a concussion sub. Rohit Sharma (c), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shreyas Iyer, Shubman Gill, KL Rahul (wk), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Ravindra Jadeja, Harshit Rana, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Shami

No Indian umpire or referee will be part of tournament as ICC confirms final list, here's why

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

two weeks out from the start of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, the International Cricket Council confirmed the list of match officials for the tournament. And there is no Indian presence for the tournament to be held in Pakistan and United Arab Emirates from 19 February to 9 March.

According to PTI, India's only representative in the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires, Nitin Menon, has opted out of officiating in the Champions Trophy in Pakistan this month due to personal reasons. "The ICC wanted to put him (Menon) on the Champions Trophy roster. But he decided against travelling to Pakistan due to personal reasons," a BCCI source told PTI. Among match referees, former India pacer Javagal Srinath is also absent from the final list as he is going on leave. A Times of India report quoted Srinath, who is currently the referee for the ODI series between India and England, as saying: "Yes I had asked for leave as I had quite a few days away from home in the month of November, December and January." With only India matches being played in Dubai, neither Srinath nor Menon would be eligible to officiate in the UAE. A team of 12 umpires will take charge of the proceedings in the 8-team tournament to be played in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi in Pakistan and Dubai in the UAE. Richard Kettleborough, a veteran of 108 Men's ODIs, and who stood in the final of the last edition played in the United Kingdom in 2017, is among six umpires who return for another Champions Trophy. Chris



Gaffaney, Kumar Dharmasena, Richard Illingworth, Paul Reiffel and Rod Tucker, all members of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Umpires, are others who also featured in 2017.

Kettleborough and Illingworth, who stood together for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 final in Ahmedabad, are joined by Michael Gough, Adrian Holdstock, Ahsan Raza, Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid, Alex Wharf and Joel Wilson, all of whom officiated at the World Cup in India.

David Boon, Ranjan Madugalle and Andrew Pycroft, all members of the ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees, comprise the three-member team of referees. Umpires: Kumar Dharmasena, Chris Gaffaney, Michael Gough, Adrian Holdstock, Richard Illingworth, Richard Kettleborough, Ahsan Raza, Paul Reiffel, Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid, Rodney Tucker, Alex Wharf, Joel Wilson.