

INDIAN CHRONICLE

22 January, 2026 | Thursday | Volume No:10 | Issue No: 297

Pages: 12+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

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Battu Tirupati Transferred as Municipal Commissioner of Kagaznagar

“Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, January 21 (Indian Chronicle)“Battu Tirupati has been transferred and posted as the Municipal Commissioner of Kagaznagar. He is expected to assume charge shortly following the official transfer orders. Further details regarding his joining date and administrative responsibilities are awaited.



Holiday Declared on January 22 for Nagoba Jatara: District Collector

“Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, January 21 (Indian Chronicle)“In view of the Nagoba Jatara being held on January 22 at Keslapur village in Indervelli mandal of Adilabad district, District Collector K. Haritha has announced a holiday for all government and private educational institutions in the district. In an official statement, the Collector said that, in lieu of the holiday, February 14 (second Saturday) will be observed as a working day.



Telangana CM proposes WEF follow-up meet in Hyderabad

Hyderabad, Jan 21

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has proposed to host a follow-up meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) every July in Hyderabad.

The proposal received unanimous support from global business leaders and policy makers during the 'Join The Rise' event held in Davos, according to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) here.

Stating that one year is a very long time for follow-ups in modern business cycles and making investment decisions, the Chief Minister proposed to the WEF to organise another follow-up forum every year, in July or August, in Hyderabad.

He added that the recent Telangana Rising Global Summit was very successful, attracting investments worth over Rs 5.75 lakh crore. "Normally, we come to Davos to sign MoUs, but this year, after the Global Business Summit's success, we are now focusing on presenting our vision and policies."

Referring to the massive success of Telangana Rising Global Summit -- held at Bharat Future City -- in December 2025, the CM said Telangana now decided to talk to the WEF about hosting the follow-up Forum in Hyderabad.

The event, which showcased the growth framework and the vision for 2047, saw the launch of Telangana AI Innovation Hub (TAIH) and Telangana Next-Gen Life Sciences Policy 2026-2030.

The delegation, including ministers D. Sridhar Babu and Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy, explained about the state's game-changer projects -- roads, Metro rail expansion, rejuvenation of river, lake and water bodies. They also mentioned the plans for new economic zones, building a new city, and a new manufacturing zone to become a China +1 alternative option.

They explained that Telangana has unmatched investment potential and sought the support of global companies in technology, knowledge, experience and expertise.

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The Chief Minister informed the high-profile attendees that Hyderabad had grown into a global hub for Global Capability Centres (GCCs). He added that Hyderabad is being developed as India's first city to be operational 24 hours -- with a focus on the night-time economy on both sides of the River Musi.

"We are building a new city -- totally smart, designed for the future, and India's answer to the best in the world. It is called Bharat Future City. In over 30,000 acres, with more than 50 per cent of the area left open as Green cover."

Popular actor Chiranjeevi, who was also in attendance, stood as a special attraction during the dinner event.

'Aur kitna sukhaoge Sukhna Lake ko': SC slams builder-official nexus

New Delhi, Jan 21

Expressing serious concern over the drying up of Chandigarh's iconic Sukhna Lake, the Supreme Court on Wednesday came down heavily on the builder mafia and bureaucrats over their alleged collusion resulting in ecological damage to the water body.

"Aur kitna sukhaoge Sukhna Lake ko (How much more will you allow Sukhna Lake to dry up)... There are illegal constructions in collusion and connivance with bureaucrats, backed by political entities in Punjab resulting in complete destruction of the lake. All builder mafias are operating there," a three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said.

The Bench, which also included Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice Vipul M Pancholi, made the comments after a lawyer mentioned a plea related to the lake during the hearing of a plea filed in a pending 1995 PIL titled "In Re: TN Godavarman Thirumulpad".

The remarks came from the Bench during the hearing of its suo motu case regarding the Aravalli definition issue, in which it had stayed its earlier decision to accept the Centre's definition of the Aravalli range. The CJ expressed displeasure over the deteriorating condition of the lake.

Earlier, the Bench wondered why matters concerning forests and lakes were repeatedly being brought directly before it, bypassing high courts and that too through interim applications in a decades-old PIL. "Why are all forest matters coming to this court?" it asked.



The Bench said it appeared a "friendly match" was being played at the behest of certain private developers and others. It asked Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, representing the Centre and amicus curiae K Parameshwar to inform it of local issues that could be effectively dealt with by respective high courts.

The matter relates to protecting the catchment area of Sukhna Lake, a man-made and rain-fed lake in Chandigarh, created in 1958 by damming the Sukhna Choe stream at the foothills of the Shivalik Hills. A major tourist attraction, it is home to various birds, including migratory species in winter. In 2020, the Punjab and Haryana High Court had ordered demolition of illegal structures around the lake to prevent encroachments.

Devotees Participate in Large Numbers in Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara Rituals at Nandiguda



"Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, January 21 (Indian Chronicle)“Arrangements are currently underway in the Municipal Pump House, Nandiguda area as part of the Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara. A large number of devotees took part in the rituals, offering sacred vows (mokku) to the deity and presenting jaggery (bellam) at the ceremonial platform (gadde) as a mark of devotion. As Wednesday is considered especially auspicious, devotees gathered in large numbers at the platforms to offer their prayers and fulfill vows. Speaking on the occasion, President Thumma Ramesh stated that all necessary arrangements are being made to ensure that devotees face no inconvenience during the rituals. The programme was attended by Secretary Poloju Srinivas, Pirsangula Srinivas, Tirumal Reddy, Kota Shankar, and other members.

“Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, January 21 (Indian Chronicle)“Hyderabad, Jan 21: In a major administrative reshuffle ahead of the Second Ordinary Elections to Municipalities, the Telangana government has ordered the transfer and posting of 47 Municipal Commissioners and senior municipal officials across the State to ensure free, fair and impartial conduct of elections. The orders were issued by the Municipal Administration (MA) Department through G.O.Rt.No.87, following the Election Commission guidelines on neutrality of election machinery. The transfers take effect immediately, according to the official order. Key Reason for Transfers The government stated that the reshuffle was necessary as several officials were: Working in their native districts, or Continuing in the same municipality/district for a long period Such postings, the government noted, could affect administrative neutrality during elections. Major Transfers Announced Among the key postings: C.V.N. Raju, Municipal Commissioner (Grade-III), Adilabad, has been posted as Secretary, Ramagundam Municipal Corporation. K. Sammaiah, Section Officer (OD), Huzurabad, has been repatriated to the Secretariat. Keerthi Nagaraju, Municipal Commissioner (Grade-III), Choppadandi, has been transferred to Raikal Municipality. A. Srinivasa Reddy, MPDO (OD),

Additional Collector Reviews JEE (Main) 2026 Examination Arrangements in Medchal-Malkajgiri District



NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal-Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 21, (INDIAN CHRONICLE)Medchal-Malkajgiri Additional Collector Vijayender Reddy directed officials to ensure the smooth, transparent, and incident-free conduct of the JEE (Main) 2026 examinations without any lapses. On Wednesday, the Additional Collector inspected the JEE (Main) examination centres at Siddhartha College and Nalla Malla Reddy Engineering College in Ghatkesar mandal. During the inspection, he reviewed the infrastructure and security arrangements and interacted with officials to assess preparedness at the centres. Speaking on the occasion, Vijayender Reddy stated that JEE (Main) 2026 examinations are being conducted from January 21 to January 29 and that a total of 13 examination centres have been established across Medchal-Malkajgiri district. He emphasized the need for strict adherence to examination guidelines to ensure a fair and orderly process. He instructed officials to prevent any untoward incidents and to maintain a disciplined environment at all centres. Candidates were advised not to carry electronic gadgets, smart devices, or wristwatches into the examination halls. Authorities were also directed to ensure the closure of photocopy and internet centres in the vicinity of the examination centres during exam hours. The Additional Collector further enquired about the availability of medical facilities, including first-aid kits, ORS packets, and the presence of medical teams at each centre. He also reviewed the implementation of Section 144 around examination venues to prevent gatherings and maintain law and order. Tahsildar of Ghatkesar Chandrashekar, college staff, and other concerned officials were present during the inspection.

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Telangana Govt Transfers 47 Municipal Commissioners Ahead of Municipal Elections

Edulapuram, has been posted as Municipal Commissioner, Haliya. M. Noorul Najeer, Manager (OD), Bhoothpur, has been appointed Municipal Commissioner, Amarchintha. Several other Municipal Commissioners were shifted across Adilabad, Mancherial, Nalgonda, Vikarabad, Karimnagar, Sangareddy, Mahbubnagar and Nizamabad districts, including transfers involving GHMC, Ramagundam, Nalgonda and Mahbubnagar Municipal Corporations. Consequential & Promotion Transfers The order also includes consequential transfers and promotions, with: Officials posted to GHMC, Others promoted and posted as Municipal Commissioners in various towns, and Some officers relieved from GHMC and posted to municipalities such as Kagaznagar, Devarakonda, Ibrahimpatnam, Armoor and Tandur. Strict Compliance Ordered The government directed all transferred officials to report immediately at their new places of posting. Failure to comply will invite disciplinary action, the order warned. The Commissioner & Director of Municipal Administration and the GHMC Commissioner have been instructed to relieve officials without delay to ensure smooth implementation of the transfers. The order was issued in the name of the Governor of Telangana and signed by Dr. T.K. Sreedevi, Secretary to Government.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Course correcting India's gig economy anomalies

The decision to nudge the quick-commerce platforms to withdraw the promise of '10-minute delivery' is a welcome move that represents an inflection point in India's gig economy and a successful course correction of a toxic model that has normalised risk for convenience. The regulatory challenge now is to reconcile two truths: quick commerce has created jobs and convenience while, at the same time, compromising on the safety of the delivery workers. The answer lies not in stifling innovation but in civilising it. Following the recent strike call by gig workers' unions, superfast commerce platforms came under renewed scrutiny. While the strikes caused limited disruption, they brought longstanding concerns — harsh working conditions, stiff targets, and a lack of job or income security — into sharper public focus. The labour ministry's intervention on the '10-minute delivery' branding was widely seen as an acknowledgement of these issues. The discontinuation of 10-minute delivery promises was among the key demands raised by gig workers' unions, primarily on safety grounds. The problem with this model is that algorithms reward haste and penalise delay, putting the lives of delivery executives at risk. While velocity is monetised, safety is externalised. India's gig workforce is expanding rapidly, and for a large section of riders, this is not pocket money but primary income. Tight delivery windows, opaque ratings and income volatility create a constant pressure loop. Even a minor traffic snag becomes a financial threat. In such a system, accidents are not aberrations; they are predictable outcomes.

Quick commerce rests on a single pillar: algorithmic optimisation. Algorithms do not see potholes, traffic signals, sudden rain or broken lifts. They see only distance, time, and conversion rates. Every delay becomes a penalty.

Strict action will be taken against those who employ child laborers: Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Local Bodies and Revenue Additional Collector Bhaskar Rao

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 21):- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Local Bodies and Revenue Additional Collector Bhaskar Rao said that strict action will be taken against those who employ child laborers. A coordination meeting for Operation Smile, aimed at eradicating child labor, was held on Wednesday in the mini meeting hall. Additional Collector Bhaskar Rao, Additional DCP Lakshmi Narayana, and District Welfare Officer Narasimha Rao participated in the meeting. “Speaking on the occasion, the Additional Collector said that action will be taken against anyone who employs children aged



0 to 18 years or subjects them to forced labor. He informed that 97 children have been rescued since January. He said that all officials should work in coordination in Operation

Muskan. He urged the officials to work diligently with professional responsibility to bring light into the lives of the children. “He said that information regarding child protection should be given to 1098, and this helpline number works 24 hours a day. He said that the three teams involved in Operation Smile in the district should register an FIR if children under 18 years of age are found working, naming the owner as A1, the foreman as A2, and the supervisors of the respective industries as A3. He also said that counseling should be given to the owners of the industries. He said that Anganwadi centers should be established in areas where there is a high concentration of industries. The program was attended by CWC, JJB staff committee, BRB coordinator Ananthalakshmi, District DMHO officer Manohar, AD Prashanth Reddy, police department personnel, NGO representatives, Child Helpline CCI staff, and district welfare department office staff.

Congress Leaders, Colony Representatives Urge Removal of Water Hyacinth and Beautification of Ramanthapur Lakes



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 21 (Indian Chronicle): “Congress leaders and local colony representatives have appealed to HYDRA Commissioner A.V. Ranganath to remove water hyacinth and undertake cleaning and beautification works at the Ramanthapur Big Lake (Upper Lake) and Ramanthapur Small Lake (Lower Lake) located in the Habsiguda and Ramanthapur divisions of the Uppal constituency. A delegation comprising senior Congress leaders from the Habsiguda Division—Janampalli Venkateshwar Reddy and Gaddam Ravi Kumar; Ramanthapur Congress Party In-charge Tavidaboyina Giribabu; former councillor Kondal Reddy; Maheshwari Nagar Colony President Mallipeddi Aravind Reddy; Habsiguda Division Reddy Sangham President Kommididi Malla Reddy; along with Pratap Reddy and Dr. Rohin Reddy—met the HYDRA Commissioner on Wednesday and submitted a memorandum. The delegation informed the Commissioner that excessive growth of water hyacinth in both lakes has led to severe mosquito menace, making it difficult for residents to step outside during evenings.

They further explained that the lakes have become highly polluted and foul-smelling, causing serious inconvenience to the local population. They urged the authorities to immediately remove the water hyacinth, thoroughly clean the lakes, and carry out beautification works to restore the lakes and provide relief to residents of the surrounding colonies.

AAP Reconstitutes Telangana State Executive Committee

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal- Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 21, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday announced the reconstitution of its State Executive Committee for Telangana as part of an organizational restructuring exercise. According to an official statement issued from the party's Telangana state office, the new committee has been formed to strengthen internal coordination and expand the party's activities across the state. Hema Sudarshan Jilloju has been appointed as Convener, while Burra Ramu Goud will serve as Working Convener. Sailu Botla has been named Co-Convener. Dr. S. K. R. Ansari has been appointed General Secretary and Mohammed Sohail as Treasurer. Syed Hyder will function as Joint Secretary and Jaweed Shareef as Joint Treasurer. Party sources said the reconstituted committee will focus on organizational expansion, grassroots mobilisation, and issue-based campaigns in Telangana. The leadership team is expected to oversee party programmes at the district and constituency levels and coordinate with the national leadership. The announcement was signed by Priyanka Kakkar, Chief National Spokesperson and Telangana State In-Charge of AAP, and Diddi Sudhakar, In-Charge Convener of the party's Telangana unit. Copies of the notification were forwarded to the party's national office bearers. AAP stated that the new executive committee would work towards strengthening the party's organisational presence in Telangana in the coming period.



Rare and Complex Heart Surgery Successfully Performed on Young Woman at Gandhi Hospital

“Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, January 21: “Doctors at Gandhi Government Hospital have successfully performed a rare and highly complex cardiac



surgery on a 25-year-old woman suffering from multiple genetic and cardiac disorders, showcasing exceptional medical expertise and teamwork. The patient, Pallavi (25), a resident of Asifabad, was initially admitted to a local hospital due to persistent health issues. After seeking treatment at several private hospitals, she was advised to undergo cardiac evaluation and was referred to MGM Hospital, Warangal, from where she was finally shifted to Gandhi Hospital for advanced care. She had been experiencing shortness of breath and palpitations for the past ten days. “Detailed medical evaluation revealed that Pallavi was suffering from Bardet-Biedl Syndrome (BBS), an extremely rare autosomal recessive genetic disorder. Doctors stated that the syndrome is caused by mutations

in various genes such as BBS1, BBS2, BBS4, BBS10, BBS12, among a total of 24 identified genes. As part of this condition, the patient also had polydactyly, red cone

dystrophy (retinitis pigmentosa), central obesity, intellectual disability, and Type 1 diabetes. “Cardiac investigations confirmed Ostium Primum Atrial Septal Defect (ASD) measuring 14.7 mm, associated with severe Mitral Regurgitation (MR). Her ejection fraction (EF) was assessed at 65%. Further assessment showed an Ostium Primum ASD measuring 2.5 cm x 2 cm with a cleft in the anterior mitral leaflet. “Given the complexity of the condition, a high-risk and intricate cardiac surgery was performed under the leadership of Dr. Ravindra, Head of the Cardiothoracic and Pulmonary Surgery Department. The surgical team successfully carried out pericardial annuloplasty, closure of the Ostium Primum ASD, and repair of the anterior mitral leaflet (AML) of the mitral valve. “Commending the medical team for their dedication and skill, Gandhi Hospital Superintendent Dr. Vani congratulated Dr. Ravindra, Dr. Tribhuvan, Dr. Harshita, and Dr. Rajasekar for completing the challenging procedure successfully. “The team also included RMOs Dr. Sheshadri, Dr. Kalyan Chakravarthy, Dr. Naveen, and Dr. Hasitha; anesthesiologists Dr. Murali, Dr. Kiran, Dr. Shreya, Dr. Sucharita, and Dr. Sai Prasanna; and cardiologists Dr. Ravi Srinivas, Dr. Prashanth, and Dr. Raj Kumar, among others. “The successful completion of this rare and complex surgery in a government hospital stands as a testament to the advanced medical capabilities and commitment of the Gandhi Hospital medical fraternity.

Divyangula Sankalp Mela Held Successfully



“Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, January 21: “The Divyangula Sankalp Mela, organised jointly by Blue Foundation, Enable India, and CADER, was held successfully on Wednesday at the Professor Jayashankar Sports Ground, Lalapet, Secunderabad. The event was inaugurated by GHMC Deputy Mayor Mothe Srilatha Reddy, who attended as the chief guest. “Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Mayor congratulated the organisers for their efforts in bringing various voluntary organisations working for persons with disabilities onto a single platform. She emphasised that disability is not a barrier to success and called for recognising the hidden talents of Divyngs and encouraging them in all fields. “Addressing the gathering, Enable India COO Moses Choudary, Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) Director Krishnamurthy, CADER Director Haribabu, Enable India State Manager Mallikarjun, Blue Foundation Director V. Kranti Kishore, and Helen Keller Institute Chairman Umar Khan highlighted the importance of inclusive development and empowerment of persons with



disabilities. “Enable India COO Moses Choudary expressed happiness over the grand success of the Sankalp Mela, organised for the first time in Telangana. On the occasion, Anti-Narcotics Bureau DSP K. Saidulu and Inspector K. Srinivasa Rao appealed to the public to cooperate in making Telangana drug-free, stating that the use and sale of narcotic substances is a criminal offence. “Special stalls were set up at the mela to provide information on education, employment, vocational skill training, healthcare, and welfare services available for Divyngs. Members of the Telangana Muscular Dystrophy Association, Wheelchair Cricket Players' Association, and the State Dwarfs Association actively participated in the event. “During the programme, Divyang achievers from various fields, including cultural artists and sportspersons, were honoured for their outstanding achievements. “The organisers stated that around 2,000 people from the erstwhile districts of Telangana attended the Sankalp Mela, making it a grand success.

Rs 69 Lakh Underground Drainage Works Taken Up at Uppal Swaroop Nagar: Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Inspects Development Works

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 21 (Indian Chronicle): “Development works are progressing at a fast pace in Uppal Division. Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy is regularly monitoring the ongoing works to ensure timely completion. As part of this initiative, on Wednesday, Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy, along with Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Parameshwar Reddy, conducted an extensive inspection tour in Swaroop Nagar,



Uppal. During the visit, underground drainage construction works being carried out at a cost of ₹69 lakh were reviewed along with Water Board official Satyanarayana and local residents. “Speaking on the occasion, Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy assured that CC road construction works in Swaroop Nagar will be taken up shortly, aiming to further improve basic infrastructure in the locality. The inspection programme was attended by Water Board Manager Satyanarayana, Swaroop Nagar Colony President Srinivas Goud, Mohan Reddy, Anand Prabhu, Pisati Anji Reddy, Hanumanth, Nagender, Gnaneshwar, Lucas, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Srinivas Reddy, Santosh, Amar, Venkateswara Rao, Ramakrishna Hanuman, Venkatesh, Ramesh, Suresh Lakshman, Kumar, and several other local residents.

Provide Opportunity for Street Vendors to Carry Out Business: Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 21 (Indian Chronicle): “Street vendors from the Chilkanagar Division approached Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj with a complaint that traffic police personnel were troubling them along the stretch from NGRI Metro Station to Stadium Metro Station and not allowing them to conduct their business. “Responding immediately, Corporator Geetha Praveen met Uppal Traffic CI Nagaraju at the Uppal Traffic Police Station along with the street vendors. She requested that small traders and street ven-



dors be allowed to carry on their daily business and appealed that poor vendors, who earn their livelihood by selling fruits and flowers on a daily basis, should not be harassed. Traffic CI Nagaraju responded positively and stated that vendors should ensure they do not come onto the roads and should conduct their business only on the footpaths, keeping their fruit carts properly placed so that there is no obstruction to traffic. He assured full cooperation to ensure that no inconvenience is caused to the public and that poor vendors are not troubled unnecessarily. Corporator Geetha Praveen also instructed the fruit vendors to follow guidelines so that there is no traffic disruption and assured continuous support by coordinating with the police, traffic department, and GHMC officials to safeguard the livelihoods of street vendors. “Expressing their gratitude, the street vendors thanked Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj and Traffic CI Nagaraju for standing by them and supporting their daily business activities. “The programme was attended by BRS State Leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, senior leaders Yedula Kondal Reddy, Kokonda Jagann, Muddam Srinivas Yadav, Shyam Balu, and several street vendors.

Every woman should come out from their homes to attend the public meeting being held in Hyderabad on the 25th, on the occasion of the 14th National Conference of AIDWA:

- Call by AIDWA Mandal Secretary Kondamagu Nagamani

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 21):- All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) Mandal Secretary Kondamagu Nagamani called upon every woman to attend the massive public meeting being held on Janu-

men and women are equal, the ruling classes are inciting religious sentiments and trying to confine women to the kitchen. She demanded that the 33% reservation for women in Parliament and Assemblies be implemented immediately, that security be provided to women in work-



ary 25th at Bus Bhavan Ground in Hyderabad, on the occasion of the 14th National Conference of AIDWA. After distributing pamphlets door-to-door as part of the AIDWA conference campaign in Vadaparthe village of Bhuvanagiri mandal on Wednesday, Nagamani said that AIDWA has continuously waged militant struggles for the protection, welfare, security, and dignity of women. She stated that AIDWA is fighting relentlessly against the attacks, atrocities, rapes, and harassment being perpetrated against women, from infants to the elderly. She strongly condemned the situation where governments are treating women as second-class citizens and said that while

places, that nutritious food and healthcare measures be taken for women and girls, and that governments show progress in legislative bodies to eliminate gender discrimination. She stated that the conference would serve as a platform to discuss these issues and formulate movements for their achievement. Nagamani called upon thousands of women to attend the public meeting being held on the 25th to demonstrate the power of women to the government and showcase their unity. Uddutha Andamma, Bhanupriya, Bobbili Swathi, Anita, Tummalasatyalakshmi, Jupalli Madhavi, Shailaja, and others also participated in this program.

The AIDWA flag is a symbol of support for women, constantly fighting for the resolution of women's problems and for their rights:

- Rasala Nirmala and Kondamagu Nagamani, Mandal President and Secretary of the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA)



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 21):- The All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) constantly fights for the resolution of women's problems and their rights, standing as a strong support for women, said Mandal President and Secretary Rasala Nirmala and Kondamagu Nagamani. On Tuesday, in Baswapuram village under Bhongir mandal, a campaign was conducted among women agricultural laborers who were planting paddy, urging them to participate in large numbers in the public meeting being held in Hyderabad on January 25th, on the occasion of the AIDWA All India Conference. On this occasion, Nirmala and Nagamani said that AIDWA has fought for and achieved victories in demanding equal pay for equal work, providing education to women, banning child marriages, granting property rights to women along with men, enacting laws against



dowry harassment, domestic violence, and sexual harassment in the workplace, and establishing women's commissions. On the occasion of the All India Conference of the All India Democratic Women's Association, which considers women's issues as societal issues and constantly fights on their behalf, being held for the first time in Hyderabad city from the 25th to the 28th of this month, a massive public meeting will be held on the opening day, the 25th. Nirmala and Nagamani urged women to participate in this meeting in large numbers. Also present at the event were Mandal Committee member Anapatla Balamani, and women from the village including Rasala Dhanamma, Rasala Mamata, Koyaguri Hansamma, Chikkula Pushamma, Chikkula Bharathamma, Kavidi Lakshmi, Kavidi Bharathamma, Ganga Boyina Bhagyamma, Macha Eeswaramma, Bodasu Sattamma, Yenaboyina Lakshmi, and others.

New 33/11KV power substation inaugurated in Mator village, Motakondur mandal:

- Roads, Buildings, and Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 21):- Roads, Buildings, and Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, along with Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ilaiah, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumanta Rao, Market Committee Chairman Chaitanya Mahender Reddy, Electricity SE Suresh, CE Balaswamy, and DE Venkateshwarlu, performed the groundbreaking ceremony for the newly constructed 33/11KV power substation in Mator village of Motakondur mandal.



CC Road Works Worth Rs.25 Crore in Uppal Old Village: Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Directs Timely Completion



“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 21 (Indian Chronicle):-“Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy on Wednesday inspected the ongoing CC road construction works being taken up at a cost of ₹1.25 crore in Old Village (Bharat Nagar), Uppal."It may be recalled that during her recent visits to various colonies, Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy had assured residents that CC roads and drainage works would be undertaken. As part of this commitment, she, along with Assistant Engineer Raj Kumar, inspected the works in progress in the Mall Maisamma Temple area of Old Bharat Nagar and instructed officials to ensure that the construction is completed within the stipulated

time."She further directed officials to initiate pending open drainage and CC road construction works in other areas of the Uppal Division at the earliest."Those present during the inspection included Kayala Seenu, Lingampally Ramakrishna, Mahankali Raju, Telakala Mohan Reddy, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Pogula Som Reddy, Kayala Chandu, Borampeta Ramu, Borampeta Ravi, Pandla Mallesh, Pullala Naresh, Kavali Hari, Pandla Lavanya, Pandla Amaravathi, Kavali Ramu, Rangula Shekhar, Pandla Srikanth, Shivaji, Barampeta Akhil, Bunni, Pujari Hanumanthu, along with several local residents.

A memorandum submitted to the Narketpally SI to curb dominant political practices: Pallagolla Modiramdev, State Convener of BC Students' Association

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 21):- A memorandum was submitted to the newly appointed Narketpally SI Vishnu, requesting him to establish a peaceful atmosphere in the villages and set up police pickets in view of the upcoming ZPTC and MPTC elections. Following the submission of the memorandum, he was felicitated. BC Students' Association State Convener Pallagolla Modiramdev, along with Edla Mahalingam and Ramesh Chari, spoke, stating that ZPTC and MPTC elections are going to be held.



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 21):- They emphasized that the police force is necessary to ensure that these elections are conducted peacefully and fairly. Therefore, they requested that police pickets be set up in the villages to ensure peaceful and democratic elections. As part of this, 1) Establishment of police pickets: Police pickets should be established in the areas related to the ZPTC and MPTC elections. These should function 24 hours a day. 2) To alleviate public fear and anxiety: Patrolling should be increased in villages, and all necessary measures should be taken to ensure that people participate in the elections smoothly and without fear. 3) Control of caste and political dominance: Since caste and political dominance are prevalent in villages and municipal areas, they must be controlled, and a strong check must be placed on dominant political practices. 4) Free exercise of voting rights: All obstacles should be removed, and complete protection should be provided to ensure that people can freely exercise their right to vote. Every individual interested in public service should be encouraged to participate in the elections. Strict action should be taken against those who resort to threats of kidnapping to prevent people from filing nominations. 5) Prevention of distribution of liquor and money: A strong check must be placed on the distribution of liquor and money for votes during elections. Legal action should be taken immediately upon receiving information. 6) Attacks on SC, ST, BC, and poor people from upper castes should be prevented. This request has been made to the District SP. "In this meeting, BC Students' Association State Convener Pallagolla Modiramdev, BC Youth Association undivided Nalgonda district Convener Edla Mahalingam, and BC association leaders Ramesh Chari, Surayya, Manil, and others participated.

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 21):- A memorandum was submitted to the newly appointed Narketpally SI Vishnu, requesting him to establish a peaceful atmosphere in the villages and set up police pickets in view of the upcoming ZPTC and MPTC elections. Following the submission of the memorandum, he was felicitated. BC Students' Association State Convener Pallagolla Modiramdev, along with Edla Mahalingam and Ramesh Chari, spoke, stating that ZPTC and MPTC elections are going to be held.

Ramanthapur Mudiraj Association New Year-2026 English Calendar Launched



Murali Mohan, along with prominent representatives from various political parties and public organizations. All the guests jointly unveiled the calendar."Speaking on the occasion, Association President Burra Mahender stated that everyone should actively participate in the Association's service-oriented activities. The attending guests praised and congratulated Burra Mahender for the commendable service initiatives being carried out by the Ramanthapur Mudiraj Association.

“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 21 (Indian Chronicle):-“The Ramanthapur Mudiraj Association, under the leadership of its President Burra Mahender, ceremoniously launched the Association's 2026 English New Year calendar on Wednesday."The event was graced by several distinguished guests, including Ramanthapur Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkata Rao, former BJP Councillor Hanumantha Rao, Censor Board Member Muthineni Jagadeesh, G. Srikanth, and senior BRS leaders Gandham Nageshwar Rao, Erram Srinivas,

Bhanu Prakash Reddy, Anil, Mallesh Yadav, G. Suresh, K. Lakshman, V. Suresh, Hanumantha Rao K.P., Shantha,



MLA Manohar Reddy leads protest rally against VBG Ramji scheme in Kandnelli village



“Vikarabad, Tandur (Indian Chronicle 21, Jan)” Tandur MLA Manohar Reddy led a protest rally against the VBG Ramji scheme in Peddemul mandal, Kandnelli village. Addressing a meeting, he criticized the BJP government’s decision to scrap the MGNREGA scheme and introduce the VBG Ramji scheme. “Manohar Reddy stated that the UPA government had introduced the MGNREGA scheme in 2005 with 100% central funding to reduce poverty and provide employment to rural people. He recalled that the scheme was launched by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Aluru village of Chevella.” The MLA alleged that the BJP government is trying to weaken the MGNREGA scheme by renaming it VBG Ramji scheme. He criticized the government’s move, stating that it is anti-poor and anti-rural. “Manohar Reddy demanded that the VBG Ramji scheme be scrapped, and the MGNREGA scheme be continued. He ap-

pealed to the people to fight against the scheme and pass resolutions in gram sabhas to reject it.” The event was attended by district DCC president Dharasing, mandal representatives, village sarpanch, leaders, and villagers.

Ramanthapur Division Congress President Mohammed Rafiq Tours Indira Nagar and Shekhar Basti



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 21 (Indian Chronicle):” Ramanthapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafiq conducted a local tour in Indira Nagar and Shekhar Basti of the Ramanthapur Division, visiting households door to door and interacting with residents to understand their problems. Residents of Indira Nagar and Shekhar Basti brought several key issues to his notice. They complained that underground drainage water and sewage had been overflowing onto the roads for the past ten days, with no response from the concerned authorities. Responding immediately, Mohammed Rafiq spoke to officials of the Sewerage Water Works Department and ensured that the problem was resolved on the spot. The residents also raised concerns regarding drinking water shortages, roads damaged with potholes, and dangerously tilted electric poles along the roads, and requested that these issues be ad-

ressed at the earliest. Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed Rafiq assured the people that he would bring all the issues to the notice of Uppal Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy and, through discussions with officials, would work towards permanent solutions to the problems. Those who participated in the programme included TPCC representative Mohammed Tofiq, Ramanthapur Division Mahila Congress President Sandhya Rani, Mallikarjuna Temple Chairman Nam Raji Reddy, Poosa Sathayya, Adinarayana Goud, Mogili Lingam, Gangaputra Bhaskar, Angala Sandeep, Gayatri Goud, Ambika, Mahesh, Tabbassum Begum, Laghusani Srinivas Goud, Poosa Mallikarjun, Poosa Balraj, Cable Ashok, Mohammed Shakeel, Kumar, Surya Icon, Uppal Constituency Youth Congress General Secretary Swamy, Shiva, Sadan Kumar, Bugga Paramesh, Chinna, Mohammed Naem, Chotu Bhai, Shiva Rak, MD Jangir, NSUI Sai, and others.

TRP Gears Up for Municipal Polls Promises B-Forms to BC, SC, ST and Minority Candidates

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal- Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 21, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “The Telangana Rajyadhikara Party (TRP) has announced that it is fully prepared to contest the upcoming municipal elections, according to S. Arun Kumar Patel, Medchal-Malkajgiri District Youth President of the party. In a press statement released on Wednesday, Arun Kumar Patel said that, following the call of party founder and MLC Teenmar Mallanna and as per the directions of State Youth President Boddupalli Chandrashekar, TRP candidates will contest the municipal elections in Muduchintalapalli, Yellampet and Aliabad municipalities. He stated that the party is actively working to strengthen its organizational structure at the village and mandal levels and is expanding its grassroots presence across the district. As part of its commitment to social justice, the Telangana Rajyadhikara Party will issue B-Forms to candidates belonging to Backward Classes (BC), Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and minority communities in the forthcoming municipal elections. Arun Kumar Patel said that TRP has emerged as a strong questioning voice and a ray of hope for marginalized and weaker sections of society. He urged people to support the movement led by Teenmar Mallanna, which aims to establish social justice and build a Bahujan-oriented governance system in Telangana. He further asserted that TRP, a party formed to fight for BC rights, will

move forward with greater strength to establish a BC-led people’s rule in the state. Expressing confidence, he said that the party will unfurl the TRP flag in the upcoming municipal elections by fielding BC candidates and securing victory with substantial majorities. Appealing to voters, Arun Kumar Patel called upon the public to think carefully and give TRP a decisive mandate, stating that the party stands firmly with the aspirations and rights of the oppressed and underrepresented sections.



Once Again, Major Funds Sanctioned for Uppal Division

Rs 4.22 Crore Approved for Various Development Works Corporator Rajita Parameshwar Reddy Thanks CM Revanth Reddy

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 21 (Indian Chronicle): “Once again, the Uppal Division has received substantial financial support, with ₹4.22 crore sanctioned for various development works. The funds will be utilized to undertake key infrastructure projects aimed at improving civic amenities in the division.” On this occasion, Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajita Parameshwar Reddy expressed her gratitude to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for extending the funds, and also thanked Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy for his continuous efforts in the way for the overall development of the Uppal constituency. “Speaking to the media, Corporator Rajita Parameshwar Reddy stated that efforts are underway to secure additional funds soon for development works in the remaining colonies as well. She emphasized that the objective is to transform Uppal Division into a model division within the Greater Hyderabad region.” She also shared details of the sanctioned funds and the proposed works, which are scheduled to commence shortly. The approved projects include: “Construction of sewerage drains at a cost of ₹79 lakh in Uppal Hills and Kurmannagar.” “Construction of CC roads worth ₹95 lakh in Padmavathi Colony and Venkateshwara Colony in Uppal.” “Construction of CC roads with an outlay of ₹1.72 crore in Uppal Hills and Kurmannagar.” “Construction of CC roads costing ₹76 lakh in Mallikharjun Nagar, Uppal.” The Corporator confirmed that all these development works will be taken up soon, ensuring improved infrastructure and better living conditions for residents of the Uppal Division.



Telugu Cultural Grandeur Shines in Qatar

Andhra Kala Vedika Unveils the Soul of Telugu Tradition Inspiring Address by Indian Ambassador Vipul Flawless Event Management by Manthani Native Ramadugu Venu



“P. S. ASHOKAN, “KARIMNAGAR BUREAU.” In a powerful celebration of India’s rich cultural heritage, traditional Telugu festivities were conducted with great splendour in Qatar, reflecting the timeless values of Indian culture on an international stage. While India is naturally known for its vibrant festivals, the manner in which the Telugu diaspora in Qatar preserves and celebrates these traditions stands as a true testament to cultural pride and continuity. “The cultural mega-event “Sankranthi Ki Vasthunnam”, organised by Andhra Kala Vedika, captivated audiences and brought Telugu heritage vividly to life. Addressing the gathering, Manthani native Ramadugu Venu expressed pride that the programme conveyed the glory of Telugu culture to the global community in such an exemplary manner. “The event featured spellbinding performances by Telugu actor Ramki and actress Bhoodevi, whose folk dances and performances evoked the charm of rural Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Renowned anchor Swapna Chowdhry enthralled the audience with her graceful and engaging presentation. Remarkably, the entire venue remained immersed in attentive silence throughout the programme—an eloquent reflection of the audience’s deep involvement. “Melodious duet performances by Krishna Chaitanya and Malavika, energetic choreography by dance masters Satyam and Tejaswini, and a captivating dance by Sreelu, daughter of actor Prithvi, further elevated the evening. A grand dance ballet involving over 80 artists mesmerised spectators, while a divine Sri Krishna Leela presentation by 40 performers, staged



amidst thousands of glowing lamps, offered a truly breathtaking visual spectacle. “Adding to the cultural authenticity, all AKV committee members appeared in traditional dhotis and shawls, while women adorned themselves in elegant green sarees, creating a vibrant and graceful ambience. “The programme was further dignified by an inspiring address from Vipul, the Ambassador of India to Qatar. Speeches were also delivered by PD Janardhan, Chairman of the NTR Literature Committee, and its President Ramanayya, who lauded the organisers for preserving Telugu cultural identity abroad with such excellence. “Overall, the event stood as a proud cultural milestone—an evening where tradition, art, and community spirit merged seamlessly, leaving an indelible impression on all who attended.

Grand Sri Bhakta Markandeya Jayanti and Annadanam at Lakshminarayana Colony



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 21 (Indian Chronicle):” Sri Bhakta Markandeya Jayanti was celebrated with great devotion on Wednesday at Lakshminarayana Colony, Uppal, under the auspices of the Padmashali Welfare Association. Women performed special prayers on the occasion, followed by an Annadanam (free food distribution) programme. Greater Hyderabad BC Welfare Association Secretary Gurram Raghavender, Lakshminarayana Colony President Lucas, Padmashali Welfare Association Honorary President Punna Yadagiri, President N. Nagaraju, General Secretary Balasubrahmanyam, Vice President D. Krishna, Treasurer Venu, Joint Secretary Surya Bhaskar Pandu, along with representatives of the Padmashali community, participated in the programme. “Floral tributes were offered to the portrait of Bhakta Markandeya. Speaking on the occasion, the speakers called upon the Padmashali community to move forward with unity inspired by the life and ideals of Bhakta Markandeya, and urged them to take the lead in all fields while continuing service-oriented activities.



From a 1910s shed to a Neo-Classical landmark: The forgotten story of Pune's very first movie theatre



GNS News Agency, Jan 21

The history of going to the movies in Pune started in a shed in the 1910s. This was Napier Cinema, considered the first theatre in the city. In the era of silent films, this makeshift space in Poona Cantonment would transport paying audiences to other worlds, demonstrating the abiding power of cinema. In the book, Mehera-Meher: A Divine Romance, by David Fenster, there is a mention of American films being screened at Napier, and among them was The Broken Coin (1915), an adventure-mystery series directed by Francis Ford.

"Every week there was a new episode, but they eventually became tired of it as the story went on forever with no conclusion," Fenster mentioned in the book. Around the cinema were landmarks, such as a fountain and a bandstand where The Napier Cinema Band would play. Mustansir Dalvi, an architect and professor of architecture, in a blog post, A Cinema House in Poona, "with time and waxing popularity, the Napier was refurbished by 1919, or thereabouts, into a fairly well-boned neo-Classical building, with timber fram-

ing and a stone gable, punctuated with a Baroque-ish front". "The Napier was very popular, and is mentioned in several accounts of Poona at the time. One peculiar feature was the screening of (what we today call) serials, short features of interminable stories that attracted the masses to the theatre weekly," writes Dalvi.

He was introduced to the cinema in his childhood in Pune. But by then, Napier was no longer called that. It had transformed into a West End cinema in 1931. Even in the new building, which carried the name, West End, twice on the facade – on the second floor balcony balustrade and once on the vertical mast on top of the building – one could see the gable and the timber staircase of the old theatre. The premises had a low boundary wall, with posters of the shows prominently displayed. "While West End was not an Art Deco building, the new front, which had a cantilevered porch, fake arches, and vertical ornament striping its sides, fit the fashions of the time. The West End shows some proto-Deco flattened ornament, sloping chajjas, and a Palladian symmetry. This can be seen in the protruding porch supported on concrete brackets," says Dalvi.

He says that, by the late 1960s and early 1980s, the cinema was screening films of dubious merit from around the world, such as the American production Ssssssnake, whose tagline was 'Once this motion picture sinks its fangs into you, you'll never be the same', and 3 Fantastic Supermen from Italy that is campy and, according to some critics, has acquired cult status. "I, particularly, remember being taken to watch Lost in the Desert from South Africa as an outing from school when I was in Class II or III. It was a horribly traumatic choice for us considering the terrible things that happen to the child in the film, including being spat in the eye by a venomous snake, after surviving a plane crash," writes Dalvi.

Main shooter in kabaddi promoter murder killed in Mohali encounter

GNS News Agency, Jan 21

The main shooter in the murder of kabaddi promoter Kanwar Digvijay Singh alias Rana Balachauria was killed in an encounter in Mohali early Saturday morning, the police said. The accused, Karann Pathak alias 'Defaulter', was shot during a fierce exchange of fire with the police near Rurki Kham village, close to the New Chandigarh cricket stadium in Mullanpur, the police said. The encounter began at around 7 am and lasted for nearly 30 minutes, during which both sides allegedly fired multiple rounds.

Mandeep Singh Hans, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Mohali, said Pathak was armed with a .30 bore pistol. "During the cordon, Karann Pathak opened fire at the police team and fired six to seven rounds. The police retaliated with around nine rounds. He was hit in the crossfire and later succumbed to his injuries at the hospital," he added. Dramatic escape from CIA custody According to the police, Pathak had escaped from the custody of the Crime Investigation Agency late Friday night. He was being taken for the recovery of the .30 bore pistol when he complained of chest pain. While being shifted to Kharar Civil Hospital, Pathak allegedly attacked a police personnel using his handcuffs and fled from custody. The injured policeman, identified as Jaspinder, was admitted for treatment. An FIR was registered at Kharar police station in connection with the escape, while a separate FIR is being lodged regarding the encounter. SSP Hans said Pathak remained on the run for nearly six to seven hours. "On Saturday morning, we received specific input about his presence in the Mullanpur area. Police teams laid a trap and surrounded him. He opened fire, forcing the police to respond," he



added. Following Pathak's escape, joint police teams from Mohali, Shri Fatehgarh Sahib and Ropar ranges were mobilised to track him down. The police have now launched a probe to ascertain who aided him during his brief escape and how logistical support was arranged. On December 15, 2025, prominent kabaddi promoter Rana Balachauria was shot dead during a kabaddi tournament in Sohana, SAS Nagar. The daylight murder sent shockwaves through the sports fraternity and triggered widespread panic in the region. Investigations revealed that the murder was the result of a well-planned conspiracy, with multiple accused involved in logistics, reconnaissance and execution. The police had earlier arrested several suspects linked to the planning and facilitation of the crime, while Karann Pathak was identified as the principal shooter. Police sources said the case involved inter-district criminal links and the use of illegal firearms.

1 party, half the power: BJP now holds nearly 50% of Maharashtra's corporator seats

GNS News Agency, Jan 21

The latest round of municipal corporation elections has underlined the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) near-total dominance of urban Maharashtra. With 1,425 corporators elected on its own, the BJP now accounts for almost half of the 2,869 corporators across the state's municipal corporations, marking its strongest civic performance yet. The scale of the BJP's rise becomes clearer when viewed over time. In the previous municipal election cycle, the party had 1,099 corporators, while in the cycle before that, its tally stood at just 320. This steady expansion reflects how decisively the BJP has consolidated its position in cities and large towns over the past decade.

The party now enjoys an absolute majority in 13 of the 29 municipal corporations in the state, including Navi Mumbai, Mira-Bhayandar, Panvel, Nashik, Dhule, Jalgaon, Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Solapur, Nanded, Nagpur, Ichalkaranji and Jalna. In addition, it has emerged as the single largest party in six other corporations, including Mumbai, Ulhasnagar, Amravati, Akola, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar and Sangli. While the BJP had also secured absolute majorities in 13 corporations in the previous round, the current results show a sharper and more widespread consolidation, with the party expanding its footprint into newer urban centres and strengthening its hold in existing strongholds.

The roots of this dominance can be traced back to the BJP's 2014 Lok Sabha breakthrough, which reshaped Maharashtra's political landscape. That victory marked a shift in urban voting patterns, weakening traditional loyalties and positioning the BJP as the default party of power in cities. Subsequent Assembly and civic elections have re-



inforced this trend. Among the BJP's rivals and allies, the picture is more fragmented. The Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena has emerged as the second-largest force with 399 corporators, while the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) has secured 155 seats. Taken together, the undivided Shiv Sena had won 489 corporators in the previous cycle, indicating a decline in the party's overall civic strength after the split. The Congress, once a significant player in urban local bodies, has been reduced to 324 corporators, down from 439 in the previous elections. It has managed to secure an absolute majority only in Latur, highlighting its shrinking influence in Maharashtra's cities.

A similar story has unfolded within the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). The Ajit Pawar-led NCP has won 169 seats, while the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) has been pushed to the margins with just 36 corporators. In contrast, the undivided NCP had won 294 seats in the earlier cycle. The results suggest that the BJP's rise has come at the cost of both its opponents and its allies.

was taken to accelerate urbanisation and enhance ease of living for citizens. For providing basic primary facilities to the citizens such as water supply, drainage pipelines, roads and sanitation in the newly added areas, NMC firmed up a project of setting up a new water supply and drainage network. Sources in the NMC said that through this project, the corporation will gradually construct modern infrastructure facilities such as new water and drainage pipelines, overhead tanks and underground septic tanks, drainage pumping stations, sewage treatment plants (STPs), and new water treatment plants in the areas. This will provide major relief to more than 25,000 locals from the problem of drinking water and sewage disposal. Health problems among children will also end.

'Private companies cannot dictate to us': Bhagwant Mann meets Amit Shah, opposes Seed Bill



GNS News Agency, Jan 21

Man also raised the issue of barbed wire on the Indian side of the International Border (IB) with Pakistan. Man also raised the issue of barbed wire on the Indian side of the International Border (IB) with Pakistan. (Image: @BhagwantMann/XPunjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Saturday opposed the proposed Seed Act, 2026, during a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday. The concerned Bill is likely to be tabled in the upcoming Budget Session of Parliament.

Talking to the media after meeting Shah at the latter's residence in Delhi, Mann said, "I told them how they can pass this Bill without taking Punjab into confidence. After the Act comes into effect, the private companies will say we should buy seeds from them, while in Punjab, we have a tradition that we keep the seeds on the side to sow them for the future sowing season. Private companies cannot dictate to us," Mann said, adding that Shah assured him that he would take the issue up. The Centre had asked all states for their reaction on the Bill, but Punjab had not reacted until now. Sources said that the government has written a separate letter to the Centre lodging its protest against the proposed Bill on Saturday. The Bill is intended to replace the existing Indian Seed Act, 1966, and the Seed (Control) Order, 1983, but opponents say its provisions go against small farmers and traditional seed systems. It also proposes action against those selling spurious seeds. The Bill's main objective is to ensure the availability of quality seeds in the market. This, it says, will prevent the sale of substandard or counterfeit seeds. Under this, mandatory registration and VCU (Value for Cultivation and Use) testing of all seed varieties will be implemented and traceability will be ensured through QR code on each seed pack. Also, strict penalties

like a fine of up to Rs 30 lakh and imprisonment of up to three years have been proposed. Man also raised the issue of barbed wire on the Indian side of the International Border (IB) with Pakistan. On this side of the IB, we have barbed wire as a fence, which is about 2 km from the IB. Thousands of acres of agricultural land fall in this area. The farmers need an ID card to visit their land, and personnel from BSF accompany the farmers to their fields. If this area is squeezed to 300 meters from the border, huge chunks of land will be freed," he said, adding that Shah told him that the matter was under consideration. The chief minister also said that he addressed the issue of the Satluj Yamuna Link (SYL) canal with Shah and said that he told him Punjab does not have a single drop of water to share with any state, hence this issue should be resolved through dialogue. "When there is no water, this issue should be closed while sitting across the table," he said. Mann said he also sought the expediting of the movement of foodgrains from the godowns as Punjab will be readying for the procurement of 125 MT wheat produce, and there is no space. "I raised the issue of shifting the huge amount of rice lying in the warehouses of Punjab," he said. He also raised the issue of withheld commission of commission agents and said that they should hold a meeting with the commission agents' unions so that it can be resolved. The chief minister said he also brought up the issue of maintaining a 60:40 ratio (Punjab and Haryana) while posting officers in Chandigarh UT. "I told him that the FCI GM (Food Corporation of India general manager) should be from the Punjab cadre and not the UT cadre. He should understand our culture. He should also understand the Mandi system and the procurement. To this, the home minister asked me to send a panel of three officers, out of which they would select one. Now we will send a panel," Mann said. He said he also raised the issue of clearing dues of Rs 8,500 crore on account of the accumulation of the Rural Development Fund (RDF). "I told him we have to build rural roads so that grains can be brought to the mandis. He assured me that he will take it up on priority and will soon release its first instalment after meeting with the officers," he said. On former Delhi CM and AAP leader Atishi's video controversy, Mann said Delhi Vidhan Sabha was most welcome to get a CBI inquiry done. "When the forensic report stated that she did not use any reference to the Guru, a court asked them to remove the video from social media; they think their CBI is above forensic science. The BJP should get the CBI investigation done," he said.

Reading paw prints, saving villages for Rs 15k a month: How forest trackers in Gir keep their eyes, ears open for lions

GNS News Agency, Jan 21

Armed with a wireless set, a pair of binoculars and a lathi that discreetly sits on the side of the motorbike, they move about the Gir forest building skills that help them tell the exact pathway of a lion from the way the dry grass was parted, down to the detail of when it might have last had its meal. A lot of this is done on foot, as the sound of the motorbike can alert the beast, thus the risk of the animal charging at them while on the job is also high. All this comes for a monthly salary that starts at Rs 15,000 which can go up to Rs 25,000, as per the tracker's ability and experience.

Ashraf Ali Chauhan, who was in his late 20s, was one such tracker hired by the Gujarat Forest Department. He was killed on January 4 when a tranquillizing dart, meant for the lioness he was rescuing, accidentally pierced his left hand. A native of Visavadar in Junagadh district, Chauhan had been a tracker for around four years, and is survived by his wife, daughter and parents. A Forest Department inquiry is currently underway into the incident to determine the possible lapses that could have led to his death. His colleagues say this could be the first such casualty of its kind.

The 200-odd forest trackers hired by the department form a critical link in the lion conservation story as they feed almost real-time information on the movement of a pride in the region, alerting a human settlement if a beast moved too close, or trying to save the animals from being run over by a train. Stressing on the importance of trackers, Ram Ratan Nala, Conservator of Forests, Junagadh Range, tells The Indian Express, "Their work is to track the lions wherever they go and to report if any one of them is in any trouble. They provide us real-time information on the movements of the lions." "Every tracker works in their assigned areas and report if anything is amiss. "It could be a lion that is limping or is unable to sit or stand properly. They inform us if the lions are going into some farms or towards the railway tracks. They also ensure that there is no man-animal conflict," Nala says.

According to Nala, the trackers direct the beasts away if they are moving towards a village with human habitation or towards a railway track. "Gujarat has been using trackers for lions. Their role is not only limited to lions, but all wildlife," he adds. As per the 2025 Census of Asiatic Lions in Gujarat, their territory extends to 35,000 sq km, and their population has increased from 674 in 2020 to 891. One of the trackers tells The Indian Express that Chauhan's untimely death was "very painful". "Probably, it is for the first time in the history of Gir that a tracker has died like this. All of us are very sad for him and his family. We are doing everything to help them," he says.

Starting at 5 am and covering 10-15 km by sundown a typical day in a tracker's life begins at 5 am, the first round lasting till about noon. "Generally, we move around in a group of around six on our motorbikes – two per bike – and spread out in a particular area. The Forest Department has provided us with walkie-talkies and a pair of binoculars. If we find any lion injured, we inform the department officials and they take a call on what to do next. We return home around noon. We venture into the forest again around 3 pm and return around 7 pm, covering around 10-15 km a day," says the tracker, who has been on the job for around 10 years. "We also help rescue lions and leopards in cases where they have killed a human," he says, adding that they are hired on a contract of 11 months. "This is a job that we took on due to our passion for wildlife. Like any other job, it has its challenges. When we move in the forest, we keep our eyes and ears open. We are very careful to keep a safe distance from the lions and other animals, especially leopards, who are more likely to attack humans. In many places, we keep our bikes aside and move on foot depending on the situation. We know it is a risky job and accordingly remain vigilant."

Key skill: Understanding wildlife behaviour The forest department advertises for the post of trackers and hires people after assessing their knowledge about lions and wildlife, and checking their fitness levels. A senior forest officer



says that when hiring trackers, they focus on important criteria like the person's knowledge and experience in dealing with wildlife, and understanding of wildlife behaviour. They also need to clear an interview. Once selected, the trackers are trained by the Forest Department on the behaviour of lions, things to take care of, like ensuring whether they have had a meal, and dos and don'ts when a lion is aggressive. They are also trained on safety norms, like not to go too close to lions. Nala says the trackers are hired on a contract basis by the Gujarat Lion Conservation Society, formed by the state government in 2007 under the provisions of the Society Registration Act to augment the participation of various sections of the society in the Lion Conservation Programme. Jaipal Singh, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife, says, "It is through trackers that we come to know if a lion is ill or has sustained an injury in infighting. Every lion is being visually tracked and monitored." "Highlighting the importance of the trackers, Singh says, "Generally, they are local residents. So, they get to know every minute change in the landscape. And therefore, they get to notice any suspicious movement in the landscape, including possible poaching." According to Singh, the state Forest Department deploys trackers on a contract basis as per the need. "Sometimes, if we find increased movement of lions in a particular area near the railway tracks, then we deploy more trackers in that region so that the accidents can be prevented." Devvrat Singh Mori, Member, Gujarat State Board for Wildlife, hailed the importance of trackers in lion conservation. "It is because of trackers that almost every lion in the Gir landscape is under the Forest Department's constant monitoring, which helps greatly in their conservation," he says.

Asian Waterbird Census 2026 records over 70 bird species in Kawal Tiger Reserve

Mancherial: Over 70 bird species have been recorded during the ongoing Asian Waterbird Census 2026, being held across five freshwater ecosystems within and adjoining the Kawal Tiger Reserve (KTR).

The exercise is being carried out jointly by the Hyderabad Tiger Conservation Society (HyTCoS) and the Forest Department. Dr Venkat Anagandula, north Telangana coordinator of HyTCoS, said bird species, including resident, winter migratory and passage migrants, were found inhabiting freshwater ecosystems locally known as Kalpakunta, Gadham Cheruvu, Dostnagar, Kistapur and Birsapet lakes. A significant proportion of the recorded species belong to Palearctic migratory guilds, which undertake long-distance seasonal migrations from northern Eurasia and parts of Europe to the Indian subcontinent, he said. According to the wildlife researcher, these movements are primarily driven by thermoregulatory stress, reduced food availability and the freezing of wetlands in breeding ranges during winter. India's tropical and subtropical climatic conditions, combined with the availability of nutrient-rich freshwater wetlands, provide optimal overwintering habitats.

Man gets admit card for FMGE after Gujarat HC directions



GNS News Agency, Jan 21

The Gujarat High Court Thursday directed the National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) to "immediately issue" the admit card for Foreign Medical Graduate Examination (FMGE) to be held on Saturday to a petitioner, whose application form for the exam had been facilitated after a previous order of the HC on December 3, 2025.

Justice A P Mayee was hearing an Interlocutory Application (IA) filed by Mihir Jani, who has completed his Medical Doctor's Diploma Course at Riga Stradiņš University, Republic of Latvia. After completing his graduation, Jani intends to pursue his medical practice in India for which FMGE is the mandatory licensing test. On Thursday, based on the application moved by Jani, the HC in its order, noted the

submissions of Jani's counsel Mihir Pathak that following the December 3, 2025 order of the HC, the NBEMS had accepted the application form of the petitioner, pending an eligibility certificate to be issued by the National Medical Commission (NMC). However, the NBEMS had not issued the admit card to the applicant to be able to appear for the examination on January 17. The HC, in its interlocutory order noted that "except the applicant, all other candidates have been issued the admit card on January 14, 2026". The order noted that the advocate appearing for the NBEMS submitted that he had no instructions in the matter.

The HC, in its order, stated that the court had "already given specific direction" to accept the application form of the applicant and facilitate him to appear for the FMGE examination on Saturday. The court order noted that the action of NBEMS in not issuing the admit card to the applicant is "contrary to the spirit of the order dated December 3, 2025, passed by this Court" and directed the NBEMS to immediately issue the admit card to the applicant on or before January 16. The HC directed the NBEMS to "act on a simple copy or web copy of the present order so as to facilitate the applicant/petitioner to appear in the FMGE examination", given that the examination is slated for Saturday. On Friday, advocate Mihir Pathak told this newspaper that his client had received the admit card following the orders issued by the Gujarat HC and would be appearing for the FMGE examination on Saturday, pending the eligibility certificate to be issued by the NMC.

Ludhiana DISHA committee passes unanimous resolution against VB-G RAM G Act



GNS News Agency, Jan 21

The District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) of Ludhiana on Friday passed a unanimous resolution opposing the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) [VB-G RAM G] Act, terming it anti-poor and detrimental to rural livelihoods, and demanded its immediate withdrawal. The meeting was led by Ludhiana MP Amrinder Singh Raja Warring. The committee expressed serious concern over the replacement of the MGNREGA, particularly the proposed shift from 100 per cent central funding of wages to a 60:40 Centre-State cost-sharing formula, stating that Punjab's weak fiscal position makes such a model unviable.

Highlighting Punjab's financial stress, the resolution noted that the state's public debt is projected to touch Rs 4.17 lakh crore by March 2026, amounting to over 46 per cent of its Gross State Domestic Product, leaving little fiscal space to absorb additional welfare liabilities. It cautioned that provisions under the new scheme, including Aadhaar-linked payments and seasonal pauses in employment, could

lead to exclusion of vulnerable households, distress migration and erosion of rural consumption. Special concern was expressed over Ludhiana district, where only one per cent of households receiving work under MGNREGA were able to complete the full 100 days of employment. Speaking to the media, Warring said that the Aam Aadmi Party government (AAP) in Punjab had failed in implementing MGNREGA.

Warring also sought a probe into the spending on the cleaning of the Buddha Nullah. "Crores have been spent on cleaning Buddha Nullah but no change can be seen on the ground. We can smell a huge scam here. We will be demanding an inquiry into this. We will also raise it in Parliament and Smart City project meetings," said Warring. Taking a dig at Punjab's former finance minister and BJP leader Manpreet Singh Badal, Warring said, "This man (Manpreet Badal) remained in power for 14 years, and of those 14, he was the finance minister for eight years. In those 8 years, he brought catastrophe for Punjab when it comes to finances. Today we are under huge debts. The difference between Warring and Manpreet Badal is that I might be less educated than him, but I at least did not take away the dining table and other furniture from government accommodation and later claimed that it was by mistake". The controversy surrounding Manpreet Badal and a "missing" dining table emerged in April 2022 after he vacated his official government bungalow following the Congress party's electoral defeat in Punjab. The Punjab Public Works Department (PWD) reported that several items were missing from the House, including a dining table, recliner sofa etc. Manpreet had recently mocked Warring for "not knowing basic mathematics calculations" after a video of the Congress leader while speaking at a rally, and saying 12 multiplied by 5 was 48, had gone viral.

CM Mamata lays foundation for Mahakal temple, says 'Siliguri to become global tourism hub'

GNS News Agency, Jan 21

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday announced plans to transform Siliguri into a global tourism and spiritual destination, promising that the city will no longer be just a transit point. Speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony of the Mahakal Temple in Matigara, CM Banerjee said the temple, named 'Mahakal Mahatirtha', will be built on 17.41 acres of land and feature a 216-foot-tall Mahakal idol, making it one of the largest Shiva temples in the world.

The complex will be managed by a trust board and include a museum, cultural hall, and replicas of the 12 Jyotirlingas, with two pradakshin routes and four deities in the four corners— Lord Ganesha, Lord Kartik, Lord Shakti, and Lord Vishnu. "We have named this Shiv Temple 'Mahakal Mahatirtha.' Along with the main temple, we are building the world's tallest Mahakal idol. This idol will be 216 feet tall. The main idol, made of bronze, will be 108 feet tall. This temple will become an international tourism destination, just like Jagannath Dham and Durga Angan. Land has already been allocated and tender has been floated. Land filling will start immediately. It will take 2 to 2.5 years. It will be built in the centre of Siliguri in Matigara's Laxmi Township area on 17.41 acres of land. One lakh people can come here every day," Mamata Banerjee said.

"There will be two sabha mandaps on two sides. 6,000 people can be accommodated at once. Through Fresco painting and stone art, the legends of Mahakal will be depicted. Rudraksh Kund and Amrit Kund will also be there. Pilgrims can take the sacred Abhishek water. Inside the complex, we will also have Prasad distribution centre, souvenir arcade, cafeteria, dala complex and residence complex for the priests..." she added. Stating that the temple complex would unite the spiritual legacy of the plains of Bengal to that of its hills, owing to the preexisting Mahakal temple in Darjeeling, Banerjee said the project would revitalise religious tourism in the region. "In line with the Jagannath Dham complex in Digha, built at a cost of Rs 30 crore and which has already witnessed a pilgrim footfall of 1.25 crore, and the 17.18-acre Durga Angan complex in New Town, the Mahakal temple will become an international tourism destination. Siliguri will no longer be a transit point; it will become a tourism hub, uniting faith, pilgrimage,



business and employment," she said.

Outlining a vision for Siliguri's development, Banerjee said, "We will make Siliguri a hub for business and tourism. We are ready to give land free of cost to any interested private party for building an international convention centre here. In the coming days, this will become a hub for business," Mamata Banerjee said. The project, estimated to cost ₹344.2 crore, is expected to boost local employment and economic growth, with the state government allocating land and resources for the project. The Chief Minister also launched several initiatives in North Bengal, focusing on connectivity, education, and tourism. 37 new buses in North Bengal, including 31 eco-friendly CNG buses and 6 luxury sleeper Volvos, will enhance transportation in the region. In a major boost for tourism, 12 volvo buses will now provide a direct link between the North Bengal hills and the coastal town of Digha. The foundation stone was laid for a new Eklavya Model School building in Kalimpong, furthering the educational reach for the region's youth. CM Mamata Banerjee announced initiatives to support tea garden workers, calling them the backbone of the region. The initiatives include providing land pattas and financial assistance under the Chaa Sundari housing scheme, inaugurating creches and new ambulances for garden workers, and launching dedicated school buses (Chaa Sathi) for their children. "We've given land and assistance, and now we'll provide Chaa Sathi school buses for your kids," she promised, ensuring local communities benefit from Siliguri's growth into an international destination.

Haryana Police launch cyber fraud crackdown: Over 1,000 objectionable links reported, 583 removed

GNS News Agency, Jan 21

The Haryana Police's cyber wing, in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), has launched a massive digital campaign, taking a firm stand against the increasing number of illegal and objectionable activities on social media. Under the campaign, 1,018 objectionable links and profiles have been reported so far, out of which 583 have already been removed or blocked by social media companies, the police said on Saturday. "The remaining 435 are in various stages of review and will be taken down soon. These figures clearly reflect the seriousness and prompt action of Haryana Police in maintaining order on social media," a police spokesperson said.

"Objectionable, anti-national, anti-religion, and misleading content inciting tension and confusion was being frequently posted on social media, making a well-coordinated action necessary. With this objective, the Cyber Haryana team started continuous monitoring of social media platforms about a month ago, and the drive is still ongoing," the spokesperson said. On a daily basis, the cyber police team identifies posts, videos, links, and profiles that contain misinformation, provocative language, or material disturbing public peace, the police said. As soon as such content is detected, a notice is issued to the social media platform concerned under Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act, directing immediate removal. No leniency is being shown at any stage of this process, an officer said. "Intensive action against fraudulent apps soon"

Haryana DGP Ajay Singhal stated that "in view of the rising cases of digital fraud, Haryana Police has initiated another significant campaign. To control the growing operations of suspicious trading and investment apps and channels across the country, Cyber Haryana launched a special and well-organized drive on January 12. To date, 28 such apps and channels have been identified under this initiative. Out of these, 14 have already been successfully removed from digital platforms, while the remaining 14 are undergoing final review and takedown procedures by social media intermediaries. In the coming days, even more intensive and effective action will be taken against such fraudulent apps to ensure a secure digital environment". "Social media influences youth and every



segment of society, and even a single misleading or provocative post can pose a direct threat to harmony and peace. Cyber Haryana teams are constantly alert, and immediate action is being taken on sensitive or objectionable posts," said DGP Ajay Singhal, while appealing to citizens not to click on any suspicious links and to avoid sharing sensitive content in any new app without verification. "If anyone comes across a suspicious post, link, or app, they must report it immediately to the police or the cyber helpline so that timely action can be taken," he said. Explaining the objective of this ongoing crackdown, ADGP (Cyber) Shibash Kabiraj said, "The main aim of the campaign is to create a safe, aware, and reliable digital environment so that social media can be used responsibly. Social media is a powerful platform that, when used responsibly, can help connect the community, disseminate information, and bring positive change. With this approach, the police encourage citizens to stay alert, share verified information, and avoid forwarding suspicious or misleading content. The police believe that with public cooperation and awareness, this campaign will become even more impactful, helping everyone collectively build a safe and healthy digital ecosystem". Caution sounded against fake trading apps expressing serious concern over the rising cases of fraudulent investment and trading apps, DGP Singhal urged citizens to remain vigilant. He said, "Cybercriminals lure people by promising high returns in a short time, trapping them in their schemes, and many end up losing their hard-earned life savings. I appeal to the public not to transfer money through any suspicious app, link, or website, and to thoroughly verify the authenticity of any investment platform before making financial decisions. I

FIR registered after skeletal remains of cattle found near Manimajra fish market

GNS News Agency, Jan 21

The Chandigarh Police has registered an FIR after skeletal remains of several cattle were discovered at a temporary enclosure near the fish market in Shastri Nagar, Manimajra, triggering concerns over possible neglect and mistreatment of animals. The case was lodged on the complaint of Pawan Kumar, a resident of BDC, Sector 26, who alleged that nearly 100 cows were being kept at the site by a local individual.

According to the complainant, the animals were housed in a makeshift compound, where remains of multiple cows were later found. Police said the discovery raised serious questions about the conditions in which the cattle were being kept and whether negligence or cruelty led to their deaths. Following the complaint, a police team reached the spot and conducted a preliminary inspection. According to police, the area was examined, and initial evidence was collected from the site. Police said the matter is being probed from all angles to ascertain the circumstances under which



the cattle died. Police said that no arrests have been made so far. The exact cause of death would be ascertained after a thorough investigation. Police added that veterinary experts might also be consulted to determine whether the animals died due to illness, starvation, or any other form of neglect.

No internet, protests at night, panic back home: Indians return from Iran, relive chaos



GNS News Agency, Jan 21

Fires lit up the streets. Protesters appeared suddenly, sometimes surrounding cars and shouting. The internet disappeared entirely, and with it went phone calls and messages. This is how some Indian nationals who arrived at Terminal 3 of Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport in the early hours of Saturday described what was happening on the streets of Iran. Waiting in the arrival section were families of Indian pilgrims, workers and students. Some were sitting on the cold metal benches, a few held flowers wrapped in cellophane. All stared at the glass doors every time they opened. Just after 3 am, Arsh Sehra stepped out. The MBBS student from Shiraz Medical University barely had time to look around before camera lights flared and microphones shoved into her face. She panicked as questions came from all directions. Her father immediately stepped closer, standing beside her. "Everything is fine," she said quickly. There had been no internet, she explained, so there were no warnings, rumours, or videos of unrest circulating on phones. "We had no idea," she repeated. The Indian Embassy had issued an advisory, after which the family booked tickets and returned on their own.

Iran is in the midst of one of its most serious bouts of unrest in years, triggered by protests that began in late December 2025 over economic hardship and later expanded

into anti-government demonstrations. Amid the crackdown and a communication blackout, India's Ministry of External Affairs advised Indian nationals in Iran to remain cautious, avoid non-essential movement, stay in contact with the Indian Embassy in Tehran, monitor official updates, and consider leaving the country where travel was feasible. Shabbir Hussain, who hails from Jammu and Kashmir, landed earlier in the night. He described a different experience. He had seen fires, he said. He had seen protests, but only at night. "Protests were happening in Tehran, Mashhad and Qom," Hussain said. "If you can't contact your family, everyone gets worried. Anxiety spread quickly back home," he said. Tehran, he said, seemed to change by the hour: unrest at night and calm during the day. Communication returned slowly. "International calling resumed after a few days. By this evening, things are becoming normal again in Tehran... that's what we are hearing." Mohammad Dilshad, from Hyderabad, had been in Iran for work on an official assignment, coordinating with supervisors based there. He had been in the country for a month, but for the past two weeks communications were shutting down slowly. Protesters, he recalled, would suddenly rush toward their car, shouting, creating panic. Nothing happened to them physically, he said.

"My mother and father were crying back home in Hyderabad," he said. "We couldn't even send a normal message." With no internet, Dilshad's flights were cancelled and the Indian embassy's phone lines in Tehran were unreachable. Eventually, his supervisors managed to book tickets. Speaking to the media at the arrivals gate, Mohammad Jawad, from Bijnor, waited for his aunt who had travelled to Iran on a pilgrimage. "We kept hearing that protests were happening mostly at night... we were assured that there was no need to be afraid," he said. Nijme Haider, from Uttar Pradesh's Amroha, was waiting for his younger brother's wife who had been unreachable for days. "The internet was dead. Then, one night, the call finally came: 'We are fine. The flight leaves at midnight.' These words gave us relief," he said.

Congress ousted from Kolhapur too as Mahayuti storms to power for the first time in KMC history

BJP-led Mahayuti emerged as the single largest party in the Kolhapur Municipal Corporation for the first time as Congress emerges single largest party. BJP-led Mahayuti wins control of Kolhapur Municipal Corporation for the first time as Congress emerges single largest party. The Congress suffered a setback in Kolhapur as the BJP-led Mahayuti stormed to power for the first time in the Kolhapur Municipal Corporation. The Congress though emerged as the biggest party in the KMC bagging 35 seats while the BJP was the second with 25 seats. "We put up a strong fight but could not succeed. A little more effort and I think we would have easily returned to power. I want to thank the people of Kolhapur for reposing their faith in us in the manner they did. We emerged as the single largest party and reflected the confidence people have in the Congress." Congress MLA Satej Patil who led the party's campaign in Kolhapur, told this paper. The Congress had ruled Kolhapur Municipal Corporation for 25 years. Though the KMC came into being in 1972, the elections were not fought on party symbols. They were sponsored by political parties. It was

Congress which had ruled all along. Out of the 81 seats, the Congress bagged 35, BJP 25, Shiv Sena 15 and NCP. The Mahayuti had jointly fought the elections.

In the Western Maharashtra, Kolhapur was the only city where the Congress was banking heavily to return to power. In Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Ahilyanagar, Satara, the Congress has almost been decimated. Patil said though they lost power, their fight will continue. "We will continue to fight for the people of Kolhapur... We will keep the KMC on its toes and keep raising people's issues from time to time. We will continue to stand by the people of Kolhapur. Our fight will continue," he said. Patil said at least in two prabhags, they made a mistake while allotting seat to their alliance partner, Shiv Sena (UBT). "I think we made some mistakes. Otherwise, we would have returned to power..." he said.

After the results, there were speculations that NCP and Congress would come together. However, NCP Minister Hassan Mushrif discounted any such possibility.

US judges order release of three Indian nationals detained without due process



GNS News Agency, Jan 21

Washington: US federal judges in California have ordered immigration authorities to release three Indian citizens, saying they were detained without hearings or proper notice after earlier being allowed to live in the United States. The rulings were issued this week in separate cases in the Eastern and Southern Districts of California. In each case, the courts found that Immigration and Customs Enforcement failed to follow basic due process requirements before re-arresting the men. All three are Indian nationals who had been released by immigration authorities and were pursuing asylum or other immigration relief when they were detained again. In the first case, US District Judge Troy L. Nunley ordered the release of Harmeet S., a 21-year-old who entered the United States in August 2022.

Court records show Harmeet was released as a minor under federal child protection laws. His immigration case is still pending. He later enrolled in an alternatives-to-detention program run by the Department of Homeland Security. The court noted that he complied with all conditions and had no criminal history. In November 2025, Harmeet appeared for an in-person check-in with ICE. He was detained without advance notice or an explanation. He remained in custody for more than a month without a bond hearing. Judge Nunley ruled that the detention likely violated the Fifth Amendment's due process clause. The court ordered

Harmeet's immediate release and barred immigration authorities from re-arresting him unless they first provide notice and a hearing. Any future detention, the judge said, would require proof that Harmeet poses a danger or is likely to flee. In a separate ruling, Judge Nunley ordered the release of Sawan K., an Indian citizen who entered the United States in September 2024. According to court filings, Sawan was detained shortly after entry and claimed fear of political persecution in India. ICE later released him while his asylum application was pending. During his release, Sawan appeared for scheduled ICE check-ins. Despite that, he was detained again in September 2025 during a routine appointment. The court said Sawan was held for about four months without a warrant or hearing. Judge Nunley ruled that immigration authorities improperly placed him under mandatory detention rules that did not apply to his case. The court said he was entitled to a hearing and other procedural safeguards. The court also restrained ICE from re-detaining him unless constitutional requirements are met. In Southern California, US District Judge Janis L. Sammartino granted a writ of habeas corpus for Amit Amit, an Indian citizen detained at the Imperial Regional Detention Center. Court records state that Amit entered the United States in September 2022. He was detained briefly and then released on an order of recognizance. After his release, Amit obtained employment and applied for asylum. He had no criminal record, according to filings. In September 2025, Amit was arrested outside his residence while waiting for transportation to work. The court ruled that his release was revoked without notice, explanation, or an opportunity to be heard. Judge Sammartino ordered Amit's immediate release and said immigration authorities must provide notice and a hearing before any future detention. The government, the court said, would have to prove that Amit poses a danger or flight risk. In all three cases, the courts said that once immigration authorities release a person from custody, that person gains a protected liberty interest. The judges found that detaining individuals without hearings creates a high risk of wrongful deprivation of liberty and undermines constitutional protections.

Praggnanandhaa vs Gukesh clash may bring World Championship to Chennai: Viswanathan Anand

GNS News Agency, Jan 21

Jaipur: International Chess Federation (FIDE) vice president and Indian great Viswanathan Anand believes that this year's World Championship could happen in Chennai if R Praggnanandhaa wins the Candidates Tournament to challenge defending champion and compatriot D Gukesh in what could be an "emotionally charged" showdown.

The 20-year-old Praggnanandhaa is among the eight men who will fight for the right to challenge the world champion during the Candidates Tournament in March-April this year. He qualified after achieving the highest results during 2025 in eligible FIDE tournaments. Gukesh, 19, and Praggnanandhaa have both been mentored by Anand.

Fabiano Caruana, Hikaru Nakamura, Anish Giri, Wei Yi, Javokhir Sindarov, Andrey Esipenko and Matthias Bluebaum are the others to have booked a Candidates slot and are strong contenders. "... whoever wins the Candidates... they will experience a kind of growth and will be dangerous in the World Championship. I would assume that if Praggnanandhaa wins, that will be emotionally charged for both of them." Anand, who is here to promote his new book Lightning Kid: 64 winning lessons from the boy who became five-time world champion at the ongoing Jaipur Literature Festival, said on Friday.

"It will not be a normal match. It may even happen in Chennai. It may, I mean, they are both in the same school, same this, same that. And you know, the reaction of everyone around them, that will be very emotionally charged, but probably balanced because it's about the same for both," added the 56-year-old great, who became India's first Grandmaster back in 1988. Chennai last hosted the world showpiece in 2013 when Anand was up against Norwegian maverick and current world number one Magnus Carlsen. In 2000, Delhi had also hosted the World Championship when Anand played against Spain's Alexei Shirov. Anand said that although Gukesh's clash with any of the other rivals would also be intriguing, it would not have the "emotional noise." "I think with the American players, Caruana and Nakamura, there are several plots here. You could make more of a rivalry. Those guys will try to play mind games. Also, they're much older. "But with the other players, I think, it is essentially neutral. It's like Javokhir Sindarov or Matthias Bluebaum, someone somehow gets there. I mean, not that they're likely qualifiers, but if they get there, there's no emotional noise," he added. The dates and venue for the World Championship are still to be announced.

Anand, who describes himself as semi-retired, also spoke in detail about his equation with the younger crop that looks up to him and how it feels to go up against them in competitions like the Tata Steel Rapid and Blitz Championships a few days ago in Kolkata. Asked what keeps him going as a player to this date, Anand said, "Because I want to. I like competing. At some point a few years ago, I decided that competitively or emotionally, I wasn't up for playing the full year and going from tournament to tournament as part of a full circuit. "But I liked picking and choosing and saying, 'I'll block this tournament for a couple of days here,



play some tournaments I find attractive and compete... this way I get a lot more free time. At the same time, I can still pick and choose my tournaments," he added. The charismatic veteran said his equation with the youngsters he has groomed, including R Vaishali (qualifier to women's Candidates) and Arjun Erigaisi, is a respectful bond because of the massive age difference. "Of course, there have been many generations younger than me. But not this much younger. Quite often, I realise I'm older than their parents... there was a time when I met Gukesh, Pragg and Arjun six, seven years ago. And I realised their combined age was not yet my age," he quipped. "But then, what is our relationship? Am I a legend talking to them? Because then that's very distant. Am I a chess player? In which case, I'm absolutely equal to them. I mean, if they suggest a good move, that's a good move. There is no seniority there," he said. Despite his amiable public persona, Anand said he is prone to anger especially when results on the chess board don't go his way. "People say, oh, you can play chess for fun, you can't. If I lose six games, I can be in the most beautiful location on earth playing chess, and I have no fun. I'm miserable all day," he said. "If I win two games, I can be in some dump, and I'm very happy... crucially, I wouldn't say that the bulk of my career was unhappy. It was very happy, but it was in a different way." "... if you ever start getting too philosophical about losing, I mean, the only reaction that matters is you have to be angry. Otherwise, you cease to be a chess player," he explained. The man, who would play 30 games a day in his prime, also recalled being cold to his rivals and keeping a poker face to avoid being read by them... when I was playing against them, I didn't even want to think about them, I didn't want to talk to them till the match was over... till the match was over, I could not be friendly with them," he said referring to his well-documented rivalries with Russian greats and former world champions like Garry Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik. "And so we actively avoided each other. Everything felt like a taunt. Everything I'd say about you felt like a taunt... it's a state of mind. It's very selfish. But maybe it's the nature of sport," he remembered. "... it's only afterwards you can disconnect. And it's funny, nowadays, I get along very well with Kasparov, for instance. But there was a time when, you know, we didn't really see eye to eye for many years."

government.

"I pledge to you... that we will continue together until we achieve the desired national goal," said Mr. Zubaidi. "With your determination, we will prevail. With your unity, the South will be protected, and with your will, the future state will be established. "Separatist supporters have continued protest and on Friday (January 16, 2026) turned out in their thousands in the southern Yemeni city of Aden, backing Mr. Zubaidi and the STC. They brandished photographs of Mr. Zubaidi, with some chanting against Rashad al-Alimi, who heads Yemen's Saudi-backed presidential body, and his Saudi backers. One of the protesters, Hussein Mohammed al-Yafai, told AFP he had come out to "reject the illegitimate measures taken by Saudi Arabia... against the South. "Another demonstrator, Wafi Al-Arimi, said "no power on earth can force the southerners to abandon their national project". But Yemen's internationally recognised government and its presidential body have since undergone a purge. UAE-aligned ministers and members of the presidential council have been dismissed and Mr. Alimi declared that all southern factions would unite under Saudi command.

Donald Trump claims Pakistan PM said he saved lives of 10 million by stopping India-Pakistan conflict



GNS News Agency, Jan 21

U.S. President Donald Trump has again claimed that he stopped the fighting between India and Pakistan and saved millions of lives, describing it as an "honour". Addressing an event in Florida on Friday (January 16, 2026), Mr. Trump claimed the U.S. had brokered multiple peace deals in less than a year and Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has credited him with saving at

least 10 million lives by stopping the Indo-Pak conflict.

"In less than a year, we made eight peace deals and ended the war in Gaza. We have peace in the Middle East. Nobody thought that was going to be possible," he said. Mr. Trump also asserted that Washington helped defuse tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbours, India and Pakistan. "We stopped India and Pakistan from fighting, two nuclear nations... The Pakistani Prime Minister said 'Donald Trump saved at least 10 million people'. And it was amazing, and it's an honour," he said. Mr. Trump has repeatedly asserted that he played a role in halting tensions between India and Pakistan last year. He has made the claim around 80 times since May 10 last year, when he announced on social media that the two countries had agreed to a "full and immediate" ceasefire after a "long night" of talks allegedly mediated by Washington. India has consistently rejected any third-party intervention in its dealings with Pakistan. Mr. Trump has also said on several occasions that Sharif, who visited the White House last year, credited him with saving millions of lives by stopping the conflict between India and Pakistan.

U.S. President Donald Trump warns of 'very strong action' if Iran hangs protesters



GNS News Agency, Jan 21

U.S. President Donald Trump warned of unspecified "very strong action" if Iranian authorities go ahead with threatened hangings of some protesters, with Tehran calling American warnings a "pretext for military intervention". International outrage has built over the crackdown that a rights group said has likely killed thousands during protests posing one of the biggest challenges yet to Iran's clerical leadership. Iran's UN mission posted a statement on X, vowing that Washington's "playbook" would "fail again". Iran protests LIVE: Trump warns of 'very strong action' if Iran hangs protesters

"U.S. fantasies and policy toward Iran are rooted in regime change, with sanctions, threats, engineered unrest, and chaos serving as the modus operandi to manufacture a pretext for military intervention," the post said. Iranian authorities have insisted they had regained control of the country after successive nights of mass protests nationwide since. Rights groups accuse the government of fatally shooting protesters and masking the scale of the crackdown with an internet blackout that has now surpassed the five-day mark. Trump announces 25% tariff on 'any country' trading with Iran, move could impact India, China, UAE

New videos on social media, with locations verified by AFP, showed bodies lined up in the Kahrizak morgue just south of the Iranian capital, with the corpses wrapped in black bags and distraught relatives searching for loved ones. Mr. Trump, who earlier told the protesters in Iran that "help is on its way", said on Tuesday (January 13, 2026) in a CBS News interview that the United States would act if Iran began hanging protesters. Tehran prosecutors have said Iranian authorities would press capital charges of "moharebeh" [waging war against God], against some suspects arrested over recent demonstrations. "We will take very strong action if they do such a thing," said the American leader, who has repeatedly threatened Iran with military intervention. "When they start killing thousands of people — and now you're telling me about hanging. We'll see how that's going to work out for them," Mr. Trump said. The U.S. State Department on its Farsi language X account said 26-year-old protestor Erfan Soltani had been sentenced to be

executed on Wednesday.

"Erfan is the first protester to be sentenced to death, but he won't be the last," the State Department said, adding more than 10,600 Iranians had been arrested. Rights group Amnesty International called on Iran to immediately halt all executions, including Erfan Soltani's. Mr. Trump urged on his Truth Social platform for Iranians to "KEEP PROTESTING", adding: "I have cancelled all meetings with Iranian Officials until the senseless killing of protesters STOPS. HELP IS ON ITS WAY." It was not immediately clear what meetings he was referring to or what the nature of the help would be. European nations also signalled their anger over the crackdown, with France, Germany and the United Kingdom among the countries that summoned their Iranian ambassadors, as did the European Union. "The rising number of casualties in Iran is horrifying," said EU chief Ursula von der Leyen, vowing further sanctions against those responsible. Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights said it had confirmed 734 people killed during the protests, including nine minors, but warned the death toll was likely far higher. "The real number of those killed is likely in the thousands," IHR's director Mahmod Amiry-Moghaddam said. Iranian state media has said dozens of members of the security forces have been killed, with their funerals turning into large pro-government rallies. Authorities in Tehran have announced a mass funeral ceremony in the capital on Wednesday (January 14, 2026) for the "martyrs" of recent days. Amir, an Iraqi computer scientist, returned to Baghdad on Monday (January 12, 2026) and described dramatic scenes in Tehran. "On Thursday night, my friends and I saw protesters in Tehran's Sarsabz neighbourhood amid a heavy military presence. The police were firing rubber bullets," he told AFP in Iraq. Reza Pahlavi, the U.S.-based son of Iran's ousted shah, called on the military to stop suppressing protests. "You are the national military of Iran, not the military of the Islamic Republic," he said in a statement. Serious challenge

The government on Monday (January 12, 2026) sought to regain control of the streets with mass nationwide rallies that supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei hailed as proof that the protest movement was defeated, calling them a "warning" to the United States. In power since 1989 and now aged 86, Mr. Khamenei has faced significant challenges, most recently the 12-day war in June against Israel, which forced him to go into hiding. Analysts have cautioned that it is premature to predict the immediate demise of the theocratic system, pointing to the repressive levers the leadership controls, including the Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is charged with safeguarding the Islamic revolution. Nicole Grajewski, professor at the Sciences Po Centre for International Studies, told AFP the protests represented a "serious challenge" to the Islamic republic, but it was unclear if they would unseat the leadership, pointing to "the sheer depth and resilience of Iran's repressive apparatus".

Trump questions Reza Pahlavi's ability to garner support in Iran

GNS News Agency, Jan 21

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Wednesday (January 14, 2026) that Iranian Opposition figure Reza Pahlavi "seems very nice" but expressed uncertainty over whether Pahlavi would be able to muster support within Iran to eventually take over. In an exclusive Reuters interview in the Oval Office, Mr. Trump said there is a chance Iran's clerical government could collapse, blamed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for the stalemate in negotiations with Russia over the war in Ukraine, and dismissed Republican criticism of a Justice Department probe of Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly threatened to intervene in support of protesters in Iran, where thousands of people have been reported killed in a crackdown on the unrest against clerical rule. But he was reluctant on Wednesday (January 14, 2026) to lend his full support to Pahlavi, the son of the late shah of Iran, who was ousted from power in 1979. "He seems very nice, but I don't know how he'd play within his own country," Mr. Trump said. "And we really aren't up to that point yet. I don't know whether or not his country would accept his leadership, and certainly if they would, that would be fine with me." Mr. Trump's comments went further in questioning Pahlavi's ability to lead Iran after saying last week that he had no plans to meet with him. The U.S.-based Pahlavi, 65, has lived outside Iran since before his father was toppled in the 1979 Islamic Revolution and has become a prominent voice in the protests. Iran's opposition is fragmented among rival groups and ideological factions - including the monarchists who back Pahlavi - and appears to have little organized presence inside the Islamic Republic. Iran briefly shuts Tehran Airspace amid U.S. tensions, protests; flights rerouted. Mr. Trump said it is possible the government in Tehran could fall due to the protests but "that in truth "any regime can fail." "Whether or not it falls or not, it's going to be an interesting period of time," he said.

Mr. Trump, who is closing out the first year of his second term in office, sat behind his massive Resolute Desk

and sipped a Diet Coke during the 30-minute interview. At one point, he held up a thick binder of papers, which he said contained his achievements since being sworn into office on January 20, 2025. But he sought to manage expectations for Republicans in November's congressional midterm elections, noting that the party in power frequently loses seats two years after a presidential election. "When you win the presidency, you don't win the midterms," he said. "But we're going to try very hard to win the midterms." Zelenskyy's main impediment to reaching deal

Mr. Trump, who has struggled throughout his presidency to end Russia's war in Ukraine despite campaign boasts that he could end it in a day, said Mr. Zelenskyy is the main impediment to resolving the four-year-old war. Mr. Trump has frequently criticised both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Mr. Zelenskyy, but seemed more downbeat once again on the Ukrainian president. Mr. Trump said Mr. Putin is "ready to make a deal." Asked what the hold up is, Mr. Trump said simply: "Zelenskyy." "We have to get President Zelenskyy to go along with it," he said. Republican lawmakers "should be loyal." Mr. Trump dismissed Senate Republicans who have vowed to block his Fed nominees over concerns that Trump's Justice Department is interfering with the central bank's traditional independence with its probe into Powell. "I don't care. There's nothing to say. They should be loyal," he said of his party's lawmakers. Mr. Trump also rejected criticism from JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon that Trump's meddling into the Fed could spike inflation. "I don't care what he says," Mr. Trump said. Mr. Trump is to meet on Thursday with Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado at the White House, their first in-person meeting since Trump directed the arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and seized control of the country earlier this month. She's a very nice woman," Mr. Trump said of Ms. Machado. "I've seen her on television. I think we're just going to talk basics." Ms. Machado won the Nobel Peace Prize last year and dedicated it to Trump. She has offered to give him her prize, but the Nobel Committee said the peace prize cannot be transferred. He praised the acting president of Venezuela,

Uttarakhand to Himachal to J&K, why this winter feels snowless



rains. "The western disturbances currently have little moisture, and the trough, the region of low pressure, is shallow, impeding its ability to lift moisture. The propagation is northward at a higher latitude, which explains bits of precipitation in Kashmir and parts of Himachal Pradesh, because it intersects those regions first and can release moisture there, but not in Uttarakhand, which lies eastward. Another reason could be that when the system approaches the Indian subcontinent, there could be weak circulation, reducing its residence time over the region," Tomar said.

There have been reports that Nepal, too, has seen a dry winter. Delayed precipitation is compounded by reduced snow persistence, the time snow remains on the ground after snowfall. This means that when snow falls in February, while the minimum temperature remains low, the maximum temperature is relatively high, due to high diurnal temperature variation.

So, when snow falls, warmer temperatures reduce snow persistence, Tomar said. "When it snows in December, moisture percolates and it gets retained for long periods. The melting process is also not rapid. This is beneficial for many rabi crops. Even if there is a delay in western disturbances after the first precipitation, an early snowfall/rainfall is beneficial," Tomar said. The situation is expected to change in the next few days, with the latest forecast suggesting light to moderate intensity rainfall over northwestern India during the January 18-20 period due to another approaching western disturbance. "Rainfall activity is likely to be below normal over the country, except the western Himalayan region and northwest India, where it is likely to be near normal to above normal," the IMD said on Thursday. Forest fires have also been raging in different parts of the Himalayas, and in particular, in parts of the Valley of Flowers range in the Nanda Devi National Park. This has been attributed to the lack of moisture in the forest floor, caused by decreased snowfall. Since the beginning of the fire season on November 1, the Forest Survey of India has recorded more than 1,600 fire alerts in Uttarakhand, 600 in Himachal Pradesh, and around 300 in Jammu and Kashmir through the SNPP satellite. With Himalayan glaciers already experiencing sustained mass loss, scientists warn that declining snow persistence and reduced winter precipitation could worsen the crisis. Manish Mehta, a scientist at Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, said that glaciers could melt earlier than the season begins. "It could also result in the formation of proglacial and supraglacial lakes, increasing the risk of glacial lake outburst floods. Equilibrium line altitude, which marks the area or zone on a glacier where accumulation is balanced by ablation over one year, could shift upwards. As a result, the volume of discharge to rivers will also come down," he said.

In December and January, Uttarakhand received no rainfall at all. Himachal Pradesh recorded the sixth-lowest rainfall in December since 1901, while Jammu & Kashmir received very little rain and snow in January, according to data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD). As a result, the Himalayan states have unusually bare and snowless mountain peaks this winter, raising concerns over growing unpredictability in seasonal precipitation, water security, forest fire vulnerability and agricultural productivity.

It has been a dry winter for India as a whole, with the country receiving less than one-fourth of the rainfall that is expected in the first half of January. But the northwest region was particularly hit, getting just 8 per cent of the rain expected during this period. Experts say that winters in the Himalayan states like Uttarakhand have been getting increasingly dry over the past decade. "During the last ten years, there have been four occasions when Uttarakhand received very little rain in January. This indicates that this trend is becoming common," IMD Dehradun director C S Tomar said.

The 2024-25 winter season had seen rainfall deficiency of 96 per cent in the northwestern region. Studies have shown a marginal declining trend in the winter season rainfall over some pockets of north India. During winters, the north and northwest India regions normally experience light to moderate intensity rainfall mainly triggered by the passing streams of western disturbances. This precipitation is particularly vital for the rabi crops cultivated along the plains and supported by irrigation. In the higher altitudes, snow or rainfall is key for the recharge of the groundwater aquifers. In December and January, streams of passing western disturbances normally interact with moisture-laden easterly or westerly winds coming in from either the Bay of Bengal or the Arabian Sea. This creates a wind confluence that happens normally over the Himalayas. It results in precipitation in the form of snow or rainfall.

But this year, the western disturbances have not been strong enough to trigger a rainfall event. In December, eight western disturbance streams (against normal of six) crossed northern-most Indian region, but produced little

As BJP wins BMC qila, why the echoes of its civic poll success will travel far beyond Maharashtra

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is not just any other civic body. The outcome of the elections to the corporation in the country's financial capital, with an annual budget of Rs 75,000 crore, contains messages that go beyond the shores of Maharashtra. The iconic BMC building with its Gothic Victorian architecture, and always so arresting at night when it was lit up, used to be a defining symbol of aamchi Mumbai. On Friday, as the BJP and its ally Shiv Sena, led by Deputy CM Eknath Shinde, took control of the corporation, defeating Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT), it was a testimony to the way that the character of Mumbai and Maharashtra has changed. The BJP was expected to win, given that it was only two seats short of the undivided Sena back in 2017, and the BJP had consolidated its position following the split in the Sena and the NCP since then, making common cause with the breakaway factions of the Sena and the NCP led by Deputy CMs Shinde and Ajit Pawar, respectively.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis is the biggest beneficiary of the BMC win that will help him strengthen his grip over the government. Since he took over as CM last year, Fadnavis's appeal, and that of the party, has grown with his management of the coalition despite its inherent tensions and their focus on vital issues related to urban development. Along with leaders such as Yogi Adityanath and Himanta Biswa Sarma, Fadnavis is seen as the BJP's future. His handling of the Mahayuti government has undoubtedly helped the party win the BMC and other important corporations, including Pune, which was once the fiefdom of the NCP and the Pawars.

The BMC outcome will also allow Fadnavis keep his allies in check, even though they have helped the party to win. The Shiv Sena cut into the support base of Uddhav's Sena (UBT), depriving him of victory. And Uddhav prevented Shinde from acquiring the strength that might have enabled him to flex his muscle within the ruling coalition. It has turned out to be Advantage BJP in more ways than one and Fadnavis finds himself with laddoos in both hands. Shinde has been contained and Ajit Pawar has been reined in, having failed to regain Pune despite joining hands with his uncle Sharad Pawar.

The BJP has conquered the BMC qila. Backed by powerful Gujaratis and the Hindi Heartland-wallahs from UP and Bihar, the party managed to craft a wider support base. Its humungous, well-oiled machinery, it goes without saying, remained, as in the past, many steps ahead of its opponents. The BJP has overcome the setback it suffered in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, making up for it with wins that year in Haryana and Maharashtra, and then in Delhi and Bihar in 2025. Starting the year with the BMC win may give it a psychological advantage in the impending polls in West



Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, and Kerala.

Can sub-nationalism check BJP?

Even though the BJP took hold of the BMC, the fortress did not collapse completely as some thought it might, with Uddhav's party not too far behind the BJP. This showed that sub-nationalism represented by his "Marathi manoos" pitch was not a winning card on its own. But it also showed that issues involving Marathi pride and identity could not be dismissed outright. So, BMC 2026 may have a message for other regional satraps. Over the years, regional outfits have used caste lineups as a way to oppose the BJP's religious mobilisation. Others tried to use sub-nationalism as a counter to the BJP's heady cocktail, like Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal with her own brand of Bengali asmita and M K Stalin emphasising Tamil pride by speaking against Hindi imposition and the impending delimitation exercise. But the regional parties may have to mount a narrative that has a wider appeal, particularly in the states going to the polls this year.

Shape of things to come?

The large-scale use of money and revdis that was seen in the civic body polls was arguably not seen in earlier polls. The voter has become more pragmatic, interested mainly in what she can get from parties immediately, thus diluting her stakes in the electoral process. The BMC and other corporation polls in Maharashtra have also shown, yet once again, the proclivity of politicians to change parties, shift alliances at the drop of a hat, and willingly tie up with those they were ideologically opposed to. Is this now an irrevocable shape of things to come? For there are no ideological divides left today, except on secular and non-secular lines. At the lower levels, even those are missing.

Some believe this flexibility, for all its negative features, may help keep a diverse country together, without the many sharp ideological hardlines that divide the democratic space in other countries. Or could this be a way of finding solace when the political process goes awry? What, however, is more clear and this was aptly summed up by a political wag: the real divide in the Indian polity today is between a ruling BJP on the fast track and the Opposition unable to mount an alternative to it. The BMC elections have only brought this home to us once again.

sis, 'Prenatal paracetamol exposure and child neurodevelopment', published in the peer-reviewed journal by Francesco D'Antonio et al, has established beyond doubt that there is absolutely no evidence available to show a direct link between prenatal use of paracetamol and autism in the babies born. The authors clarified that, "Paracetamol, or acetaminophen, is the most commonly used analgesic and antipyretic during pregnancy, recommended globally as a first-line option for pain relief and fever reduction. Its safety profile is generally more favourable than that of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and opioids, making it the preferred choice in obstetric care." The article reviewed 43 existing clinical studies concluded that, "Current evidence does not indicate a clinically important increase in the likelihood of autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, or intellectual disability in children of pregnant individuals

'I don't want to hide anymore. I want to be seen and heard': Nun in rape case against Bishop speaks out



IN 2018, the Catholic church in Kerala was gripped by an unprecedented crisis. A rape complaint against Bishop Franco Mulakkal, then head of the church's Jalandhar diocese, had set off protests across the state. Away from the sloganeering and speeches, at St Francis Mission Home, a two-storeyed convent set deep inside a canopy of fruit trees, the complainant, a 51-year-old senior nun, had spent her days behind closed doors, broken and convulsed by shame and self-loathing.

Seven years later, she has decided to step out. No longer anonymous, no longer as a victim, but as herself — Sister Ranit M J. "Many people think the case is finished, that I have left this place. But the fight is not over. I don't want to hide anymore. I want to be seen and heard," Sr Ranit tells Kerala nun rape case, nun rape case, Sr Ranit, Nun in rape case against Bishop speaks out, Nun in rape case, Bishop Franco Mulakkal, Bishop Franco Mulakkal rape case, Express Premium, Indian express news, current affairs Sr Ranit at the chapel of the St Francis Mission Home at Kuravilangad in Kottayam district. (Photo: Nikhila Henry) Mulakkal, who was accused of raping Sr Ranit 13 times between May 2014 and September 2016 when he was the Bishop of Jalandhar Diocese, was arrested in September 2018 — the first time a sitting Catholic Bishop in India was taken into custody on charges of sexual assault. In 2022, a trial court acquitted Mulakkal on the grounds that there was lack of proof and there were inconsistencies in the survivor's statements. Sr Ranit, who moved the High Court against the acquittal, is awaiting a hearing in 2026. "I have decided to come out because it will give strength to a lot of women," she says, adding, "I will not be defeated. I will attend public meetings and speak the truth. I don't know what I will talk about. But I will surely talk." Nun in rape case against Bishop speaks out Nun in rape case against Bishop speaks out

A blue signboard next to the Pala-Vaikom state highway announces the St Francis Mission Home. A steep, narrow lane leading down from this sign stops at an imposing two-storied building at Kuravilangad village in Kottayam district. Spread over a six-acre campus, the Mission Home is a scattering of buildings, including a chapel and a convent run by the Missionaries of Jesus, a congregation based in Jalandhar, Punjab. While it's an all-woman congregation of nuns engaged in pastoral and social work, and has its own hierarchy, it belongs to the Jalandhar diocese with the Bishop as the patron.

The Mission Home is a labyrinth of dimly lit passages, but sister Ranit walks briskly, with the conviction of someone who has walked these halls countless times. She has been here since 2013, when she moved from Jalandhar after the end of her term as Superior General, the highest office a nun can hold in a congregation. It was at the Mission Home that she led a team of nuns as they tended to elderly destitutes and managed the property for the congregation. It was here that she was raped, in Room Number 20.

Kerala nun rape case, nun rape case, Sr Ranit, Nun in rape case against Bishop speaks out, Nun in rape case, Bishop Franco Mulakkal, Bishop Franco Mulakkal rape case, Express Premium, Indian express news, current affairs Bishop Mulakkal after his acquittal in 2022. As she reaches her spartan room on the ground floor, she says, "It's the structure that is stifling."

In the darkness of the convent, in the oppressive silence that screams out of its walls, is a reflection of the Church itself and of the rigid administrative structure of dioceses and archdioceses that govern it. The hierarchy often peaks with the Bishop, who not only has administrative authority over the churches and other institutions within the diocese, but wields significant control over religious congregations such as the Missionaries of Jesus to which Sr Ranit belongs. It's a structure that demands complete submission to the authorities, no questions asked. And when someone does stand up, there are consequences. As Sr Ranit was to find out. May 5, 2014 was a busy day at the Home. Bishop Mulakkal was in Kerala to attend the ordination of a priest at Chalakudy in Thrissur district, and had informed the Home that he would be staying there the night. Court documents say that as the Bishop reached Kuruvilangad from Chalakudy after the day's engagements, he retired for the night to Room No. 20. The documents say that after 10 pm, he allegedly called Sr Ranit and asked her to iron his cassock and bring it to him. While such tasks are not part of a nun's prescribed duties, women in mission settings often find themselves performing them due to the Bishop's authority and the absence of institutional safeguards.

When Sr Ranit knocked on his door to hand him the cassock, Mulakkal allegedly asked her to bring him documents related to the recent renovation of the kitchen in the Home. Court documents say that when she entered the room with the papers, Muliakkal "bolted the door from inside", and allegedly disrobed and sexually assaulted her. Nun in rape case against Bishop speaks out Nun in rape case against Bishop speaks out "I remember wanting to scream at the time. But I was too scared for my life because he was the Bishop, someone as close to God as possible," she says. The sexual assault allegedly happened the following day, May 6, too, as the Bishop again allegedly summoned her to his room. Two months later, on July 11, 2014, as the Bishop again came to the Home, Sr Ranit says she was too scared to even do her chores. This time, too, he allegedly raped her.

The assaults allegedly continued during each of the Bishop's 13 visits spread across 2014 and 2016, the last of them on September 23, 2016. He once allegedly called on the phone to make sexually explicit remarks, her statement to the court said. As she speaks of "the utter shame" of what she faced in Room No. 20, the sunlight bounces off the stained glass windows of the chapel, lighting up her face that's contorted in pain and streaked in tears.

"What he was inflicting on my body and mind, I alone had to bear," says Sr Ranit. She says that she was also worried that her biological sister, Sr Alphie, who was part of the same congregation in Jalandhar, would be penalised if she didn't succumb to the Bishop's wishes. Sr Ranit at the St Francis Mission Home at Kuravilangad village in Kottayam district Sr Ranit at the St Francis Mission Home at Kuravilangad village in Kottayam district. "I begged him to leave me alone, but he laughed off my pleas," she tells The Indian Express. By September 2016, two years after

the assaults began, Sr Ranit says, she gathered the courage to oppose the Bishop, telling him during phone calls that she didn't want him to stay at the Home.

The retribution that followed was swift, leading to her being removed from her post of Mother Superior of the Home. Sr Ranit's statement to the court read, "(The Bishop) tried to implicate her family members in false police cases. "While the defence highlighted the two-year delay in filing the complaint, Sr Ranit told the court that she had reported the assaults to her spiritual mother, Sr Lizzy Vadakkal of Franciscan Clarist Congregation, and had also spoken of them in her confession to a priest, a holy sacrament that's protected by the absolute seal of secrecy binding on the priest. Sr Ranit says she was too scared to speak out, "Virginity and chastity are central to my belief system, part of my vows to the church. The Bishop ripped these off me, he broke my vows. There are dire consequences if vows are broken, even involuntarily. I did not want to be expelled from the congregation. I was too scared to speak out."

The tracts around the Mission Home now have rows of tapioca, cabbage, cauliflower, ginger and turmeric plants. The tracts around the Mission Home now have rows of tapioca, cabbage, cauliflower, ginger and turmeric plants. Court records show that days before filing a police complaint on June 26, 2018, Sr Ranit wrote to senior Church authorities, including the Apostolic Nuncio, the Vatican's diplomatic representative in India, alleging that she had been subjected to rape. "I had knocked on every possible door inside the Church to save myself from the Bishop's cruelty. But none of the superiors addressed my complaints. I had to finally lodge a police complaint," says Sr Ranit.

The case and the sharp glare it cast left Sr Ranit broken. "I considered my life to be over. I thought I was finished because of the shame of what was inflicted on me," she says. But as she locked herself up in the convent, five of her sister nuns stood up in a moment of sisterhood — Sr Neena Rose, Sr Anupama, Sr Josephine, Sr Ancitta and Sr Alphie, her biological younger sister who moved from Jalandhar to be by her side. The five nuns pitched a tent in the heart of Ernakulam, at Vanchi Square, to protest and demand that Mulakkal be defrocked or removed from the church, arrested and tried in a court of law. The protest soon caught on as about 80 organisations backed the nuns with resistance songs and searing speeches against Bishop Mulakkal. Nun in rape case against Bishop speaks out Nun in rape case against Bishop speaks out

On September 21, the Bishop was arrested. As the case went to trial, the prosecution argued that Mulakkal had used his "official status, control, supremacy and dominance he was holding as the Bishop of the Diocese" to illegally "confine, rape and subject her to unnatural sex".

However, in 2022, Kottayam Additional Sessions Court acquitted Mulakkal, stating that the prosecution had failed to prove all counts due to lack of evidence and inconsistencies in Sr Ranit's statement. While acquitting Mulakkal, the court observed, "... when it is not feasible to separate truth from falsehood, when grain and chaff are inextricably mixed up, the only available course is to discard the evidence (of PW 1, Sr Ranit) in toto". The prosecution lawyer refused to comment on the trial court's order. A year after the acquittal in 2022, Mulakkal resigned from the post of Jalandhar Bishop. However, he still holds the title of Bishop since he has not been defrocked by the Church. The Indian Express reached out to Mulakkal through his lawyer, Senior Advocate Raman Pillai, who said the Bishop will not issue a statement. He said, "She (Sr Ranit) is just repeating the false allegations she once made against the Bishop. She can repeat the allegations if she wants." In 2023, a year after the acquittal, Sr Neena Rose, Sr Josephine and Sr Anupama left the congregation to lead private lives.

Nun in rape case against Bishop speaks out Nun in rape case against Bishop speaks out. With that, St Francis Home went silent. Today, just three nuns, Sr Ranit, Sr Alphie and Sr Ancitta, walk the halls of the building that has 36 rooms and a chapel. Besides, silence is a virtue taught in convents. No longer, says Sr Ranit, as she takes on an increasingly hostile Church.

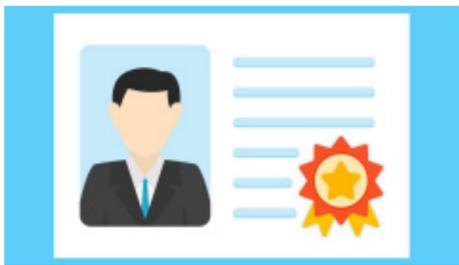
"For the Church, it is as if this convent does not exist anymore," Sr Ranit says, adding that they have not been getting the monthly sustenance funds from their congregation. "We are supposed to get Rs 5,000 per month as support funds, but we have not been getting it. So, we decided to grow vegetables, sew... do everything we can to keep the Home going," she says. The tracts around the Home now have rows of tapioca, cabbage, cauliflower, ginger and turmeric plants. In a pen on the campus, hens and ducks cluck and quack noisily. On January 2, 2026, a cow and its calf arrived at the Mission Home.

The nuns have also been stitching clothes, tote bags and sling bags under a banner 'Stand by Me' to sustain themselves. "A few priests and nuns from different congregations and some concerned persons from the laity have stood by us since 2018. They bought us sewing machines so that we could have some income from stitching clothes and bags," Sr Ranit says. The nuns have been stitching clothes, tote bags and sling bags under a banner 'Stand by Me' Bishop Jose Sebastian Thekkumcherikunnel, who took over as the Bishop of Jalandhar in 2024, denies that the diocese has abandoned the sisters. "The Mission Home belongs to the Jalandhar diocese and any income generated from the Home is of Jalandhar diocese. Hence, factually, the sisters at the home are still being supported by the diocese. The church has not thrown them out as they are claiming," he says.

As she ploughed through, there were times when deep despair took over. "There were days when I felt like I should not have reported the rape. There were questions about my character, family background and life itself. I felt my head would explode," she says. With Bishop Mulakkal's acquittal, there were more questions than answers. "How to go out? How to face people? How to live? These were the questions I asked myself," she says.

But few things pained her as much as watching the congregation she built disintegrate around her. "I was in the founding batch of this congregation. Even after I became the Superior General, I worked a lot to build the congregation, travelling in general compartments of trains, even sitting near bathrooms," she says. The congregation, she adds, has shut her out now. "I don't even get newsletters from them. The isolation is complete. It is an attempt to break me," she says. Yet, it was out of this deep hurt that came the conviction to fight back. "When I was not able to get justice from the church, I had to file a police complaint. When I did not get justice from courts, I decided to speak out in public," she says, adding she was the most comfortable during Covid days when everybody had to wear a mask. "I used to hide behind that mask for long. It is time to shed it," she says. As they await the hearing in the High Court, the three sisters stick to their life of discipline, starting with a prayer at 5.45 am and ending at 10 pm.

How micro-credential courses can save our arts, science and engineering degrees



mainstream of higher education in recent years, elements such as standardized descriptions, quality assurance, industry recognition, stacking mechanisms, and global credit transfer for domestic and international portability remain underdeveloped. Evidence suggests that micro-credentials can lead to tangible career benefits, including increased confidence, pay raises, and promotions, particularly for entry-level employees.

How could autonomous colleges and universities redeem this?

Apart from universities, autonomous colleges can leverage the entitlement granted by the UGC as a revenue stream by offering certificates (digital badges), diplomas (nano-degrees), and postgraduate diplomas (micro-degrees) through Schools of Continuing Education or Centres for Lifelong Learning using the college's name. If these courses are accredited by the NSDC or benchmarked against industry standards through MoUs with relevant industries, they may qualify for GST exemption of 18%. Unfortunately, many autonomous colleges are unaware of these entitlements and remain constrained by university-prescribed conventional courses that have not been revised for decades. Autonomous Colleges of Education can consider replenishing the decline in enrollment by repurposing their expertise in association with edtech industries, offering microcredentials using customized instructional design modules and mapped to edtech industry portfolios, thus creating sustainable revenue streams. How do we design micro-credentials

Micro-credential course design demands the selection of specific competencies or learning outcomes that are in demand in the labour market but have yet to be integrated into academia. A key feature is the translation of authentic industry practices into modules by meticulously mapping them with graduate attributes, programme outcomes, and course outcomes, particularly when academic integration and scalability into stackable micro- or nano-degrees are envisioned. Purely industry-designed micro-credentials may not include such academic mapping. Micro-credentials can also be co-designed with overseas universities through strategic partnerships, creating academic pathways and foundational courses for learners seeking cross-disciplinary mobility from undergraduate to postgraduate studies abroad. Well-structured MoUs may include provisions for tuition fee waivers or exemptions for co-created and mutually accredited micro-credentials. Beyond academic and career pathways, micro-credentials can be offered for learners aspiring toward entrepreneurship, mapped to portfolios such as Incubation Manager, Startup Coach, Innovation Lead, or Venture Analyst. Engagement with professional bodies, industries, and accreditation agencies such as NSDC is essential to benchmark content against professional standards. Stackability from digital badges (30 hours) to nano-degrees (diploma) and micro-degrees (PG diploma) should be planned carefully, keeping the National Credit Framework (NCrF) and qualification framework level 5 in view. Learning outcomes and competencies must be aligned with proposed academic progression and job or entrepreneurship pathways. Micro-credentials may be delivered through synchronous, asynchronous, or offline modes, depending on the competencies targeted. In the Indian context, credit allocation under the NHEQF distinguishes between theory, practical, and experiential learning, while NSQF-aligned courses assign one credit to 30 hours of learning without such distinctions.

New age evaluation rubrics for micro-credentials

Micro-credentials employ varied assessment methods, including quizzes, assignments, micro-capstone projects, digital badges reflecting competency milestones, work-integrated learning, reflective practice journals, design sprints or hackathons, problem-based case files, micro-defenses through viva voce, digital portfolios, simulation-based tasks, infographic creation, submission of logs or reports as evidence of practice, and final tests conducted online or in proctored settings. In some cases, universities also recognize prior learning and assess it using the same rubrics for certification. Quality assurance of micro-credentials Quality assurance plays a significant role in conceptualizing, designing, and implementing micro-credentials in colleges and universities. Autonomous colleges may pursue international accreditation through well-defined MoUs with overseas universities via twinning or dual-degree programmes. However, micro-credential design must address key questions related to competency mapping, authenticity of industry practices, accreditation and benchmarking, portfolio development, personalized learning, stackability, pathway alignment, and the role of Professors of Practice in translating industrial experience into teaching and learning. Instructional design Following course design, effective implementation requires skill and cognitive profiling of students based on learning goals and interests using psychometric assessments integrated into Learning Management Systems and Learner Experience Platforms. LXPs combine social media features with virtual learning environments to support AI-driven personalized learning, heutagogy, and self-paced learning. This inclusive approach motivates diverse learners through completion-type and mastery-type badges. Learning analytics derived from learners' digital activity traces help optimize learning environments, while social learning analytics examine knowledge acquisition in collaborative, informal contexts. Currently, edtech companies play a major role in designing such courses in collaboration with industries and universities. Autonomous colleges and state universities must understand the foundational requirements for designing micro-credentials, integrate Gen Z perspectives, and reimagine higher education for resilience. Without strengthened industry-academia engagement, higher education risks redundancy beyond institutional boundaries.

Legislature pays rich tributes to veteran legislator Shamanuru Shivashankarappa

Both the Houses of the Karnataka legislature paid rich tributes to veteran legislator and former Minister Shamanuru Shivashankarappa who died on December 14. On December 15, legislators cutting across party affiliations hailed the 94-year-old entrepreneur-turned-politician as ajaathashatru (one without enemies). In the Assembly, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah recalled that Shivashankarappa was the senior-most MLA in India. Also, he had served the Veerashaiva Lingayat Mahasabha for a long time as its president, he noted. Beginning his political career in 1969 as a member of the Davanagere municipal body, Shivashankarappa had gone on to be elected an MLA six times and also served as an MP for one term, he recalled. "If Davanagere has seen economic development, Shivashankarappa is responsible for it," the Chief Minister said. He pointed out that the veteran legislator had turned

Davanagere into a vidya Kashi (major educational centre). He had also played a crucial role in building a brand name for Davanagere as a textiles hub, the Chief Minister said. He had spent ₹6 crore of his personal funds during COVID to get oxygen cylinders for the needy, Mr. Siddaramaiah said. Recalling his 75th birthday celebrations organised in Davanagere, Mr. Siddaramaiah said the event had been organized on land belonging to Shivashankarappa. "That was my first and last birthday celebration. I do not celebrate my birthday as no one is aware of the exact date of my birth. While my parents could not remember the date as they were illiterate, a teacher has mentioned a date during enrolment to the school," the Chief Minister said. Leader of Opposition R. Ashok recalled that Shivashankarappa used to issue statements regarding the Veerashaiva Mahasabha in a courageous manner without being scared of the feedback. "

Relief under RTI Act for woman who was stripped of land ownership



More than a decade after her agricultural land was erroneously recorded as temple property, abruptly depriving her of ownership, a woman turned to the Right to Information (RTI) Act to uncover the truth. In 2012, S. Narayani of Chennai, was shocked to know her ancestral land measuring 75 cents at Tirupurur in Chengalpattu district had been shown in the encumbrance certificate as property belonging to the Arulmigu Kandaswamy Temple, Tirupurur.

Along with her son, S. Rajkumar, Ms. Narayani approached officials of the Revenue, Registration, and Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) departments seeking an explanation as to how the family's private land was listed as temple property. However, their repeated representations evoked no response from the officials. "We had all the land records such as parent documents, patta, chitta and other revenue certificates to establish our ownership. But the officials could not produce a single document to justify how our land was shown as gov-

ernment property. They refused to entertain our request to change the records based on facts," Mr. Rajkumar said. No response to RTI Act plea. With no relief forthcoming, Ms. Narayani filed an RTI Act application in 2022 with the District Registrar-cum-Public Information Officer (PIO), Chengalpattu, seeking details on how the ownership of her land had been altered. When the application drew no response, she moved an appeal before the Tamil Nadu Information Commission (TNIC) the following year. When the matter came up before State Chief Information Commissioner Md. Shakeel Akhter, he summoned the PIOs of the three departments and directed them to explain how private patta lands in Survey Nos. 56/1, 56/3 and 56/5 had been converted into temple property, and to produce supporting documents. Though the officials initially maintained the lands belonged to the temple, they failed to furnish any records to substantiate their claim. Wrong entries acknowledged. After several adjournments spanning over two years, the Registration Department's PIO submitted a report stating that mistakes and erroneous entries had been made in 2007. The officials responsible had since retired, the report said, and no action could be initiated against them. The PIO further informed the Commission that the petitioner could approach the appropriate authorities for registration of the property, provided there was no objection from the Revenue Department regarding the genuineness of the patta or any pending litigation. Passing orders after hearing both sides, Mr. Shakeel Akhter directed Ms. Narayani to approach the District Registrar, Chengalpattu, with all relevant documents for registration of her land, a move that would restore her ownership and rights over the property.

How illicit cultivation of cannabis has left the verdant hills of Kandhamal in the weeds



A 30-kilometre drive from the district headquarters of Kandhamal and a short 300-metre trek off a blacktop road leads to a valley where nature still breathes in its purest form. But the calm is deceptive. Without warning, a team of police personnel armed with mowers descends on the landscape. In barely half an hour, two acres of lush cannabis plantations lie flattened. Since November, Kandhamal police have razed over 4,000 acres of such cultivation. Their action, they insist, is not oppressive but a preventive effort to choke the supply chain before cannabis (also known as ganja, marijuana, and weed) grown on these remote slopes reaches the end users in distant metropolitan cities.

Between raids and field destructions, the district administration has seized 59,068 kg of cannabis, and arrested 211 people in 185 cases in 2025 alone – the highest amount of cannabis seizure recorded by any district in the country this year. "We have mobilised all our efforts to ensure that the ganja consignments do not leave the district and are destroyed or seized within our jurisdiction. The effort required is humongous, involving both physical and financial exhaustion. But we are up to it," Kandhamal Superintendent of Police (SP) Harish B.C. said. Phulbani Subdivisional Police Officer (SDPO) Subhrajit Biswal, who has been leading the teams on the ground, hopes to destroy sizeable tracts of the illicit crop before the plants begin to flower.

So, how did Kandhamal turn into a haven for illicit cultivation?

The geography and terrain of the area favour it. The remote, forested, and inaccessible areas of the district coupled with a climate well-suited for cannabis make it ideal for clandestine plantations. Ganja cultivation is also far more lucrative than regular legal crops. It sells at around ₹2,000 per kg, and prices spike to ₹3,000 during shortage or in-

Inhalable microplastics, a hidden toxin worsening Indian cities' air

On successive weekends in November, hundreds of Delhi residents gathered at India Gate holding placards saying "I miss breathing" and "right to live, not just survive". Winter's onset once again plunged the National Capital Region into a dense smog, with the air quality index refusing to exit the 'severe' (301-400) or 'very poor' (201-300) levels. Even now, regulators are scrambling to enforce graded action plans to mitigate the concentration of PM2.5 and PM10 particles in the air. Into this toxic mix, new research has added a previously overlooked problem called inhalable microplastics. According to scientists, they pose a direct and alarming risk to human health.

Atmospheric pollution has traditionally been associated with the so-called criteria pollutants; aside from the two size-wise groups of particulate matter, these include carbon monoxide, lead, sulphur oxides, nitrogen oxides, and ozone. Of late however they've been joined by respirable emerging contaminants — including inhalable microplastics — fuelled in no small part by the production of 400 million metric tonnes of plastics every year. The world also releases 52.1 million tonnes a year of plastic waste into the environment.

A first-of-its-kind comprehensive study published in Environment International in November examined inhalable microplastics in India. These are plastic particles smaller than 10 micrometres (µm). The researchers, led by Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Kolkata professor Gopala Krishna Darbha, monitored ambient concentrations at human breathing height (1.5 m) in five highly populated markets in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai. Thus the team estimated the average concentration of inhalable microplastics in all four cities to be 8.8 µg/m3. This "means the average city resident is breathing in about 132 micrograms every single day," Dr. Darbha said. "This is a very high daily dose of pollution. The most critical factor is the size of these particles. They are so tiny that they can bypass our natural defenses and penetrate deep into the lungs. This chronic exposure presents a serious, ongoing risk to public health." Researchers, however, said

the greater danger is these plastic particles serving as Trojan horses that smuggle in toxic co-pollutants, including heavy metals like lead and cadmium and hormone-disrupting chemical compounds like diethyl phthalates. The team found atmospheric lead levels to be highest in Kolkata, followed by Delhi. The team members also found, reportedly for the first time, that the inhalable microplastics plastics can also carry microbes, including harmful fungi like *Aspergillus fumigatus*, that contain antibiotic-resistance genes, meaning they could spread infections that don't respond to common antibiotics. By comparing this information with major toxicology databases, the team found that breathing these contaminated plastic particles was associated with a higher risk of cancer, hormone-related diseases, breast problems, and respiratory illnesses.

In all four cities, winter evenings had a mean inhalable microplastic concentration of 32.7 particles/m3 while non-winter evenings averaged 18.8 particles/m3, reflecting a 74% seasonal increase during winter. There was a significant inter-city variation as well: the data revealed that the residents of Delhi and Kolkata were exposed to high concentrations of inhalable microplastics — 14.18 µg/m3 and 14.23 µg/m3 respectively — whereas Mumbai (2.65 µg/m3) and Chennai (4 µg/m3) fared much better. "The major factors that are coming here are meteorological conditions," Dr. Darbha said alluding to Mumbai and Chennai being coastal cities. "Second is urban population density, and third one is waste mismanagement." Zeroing in on the particles themselves, the researchers identified 11 kinds of plastics in the air, most of them coming from places the researchers said people usually overlook. "The particles were primarily less than 100 µm in size (56.2%), followed by 100–500 µm (24.7%) and over 500 µm (19.1%). Fragments were more common than filaments," the team wrote in its paper. "Larger filament-shaped airborne microplastics typically ... originate from synthetic textiles or toy fillings. Smaller fragments, often secondary airborne microplastics, arise from packaging, tire wear, household release, cosmetics, mini- and micro-industries, construction,

Indigenous AI should be developed by Indian talent on Indian servers: PM Modi to startups



Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday said that Indian startups should focus on building indigenous artificial intelligence (AI) solutions, which should be developed by talent from the country and on Indian servers. Speaking on the occasion of National Startup Day, which also marked 10 years of the government's flagship Startup India scheme, he urged startups to double down on manufacturing, and focus on creating global standard products in the country. He also said that the country's goal should be to play a leadership role in new startup trends and technologies.

"As we are moving ahead, our ambition should not be of partnership, but we should aim for global leadership... It is time our startups focus more on manufacturing, we have to create new products, which are of the best quality, and take the lead in technology with unique ideas," the Prime Minister said in his address to the startup ecosystem. He also said that Indian startups need to focus on new domains that can secure the country's economic and strategic interests. "Many domains are arising which will play a major role in India's economic security and strategic autonomy. AI's example is in front of us. The more a country is ahead in the AI race, the higher its advantage. Our startups have to do this job for India," he said.

Speaking of the IndiaAI Mission, the PM said over 38,000 GPUs (graphics processing units) have been onboarded so far. "Our effort is that big technology is available to small startups. Indigenous AI should be developed by Indian talent on Indian servers," he said. "You are well aware what the state was 10 years ago, there was no scope for innovation in the country. We challenged that, launched Startup India, gave young people an open sky, and today the result is in front of us. In 10 years, the Startup India mission has become a revolution. India today is the world's third largest ecosystem. 10 years ago, there were less than 500 startups, today there are more than 2 lakh... Today India has 125 active unicorns," the PM said. He also highlighted that in 2025, about 44,000 new startups were registered in the country, which was the highest for a single year in the 10 years of the Startup India scheme so far. "I'm happy that Startup India gave birth to a new culture in India. Earlier, new businesses and ventures were brought about by kids of big families because they could easily get funding. The middle class and the poor saw only dreams of a job.

Reliance Industries' profit growth flat at 1.6% in Q3, revenue rises 10%

RIL said it maximised refinery utilisation to capture high margins, adding that agile crude sourcing helped sustain throughout despite procurement challenges. RIL said it maximised refinery utilisation to capture high margins, adding that agile crude sourcing helped sustain throughout despite procurement challenges.

The gains in Reliance Industries Ltd's (RIL) digital services and oil-to-chemicals (O2C) businesses led to a marginal 1.6 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 22,290 crore for the third quarter (Q3) ended December 2025 as against Rs 21,930 crore in the same period last year. However, the net profit attributable to the owners of the company rose only by 0.57 per cent to Rs 18,645 during the quarter from Rs 18,540 crore a year ago. The company's gross revenue rose by 10 per cent to Rs 293,829 crore in Q3 from Rs 267,186 crore a year ago. Oil-to-chemicals EBITDA increased by 14.6 per cent year-on-year with a sharp rise in transportation fuel cracks, higher volumes and higher sulphur realisation partially offset by a decline in downstream chemical margins and higher feedstock freight rates, it said.

On the impact of new Labour Code changes, RIL said, "Once Central/State rules are notified by the government on all aspects of the Codes, the company will evaluate impact, if any, on the measurement of employee benefits and would provide appropriate accounting treatment." It reported an employee benefit expense of Rs 7,912 crore for Q3 as against Rs 7,155 crore a year ago. The company's digital and telecom arm Jio Platforms posted an 11.2 per cent rise in net profit to Rs 7,629 crore and an increase in revenue by 12.7 per cent to Rs 43,683 crore during the quarter.

Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd, RIL's retail arm, registered a 2.7 per cent increase in net profit to Rs 3,551 crore from Rs 3,458 crore a year ago. Revenue rose by 8.1 per cent to Rs 97,605 crore. RIL's Chairman and managing director Mukesh Ambani said the robust growth in O2C business was led by significantly higher fuel margins with favourable demand-supply dynamics, along with operational flexibility. "Upstream segment EBITDA was impacted by lower volumes and prices. Reliance's robust cash-flows and balance sheet strength have been recognized by international rating agencies," he said. RIL said it maximised refinery utilisation to capture high margins, adding that agile crude

But Startup India changed that thought," he said.

PM Modi highlighted the role women have played in India's startup journey. "Women have played a big role in this change. In over 45% recognised startups, there is at least one woman director or partner. India is the second biggest ecosystem of women-led startups. This inclusive momentum is increasing India's ability further. The country is seeing its future in the startup revolution," he said. He also said that young people from India's rural parts, and smaller towns are also starting ventures. "In tier-2 and tier-3 cities, in fact even in villages, the youth are starting up. And they are the ones trying to solve ground problems," he added. He said that being a startup founder is a matter of courage and taking risks, and today, entrepreneurs are not merely accepted, but also respected in the country. "If I ask why startups matter so much, maybe you all will have different answers. Some might say India is a young nation, that it is the fastest growing major economy, has world class infrastructure, where new sectors are coming up. All these answers are right. But the one fact that touches my heart the most is the startup spirit. Our youth is not ready to spend their life in their comfort zone... they want to create a new path for themselves, to reach new heights.

All of you have shown a lot of courage to reach here, putting so much at stake. Earlier risk taking was discouraged, but today, it has become mainstream. Those who think beyond monthly salary are not just accepted, but respected. Risky ideas which were earlier considered fringe, are becoming mainstream," the PM said. Modi said that in the last 10 years, the government has created an ecosystem in the country that encourages innovation. "We started Atal Tinkering Labs in schools, hackathons so that youth can solve the country's problems, and incubated problems so ideas don't die over lack of resources. Earlier, compliances, lengthy approval cycles and fear of inspector raj were hindrances, so we created an environment of trust and transparency," said. Outlining the Jan Vishwas Act, the PM said that over 180 provisions were decriminalised. "We helped you save time so you could focus on innovation, so that your time is not wasted in litigation. For startups, we allowed self certification in many laws, mergers and exits were made easier. Startup India is not just a scheme but a rainbow vision. It connects different sectors with new opportunities," he said. "Look at defence manufacturing. Earlier, could startups even think of competing with established players? Today under iDEX, in strategic sectors we opened new procurement ways for startups. The space sector, which was closed off to the private sector, has been opened up. Nearly 200 startups in the sector are getting global approval. Similarly, the drone sector. For years, due to the lack of an enabling framework, India was left behind. We removed outdated rules, trusted innovators. Through the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), we have increased market access. Nearly 35,000 startups and small businesses are onboarded on GeM, and have received more than 5 lakh orders worth over Rs 50,000 crore," the PM said.



sourcing helped sustain throughout despite procurement challenges. "US/EU sanctions on Russian refiners further tightened fuel markets," the company said.

"Jio's digital ecosystem is deepening its roots in Indian households. Through our mobility and broadband products, we are connecting mobile phones, homes, appliances and enterprises. The synergistic value delivered by our connectivity and media platforms has meaningfully increased customer engagement," Ambani said. The business delivered a robust financial performance with 16.4 per cent growth in EBITDA," he said. The operating revenue (net of GST) growth of Jio Platforms was driven by robust subscriber addition, average revenue per user (ARPU) growth and scale-up of digital services. Robust 16.4 per cent EBITDA growth was driven by higher revenue and margin improvement, it said. "Our retail business also had an eventful quarter, strengthening its portfolio with the onboarding of fresh brands and product ranges," Ambani said. The demerger of the consumer products business came into effect this quarter. With a broad and diverse product basket ranging from classic Indian brands to new age labels, the consumer products vertical is progressing on its accelerated growth trajectory with a focused organisational structure, the chairman said. "The (retail) business expanded its store network with 431 new store openings, taking the total store count to 19,979 with area under operation at 78.1 million sq. ft. The registered customer base grew to 378 million," the company said.

Maruti Suzuki to invest Rs 35,000 crore in new Gujarat plant

Gandhinagar: Maruti Suzuki India Limited (MSIL) will invest Rs 35,000 crore to develop a new plant in Khoraj, Gujarat which will have a total annual production capacity of 10 lakh vehicles, it was announced here on Saturday. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said in a post on X that the project will generate employment opportunities for over 12,000 people and catalyse the growth of ancillary units and MSMEs in the state — creating a robust auto manufacturing cluster. Maruti Suzuki MD Shriyut Hitachi Takeuchi handed over the investment letter to Chief Minister during a ceremony held in Gandhinagar. "Glad to witness the Investment Letter Handover by Maruti Suzuki India Limited to the Government of Gujarat for setting up a mega car manufacturing facility at Khoraj, with an investment of Rs 35,000 crore," Patel said in the post.

Guided by the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his 'Make in India, Make for the World' vision, Gujarat continues to strengthen India's manufacturing ecosystem, Chief Minister added. "The presence of

Maruti Suzuki further deepens the trusted India-Japan partnership and reflects global confidence in Gujarat's policy-driven governance, world-class infrastructure and industry-friendly ecosystem. Gujarat has firmly emerged as one of India's leading automobile hubs and a preferred destination for global investors," Patel further stated. Maruti Suzuki's Gujarat plant will be set up on 1,750 acres of land provided by Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC).

Earlier this week, the country's largest car manufacturer, informed that its board has approved a Rs 4,960-crore proposal to acquire land for expansion of its manufacturing capacity in Gujarat. The land acquisition is for the expansion of production capacity at Khoraj Industrial Estate from Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation, and "the proposed capacity addition is up to 1 million (10 lakh) units", Maruti Suzuki India said in an exchange filing. The car manufacturer produced over 22.55 lakh vehicles in 2025 — its highest-ever output in a calendar year. Maruti Suzuki India has exported 3.95 lakh vehicles in 2025, i

No Nipah virus case in Tripura: Official



Tripura Health department on Friday (January 16, 2026) said that no case of Nipah virus infection has been found in the State and all precautionary measures were being taken to prevent the spread of the disease. Mission Director, National Health Mission (NHM), Saju Waheed A, said the government is serious about preventing the disease and has taken multiple measures. "Nipah virus causes serious zoonotic disease, but human infections are uncommon, and timely awareness and preventive behaviour is crucial to prevent its spread," Mr. Waheed told reporters in Agartala on Friday (January 16). Head of the department of Microbiology in Agartala Government Medical College (AGMC), Dr. Tapan Majumder said that Nipah cases in India has largely been reported from Kerala since 2018, with a recent outbreak recorded in July 2025 in Palakkad and

Malappuram districts. Two cases have also been reported from West Bengal, but Tripura remains unaffected.

"No case of infection or any kind of outbreak was reported in Tripura. The Health department is fully prepared and has taken all preventive and preparedness measures," Dr. Majumder said. Explaining the mode of transmission, Dr. Majumder stated that the virus can spread through the consumption of raw or unprocessed date palm sap, fruits contaminated by bats, close contact with infected persons, or improper infection control practices in healthcare settings. Highlighting symptoms, he said common signs include fever, headache, body ache, vomiting, weakness and breathing difficulties, while severe cases may lead to encephalitis, causing confusion, seizures or unconsciousness.

"There is no specific treatment for Nipah virus. Management is limited to intensive supportive care. Therefore, prevention is the most important step," he said. Dr. Majumder urged citizens to avoid raw date palm sap or toddy, consume only washed and properly peeled fruits, maintain hand hygiene, avoid contact with sick persons, and strictly follow government advisories. He further stated that the Health department has strengthened surveillance, hospital preparedness, isolation facilities, and infection control protocols, and healthcare personnel are being trained to detect and manage suspected cases at an early stage. "People should not panic. People should rely only on verified information and cooperate with health advisories," Dr. Majumder told reporters.

The importance of iron in nutrition

Iron is quantitatively the most important element in all living organisms because of its role in oxygen transport and storage by haemoglobin; in energy metabolism and in cellular growth and proliferation. A normal adult male has 50 mg/kg of iron, while females have 40 mg/kg; and most of this iron is in haemoglobin which is essential to carry oxygen from the lungs to the tissues. The main source of iron is in the food we eat, with males requiring 10 mg of iron daily in the diet of which only 1 mg is absorbed, while females need double the amount to compensate for menstrual blood loss. Non-vegetarian sources of iron are better absorbed, but a diet which contains millets, unpolished rice, milk or curd, pulses and leafy vegetable can provide adequate iron. However, this needs to be supplemented in pregnancy. Iron deficiency

When the body's iron is depleted, there is a fall in haemoglobin (Hb), and the red cells become smaller (MCV: normal 80-100). The following tests can help differentiate iron deficiency from thalassemia carrier state, since MCV is low in both these conditions: serum ferritin and Haemoglobin HPLC (variant). The normal serum ferritin is 24-336 nanograms per millilitre for adult males and 24-307 nanograms per millilitre for females. A fall in Hb results in weakness, shortness of breath and palpitations on walking. In children who are chronically deficient in iron, growth can be retarded.

Blood loss: In females who have heavy periods, iron can be depleted. Gastrointestinal blood loss can also cause iron deficiency and older patients must be evaluated for malignancy of the stomach or colon. Once the diagnosis has been confirmed and the cause established, the cause must then be treated, and iron replacement therapy started. Iron can be supplemented orally or by intravenous injection. Simple inexpensive iron preparations are adequate: adult patients are started on one tablet of oral iron (60mg elemental iron) taken after meals and this is increased to two after a week and then three after another week. This low dose start and ramp up allows the patient to tolerate the iron, and is also beneficial for iron absorption. Iron replacement should continue for at least three months to build up iron stores in the body. Some patients develop nausea, vomiting or constipation with oral iron and for these patients, the iron is given intravenously. Patients usually start feeling better and the Hb begins to rise one month after starting



treatment. A public health problem In India, iron deficiency was recognised as a public health problem in children and in women who are pregnant or lactating. Therefore, the government of India started the National Nutritional Evaluation Programme (NNAEP) in which iron supplements were provided to children and pregnant and lactating women. This programme was funded by UNICEF but an evaluation of this programme by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) showed poor compliance by the beneficiaries. Iron deficiency in the population is a serious problem that can affect the growth and development of children and people's general health, with studies showing a significant reduction of the work output in populations that are iron deficient. In the West, most infant formulas and breakfast cereals are supplemented with iron.

Iron overload The body does not have a mechanism to excrete increased iron: the maximum daily excretion of iron is only one mg. One blood transfusion loads the patient with about 200 mg of iron, so children with thalassemia who need regular blood transfusions require treatment to remove the excess iron which can damage the liver, heart and the endocrine system. This is done with medicines called chelators, which can be given subcutaneously with a small pump (desferal) or orally, deferoxamine. The body's iron stores are monitored by checking serum ferritin every six months and with a T2* MRI once a year. In rare patients, there is a genetic condition which results in increased body iron stores: this is known as haemochromatosis. This article was first published in The Hindu's e-book Care and Cure

All you need to know about: Hepatitis A

With repeated outbreaks of Hepatitis A cases in Kerala -- as of December 30, 2025, the State reported a total of 31,536 confirmed and probable cases of Hepatitis A and 82 deaths, the highest numbers to date -- this may be a good time to learn a little more about the condition.

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis A virus (HAV). It is a contagious infection, and spreads through contaminated food and water, and through close personal contact with an infected person. In general, it is not a serious illness, and most people recover without specific treatment, but with supportive care. There is a vaccine available against Hepatitis A. Understanding viral hepatitis Viral hepatitis refers to hepatitis, or inflammation of the liver, caused by viruses. There are five different viruses causing five separate diseases of the liver. They are: Hepatitis A, B, C, D and E. While Hepatitis B and C can cause chronic liver disease, Hepatitis A, in general, does not, but its symptoms can range from mild to severe.

According to the World Health Organization, Hepatitis A occurs sporadically and in epidemics worldwide, with a tendency for cyclic recurrences. Epidemics related to contaminated food or water can erupt explosively. They can also be prolonged, affecting communities for months through person-to-person transmission. Hepatitis A viruses persist in the environment and can withstand food production processes routinely used to inactivate or control bacterial pathogens, it states.

How does it spread?

Hepatitis A is highly contagious. It is transmitted primarily through the faecal-oral route. The virus lives in the faeces and blood of people who have the infection. When an uninfected person consumes food or water that has been contaminated with the faeces of an infected person (through dirty hands when preparing food for instance), or ingests water/food (raw produce) that is contaminated by sewage (due to poor sewage systems) or has close, personal contact with an infected person, the virus can be transmitted. In Kerala, gaps in sanitation and poor environmental health are believed to be major drivers behind the outbreaks. Experts have pointed to the non-availability of safe drinking water, water lines running close to sewage lines, the widespread use of commercially-bought ice and contamination through cut fruit as some of the methods of transmission.

Signs and symptoms Hepatitis A has an incubation period of about two to six weeks, which means that signs and symptoms may develop a few weeks after the infection is contracted. Not everyone with Hepatitis A will have



symptoms. Those who do, may experience: fever, tiredness, joint pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain on the upper right side, itchiness, dark urine, clay-coloured stools, loss of appetite and yellowing of the eyes and skin (jaundice). Adults are more likely to show symptoms than children.

Treatment and prognosis

A blood test is usually taken to diagnose Hepatitis A. There is no specific treatment for it. Rest, eating a nutritious diet, staying hydrated and supportive care, can all help. Avoiding alcohol and making sure medication is only taken on the advice of a medical professional (as medications can affect the liver) are also important. Recovery can be slow, lasting for weeks or months; however, most people recover completely, with the liver healing within six months, with no lasting damage. In rare cases however, Hepatitis A can cause fulminant hepatitis (acute liver failure), which can be fatal. This is more likely to occur in people with weakened immune systems. Vaccination There are vaccines available for Hepatitis A that offer long-lasting protection. Both live-attenuated and inactivated vaccines are available. The vaccine is recommended for children above the age of one: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S., recommended it for all children aged 12 to 23 months and all children and adolescents between ages 2-18 years who have not been vaccinated and all people, including pregnant women, with increased risk factors for hepatitis A. However, the United States, on January 5, 2025 ended this longstanding guidance, and Hepatitis A vaccine recommendation has now been removed. The WHO recommends that vaccination against Hepatitis A virus be introduced into national immunisation schedules for individuals aged ≥12 months, if indicated on the basis of: i) an increasing trend over time of acute hepatitis A disease, including severe disease, among older children,

‘These are T20 babies... there’s no fear’: CSK’s Stephen Fleming on uncapped buys Prashant Veer and Kartik Sharma



GNS News Agency, Jan 21

With Chennai Super Kings breaking the bank for uncapped Indian players Prashant Veer and Kartik Sharma in the IPL mini-auction spending a record sum of Rs 14.20 crore each on the two youngsters, it also meant that the duo would be the most expensive Indian uncapped players in the IPL auction history till present. While Veer comes from Uttar Pradesh, Sharma hails from Rajasthan and the duo joined the likes of youngsters Ayush Mhatre and Sameer Rizvi in the Chennai Super Kings squad and Chennai Super Kings coach Stephen Fleming has termed the duo as ‘T20 babies’ and has shared how the youngsters have grown up the format in present times. “These are T20 babies. They’ve grown up with the format. They just express their skills. They’re no fear. Sometimes experienced players get caught trying to work out where the game’s going. So there’s real appeal, especially when the game is being played faster and faster. I think it’s a byproduct of T20 being around for some time now, and we’re all learning, being involved with it, and the faster it gets, these young players seem to play better.” Fleming said post the IPL mini-auction in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday.

Prior to Tuesday, Avesh Khan held the record for the

most expensive Indian uncapped player in an IPL auction. Khan was bought by Lucknow Super Giants for a sum of Rs 10 crore in the IPL 2022 auction. Earlier in the 2021 IPL auction, all-rounder Krishnappa Gowtham had become the most expensive Indian uncapped player to be sold in IPL auction with Chennai Super Kings spending Rs 9.25 crore for the all-rounder. Sharing about the change in CSK strategy, where they now focussing on an increased number of younger players in the team, Fleming spoke about how the team might have been a little slow to evolve with the idea and how the team management thought about the need to shift. “As the game has evolved, we might have been a little bit slow to evolve with it. Sometimes you can hang on to theories and philosophies because of past success, but we identified that we needed to shift, and partly the work that we did last season, halfway through, has enabled us to continue that work done,” Fleming added. Veer, a left-arm spinner and middle-order batsman, has scored 112 runs at a strike rate of 167.16 and has claimed 12 wickets in 12 T20s in Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. In the UP T20 League, Veer amassed 320 runs apart from eight wickets in 10 matches. Son of ‘Shiksha Mitra’ (Primary Teacher) who earned around Rs 12,000 per month, Veer fetched a price of Rs 14.20 crore in the IPL mini auction, an amount 47.3 times his base price of Rs 30 lakh. “I was just hoping that someone would raise their paddle, it took me some time to process that I have gone to CSK for 14 crores. Sapna lag raha tha sab, I told Rinku (Singh) bhai ke pinch karo ek baar. My family has not seen so much money in their life, this will change things for good. What I will do with the money, yeh sochnay ka kaam gharwalon ka hai, mera nahi,” Veer told The Indian Express on Tuesday. 19-year-old Kartik Sharma, a wicket-keeper batsman from Rajasthan, has scored 334 runs in 12 T20s at a strike rate of 164 hitting 28 sixes. Like Veer, Sharma too fetched the price of Rs 14.20 crore, an amount 47.3 times his base price of Rs 30 lakh.

Shreyas Iyer on PBKS getting Cooper Connolly: ‘He wasn’t in our mind at start, but we realised he fit the position perfectly’

GNS News Agency, Jan 21

Last season’s IPL finalists Punjab Kings (PBKS) had a quiet IPL 2026 auction on Tuesday in Abu Dhabi, making only four acquisitions. Having retained the core of the side that reached the IPL final last season, Punjab Kings were not in the auction for too many players to complete their 25-player squad for the upcoming season.

The IPL auction saw PBKS secure two uncapped and two capped players, with Australian pacer Ben Dwarshuis emerging as the team’s most expensive purchase this auction. The Kings opened their account with Cooper Connolly, a batting all-rounder from Australia, who was acquired for Rs 3 crore. Connolly is a rising star capable of providing flexibility in the middle order, besides being a reliable slow left-arm spin option. After the auction, Punjab captain Shreyas Iyer, who has faced Connolly in Australia, revealed that the players was not on their radar initially. “Honestly, he wasn’t there in our mind at the start but as we brainstormed and narrowed down our options, we realized he fit the position perfectly,” Iyer said. “He has a great temperament and the ability to finish games. Those characteristics matter a lot in IPL. However, we didn’t think we would get him for 3, we actually predicted his price would be much higher.” The team’s highest bid of the auction followed shortly after, as Ben Dwarshuis was signed for Rs 4.40 crore. The left-arm



pacer and handy lower-order striker adds significant depth to the bowling attack while providing a lethal power-hitting option at the death. Pravin Dubey returned to the Kings’ den after being re-acquired at his base price of INR 30 lakh. Dubey provides essential Indian spin backup to complement the existing duo of Yuzvendra Chahal and Harpreet Brar. Further strengthening the domestic core, promising young talent Vishal Nishad joins the PBKS squad, also signed at his base price of Rs 30 lakh. The Kings entered the auction with a purse of Rs 11.5 crore, successfully exhausting Rs 8 crore from the same, having acquired two overseas and two Indian players.

Robin Uthappa on Dhoni at CSK: ‘Genuinely feels like right time for him to step away’

GNS News Agency, Jan 21

Former India cricketer Robin Uthappa has said that given the squad Chennai Super Kings’ (CSK) have on their hands after the IPL 2026 auction, this feels “like the right time” for franchise cornerstone Mahendra Singh Dhoni to step away from the side. “I don’t think his (Dhoni’s) role changes dramatically because this transition has been ongoing for a while. Ever since the captaincy returned to him from Ravindra Jadeja, you could see that he’s been gradually shifting responsibility year after year. Each season, more responsibility has moved towards Ruturaj Gaikwad. When you look at this squad now, it genuinely feels like the right time for Dhoni to step away, because many of these players were literally kids when he first started playing the IPL. From here, CSK will need to identify a core from within this group and build forward,” Uthappa said on JioHotstar’s TATA IPL Auction Review show. CSK’s Mahendra Singh Dhoni speaks to his Chennai Super Kings teammates in a huddle.

In the IPL 2026 mini-auction, five-time champions Chennai picked nine players. The most eye-catching of the nine picks were all-rounder Prashant Veer and wicketkeeper-batter Kartik Sharma. Both players started the auction with a base price of Rs 30 lakhs but were bought by CSK for Rs 14.2 crore in the mini-auction. Besides these two, CSK also picked Sarfaraz Khan, Rahul Chahar, Matt



Henry, Akeal Hosein, Matthew Short, Zak Foulkes and Aman Khan in the IPL 2026 auctions.

For Chennai, which has traditionally been a franchise that relies on experience and proven names, this is a signal of a paradigm shift, the team is now investing in uncapped Indian players, headlined by 19-year-old Kartik and 20-year-old Prashant. But even before the auction, CSK have made decisive moves about its leadership group within the side. Ahead of the IPL mini-auction, CSK had opted to trade Ravindra Jadeja, a man it had once entrusted captaincy on, along with Sam Curran to Rajasthan Royals in exchange for Sanju Samson, who was the skipper of RR for many seasons.

Tilak Varma jumps to fourth in ICC T20I rankings as Varun Chakravarthy stays on top

Hyderabad: India’s hard-hitting batter Tilak Varma has surged up two places to fourth in the ICC Men’s T-20I Player Rankings even as spinner Varun Chakravarthy has consolidated his position at the top of the bowling rankings.

Varma followed up his score of 26 in the opening match against South Africa in Cuttack with 62 in New Chandigarh and 26 net out in Dharamsala this past week to overtake Pakistan’s Sahibzada Farhan and England’s Jos Buttler in the list led by India’s Abhishek Sharma. Varma’s best ranking is the second position that he reached in January this year. South Africa captain Aiden Markram’s knock of 61 in a score of only 117 in the third match has taken him eight places up to 29th while Quinton de Kock’s match-winning 90 in the second T20I has lifted him 14 places to 53rd position.

The T20I bowling rankings see Chakravarthy, who

bagged two wickets each in the two T20Is played this past week, adding 36 rating points to his tally, which has gone up to a career-best 818 points. Seamers from both sides have moved up the charts. India’s left-arm Arshdeep Singh, who was named Player of the Match for his haul of two for 13 in Dharamsala, is up four places to 16th while South Africa pacers Marco Jansen (up 14 places to 25th) and Lungi Ngidi (up 11 places to 44th) have also progressed. In the ICC Men’s Test Player Rankings, Devon Conway’s scores of 60 and 28 in Wellington helped his team to a nine-wicket win in the second match of their ICC World Test Championship series against the West Indies and lifted him seven places to 34th position among batters. Mitchell Hay made a fine debut, top-scoring with 61 as he started his Test career in joint-78th position while Jacob Duffy took five second-innings wickets for just 38 runs to move up 15 places to a career-best 48th position among bowlers.

Rifle-carrying police, flag at half-mast: Bondi terror tragedy leaves a shadow on Ashes Test cricket at Adelaide



GNS News Agency, Jan 21

The cricket fans at Adelaide Oval on the opening day of the third Test between Australia and England witnessed certain unseen sights: like a huge blanket of rifle-carrying extra police protection with powers to do random searches. Sunday’s terrorist attack at Sydney’s Bondi beach, which reportedly killed 15 civilians and a child. Flags at the stadium flew at half-mast and security was ramped up, with armed police patrolling inside and outside the arena where more than 50,000 fans turned up to watch the Test. As the first day of the Test began, SA Police Commissioner Grant Stevens said every bag would be searched as they entered the Oval each day.

“The Test match in Adelaide is the first major event in Australia since the tragic incident at Bondi,” Commissioner Stevens said. “So we are exercising that level of vigilance as a reassurance piece and also to make sure that we’re taking advantage of all the authorities available to police to provide a safe and secure environment.” A moment’s silence at Adelaide Oval was held prior to the start of play to pay respect to the victims of the Bondi tragedy. Singer-songwriter John Williamson led a moving rendition of his popular “True Blue”, which portrays Australians from all

backgrounds sharing the same hopes and aspirations. Marnus Labuschagne was seen with his eyes closed, while Nathan Lyon looked on the brink of tearing up. The police commissioner stressed there was no specific intelligence that suggested any higher level of threat for the South Australian community but just that they wanted to be extra careful. “We are doing this as a measure to reassure the community of South Australia that they are safe when attending the Test,” he said. “It will be obvious to people attending that there are extra police in and around the venue, particularly around on the outside of the perimeter. You will see our security response section personnel in and about the venue every single day of the Test, and they will be carrying rifles as they are trained and authorised to do so.” Cricket Australia’s chief executive officer Todd Greenberg said in a statement that it was a tragic time for all Australians. “While sport can seem insignificant at times like this, we have the unusual opportunity to bring millions of people together to pay tribute, to console and to contemplate what we want our nation to be,” Greenberg said. Former England captain and a commentator now Michael Vaughan was at the Bondi beach when the episode happened. “Yesterday was a surreal day that I don’t really want to go through again. I’m deeply saddened by everything that has gone on. To be 300 yards away, in a pub locked away, scary times.” I look at Bondi and Sydney in particular – it’s like my second home. Australia is an amazing country, and it’s probably one of the countries in the whole world where I always say it’s the safest. It’s the safest place,” Vaughan told the BBC. The cricket boards of England and Australia released a joint statement, paying their tributes to those who lost their lives in the attacks on Sunday. Everybody at Cricket Australia and the England & Wales Cricket Board is horrified by the tragic events at Bondi Beach yesterday evening. All of our thoughts are with the victims, their friends and families, the Jewish community and the people of Australia at this deeply distressing time. Our condolences go out to all those affected. We stand with you,” the statement said.

‘Dizzy, nausea’: Why Steve Smith made a shock withdrawal on morning of Adelaide Test against England

GNS News Agency, Jan 21

Steve Smith withdrew from the third Test of the Ashes series against England on the morning of the opening day’s play. Cricket Australia has confirmed Smith had been suffering from “nausea and dizziness” in the lead-up to his shock withdrawal from the Adelaide Test. The late withdrawal allowed Usman Khawaja a rare opportunity to play in the series, which he has grabbed with both hands, leading Australia on a tricky day’s play thus far. Khawaja had started slowly and had reached 5 from 27 balls when Harry Brook dropped a regulation catch at second slip. From that moment on, Khawaja changed his intent, and started to hit more shots.

Smith had even done his warm-ups at the Adelaide Oval, but had to leave the stadium after a chat with the coach Andrew McDonald. Smith had led Australia in the first two Tests, but luckily, for them, Pat Cummins had come back for this game to take over the leadership role. Smith has been feeling unwell in the last few days. “Over the past few days he has been feeling unwell, with symptoms including nausea and dizziness,” a Cricket Australia statement said. “He was assessed and monitored closely and was close to being available to play. However, given the persistence of symptoms, a decision was made not to proceed. He is being treated for a potential vestibular issue. This is something Steve has experienced intermittently in the past and is being managed accordingly. He is expected to be available for the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne.” Cummins shared his relief that Usman Khawaja was ready to take over at such a short notice. “Steve is feeling a little bit unwell the



last couple of days,” captain Pat Cummins said. He came and gave it a crack this morning but didn’t think he was going to get up for this one so he’s headed off home. But we’re pretty lucky we have got someone like Usman who can step right in. “Smith’s loss is a huge blow as Stuart Broad had spoken him as the thorn in England’s flesh. “To win the series, we have to keep him (Smith’s average) to under 50, don’t we?” Broad said on the ‘For the Love of Cricket’ podcast, which he co-hosts alongside Jos Buttler. “He’s gonna score a hundred, it’s what he does. (If) he averages 40, that’s at least 15 under his career average, so you’re doing brilliantly. I think you have to get him early,” he added. “If England aren’t celebrating in his first 40 runs, it’s going to be a long series. Obviously his technique has changed throughout, but I still can’t sit here and go ‘well this is how you get him out’. That’s an unbelievable strength of his. He’s incredibly difficult to bowl at. Sometimes you don’t feel like you’ve bowled a bad ball and it still goes for four,” he added.

Why being at home feels like a vacation to D Gukesh, R Praggnanandhaa and Arjun Erigaisi

In a recent clip uploaded on its social media handles, FIDE asked some of the top chess players in the world a simple question: if they could pick one vacation spot for the rest of their lives, what would it be? Amidst the understandable replies like Greece, Bali, Havana, Switzerland, San Sebastian, Maldives and the Caribbean islands, the response from a trio of top Indian stars – D Gukesh, R Praggnanandhaa and Vaishali Rameshbabu – stands out. It’s not a lack of imagination on the part of the Indians, nor are they reluctant travellers. On the contrary, so cramped are the jet-setting lives of India’s top chess players that being at home for them has begun to feel like a luxury. “Nowadays going home feels like a vacation,” world champion Gukesh told FIDE in the interview with a smile. In just a three-month phase between August to October this year, Gukesh has flown from Spain (Granada Chess Open) to Poland (for an exhibition event against Jan Krystof Duda in Katowice) to the USA (for St Louis Rapid and Blitz in Missouri) and then the Sinquefeld Cup) to Uzbekistan (for FIDE Grand Swiss), to USA again (for Checkmate: USA vs India exhibition event in Arlington, Texas) to Greece (for the European Club Cup in Rhodes) to the US (for Clutch Chess: Champions Showdown event in St Louis) before playing in the FIDE World Cup in Goa. After a short break, he’s in Mumbai playing at the Global Chess League (GCL) before he flies off to Qatar for the World Rapid and Blitz Championship, then returning to India to play at Kolkata’s Tata Steel Chess India Rapid and Blitz, where each day players play multiple games just like in every other rapid and blitz tournament. (The Global Chess League, in contrast, is just one game a day, occasionally two, which gives players plenty of breathing space.) The year has also seen Gukesh make trips to the Netherlands for the Tata Steel Masters, Germany and France for Freestyle events, Romania for the Superbet Chess Classic, Norway for Norway Chess, and Croatia for the SuperUnited Rapid and Blitz. India’s other top players like Praggnanandhaa and Arjun Erigaisi are also racking up air miles as rapidly as Gukesh due to packed tournament calendars. Pragg, for example, played in events at a break-neck pace through the year as he was chasing a Candidates spot through the FIDE Circuit route. That took him to Wijk aan Zee, Prague, Paris, Warsaw, Bucharest, Jermuk (Armenia), Tashkent, Zagreb, Las Vegas, Saint Louis, Samarkand (Uzbekistan), Sao Paulo and London. And then there were the World Cup and GCL for which he came to India. This calendar means that between late August and early October, the youngster played on three separate

continents. Right after his exit from the World Cup last month, he was on a flight to play in the London Classic before coming to Mumbai and will play in the World Rapid and Blitz, Tata Steel Kolkata and Tata Steel Wijk aan Zee before competing at the Candidates tournament in Cyprus in March-April. “I’ve hardly been home this year. At the most, I get two weeks at home. To me, that’s not really a break, because by the time you feel relaxed, another tournament is there and you have to start playing. I would like a much longer break,” Pragg says. “Even after winning the UzChess Cup in Tashkent (on June 28), I had to leave immediately. I’d played for seven hours on the final day, because it was a morning round. I played a classical game, then had to fight it out in the tie-breaks, then there was a closing ceremony. By the time I got to the room, I was dead. But I still had to pack immediately to fly out. But all this is part of what we do,” he shrugs. His good friend Erigaisi would agree. After his defeat to Wei Yi in the quarters of the FIDE World Cup, he gave himself a break of 10 days at home before flying off to Jerusalem for a tournament and then to South Africa for the Freestyle Chess season finale. That done, he’s flown to Mumbai to play in the GCL. Afterwards, just like Gukesh, Arjun and Pragg, he will be on a flight to Qatar for the World Rapid and Blitz, then off to Kolkata for the Tata Steel Chess tournament. “After the Jerusalem tournament ended, I had to fly the same night because there were some Freestyle Chess activities from the next day itself in South Africa,” Erigaisi says, describing a 13-hour journey, involving a flight from Tel Aviv to Addis Ababa and from there to South Africa. After the Freestyle event, Erigaisi was on a flight to Mumbai the next day itself to play in the GCL. “But that flight had many chess players,” he smiles. Ask him how many days on average he plays in tournaments, and Erigaisi estimates just over half of the year. And that, he points out, is a lower workload from the phase between June 2021 and June 2022 when he was playing in tournaments for about 200 days. Ask him if there are ideas like ‘workload management’ in chess, just like in other sports, and he shrugs: “At least now that I’m still young, fatigue hasn’t happened. It’s also why we all realise that fitness is one of the important goals for us. It’s one of the reasons why Magnus Carlsen is still so good at 35 and Vishy sir is doing so well at 56.” Gukesh too shrugs off any talk of mental fatigue. When asked by FIDE at the World Cup why he had chosen to play in an exhibition event in the USA, that too in rapid and blitz, just before he had to play in a classical World Cup on the other side of the world, with issues like jet lag to contend with, he replied: “I

Saroj Khan refused to choreograph Madhuri Dixit's 'Dhak Dhak', accepted on one condition: 'No one will question me'



The film industry often witnesses a duo of artists come together and make magic every single time they meet. That relationship can be between a director and actor, a composer and a singer, or even a choreographer and actor. One of the best examples of the latter is the relationship between actor Madhuri Dixit and late choreographer Saroj Khan. In a recent interview, Madhuri recalled working with the stalwart and shared some stories from their time together. The actor appeared on Radio Nasha's YouTube channel and was asked about some of the iconic songs from her career. Naturally the mention of Saroj ji kept coming, as Madhuri first told a story from the sets of Subhash Ghai's Ram Lakhan. She revealed that the famous song 'O Ram Ji' was completely different when picturised for the first time. Dixit said that there was a communication gap between Ghar and Saroj, but nothing too difficult for the latter to fix.

Recalling the story, Madhuri said, "I will in fact tell you a very funny story from the shooting of 'O Ram Ji'. So obviously Javed Akhtar had written the words for it, and Bappi Lahiri had composed it, but no one briefed Saroj ji about the song. She was made to listen to the song and was asked for the steps. Now my character was very innocent, and I was supposed to be complaining to the elder brother (Jackie Shroff) about his younger one (Anil Kapoor), but she made it into a total Bollywood number." She added, "Subash ji stopped her mid-performance and said, 'Esa character nahi hai ladki ka' (This is not how the girl is like). But the genius of Saroj ji is that within minutes she had come up with a new choreography, and then you saw what she did." The actor talked about the shooting of one of her most iconic songs, 'Ek Do Teen', from the N Chandra film Tezaab. Madhuri revealed that she initially didn't understand the meaning or reasoning behind the song and said, "The first

time I heard 'Ek Do Teen', I didn't understand it. I thought they didn't have enough words, and that is why they have put numbers. But then I realised the meaning behind the song." She continued and said that Saroj ji wanted her to work extra hard in order to prepare for a proper Bollywood number. "Right as the shooting was about to start, Saroj ji told me, 'You have only done classical or semi-classical numbers. You haven't done something like this, so you need to rehearse.' I agreed, and for 13 days straight I rehearsed with her. At one point she got annoyed with me and said, 'Tum ghar jao abhi' (You go home). But I stood there and said that I wasn't going before finishing my rehearsal." Madhuri added, "Because I was used to dancing on stage, performing for a camera was difficult. But that song helped me learn so much about this art and how to dance for the camera." Madhuri then talked about the Bappi Lahiri song Tamma Tamma from the film Thanedar, directed by Raj N Sippy. She recalled the difficult steps for the song and said, "Shooting Tamma Tamma was incredibly tough. We had 4 people doing the same steps: me, Sanju, and two backup dancers. Now if anything went wrong, they had to reshoot it from the beginning. We had to do 40 retakes because Saroj ji refused to cut. She wanted it all in one shot. We finally got the shot, and we were relieved, but we were so tired. Our knees were busted up by the end." "Dhak Dhak" was a last-minute addition to Beta. The Indra Kumar directorial, Beta, had the song 'Dhak Dhak' in it, performed by Udit Narayan and Anuradha Paudwal. The song is one of the most beloved from Madhuri's discography, and yet it almost didn't happen. Madhuri revealed that the song was a last-minute addition to the film and that Saroj ji worked everyone to the bone in order to shoot the song in the limited time. "Now, like many other songs in the past, 'Dhak Dhak' also came to us in the last moment. Indu Ji (Indra Kumar) was adamant that he had to have this song for the film. I told him that I had to go for an outdoor shoot in three days, and it wasn't possible. But he wouldn't budge, and I finally decided to pull double shifts in order to shoot the sequence," said Madhuri. She added, "When Indu ji approached Saroj ji for the song, she told him, 'I will give you the song in three days, but if I say that a shot is right, no one will argue with me.' Everyone agreed, and that is exactly what happened. The moment Saroj Ji would be happy with a scene, we moved to the next sequence. People look at the song now and wonder how carefully it must have been shot; actually, it was shot very quickly without any breaks." Saroj Khan is still considered by all to be one of the greatest Indian choreographers of all time. She passed away in 2020, at the age of 71.

Kapil Sharma takes a dig at how Priyanka Chopra met husband Nick Jonas on Twitter: 'Hum par case ho gaye'

Kapil Sharma is all set to return with season four of The Great Indian Kapil Show on Netflix, and the makers have raised excitement by unveiling a promo featuring the season's first guest—global star Priyanka Chopra Jonas. While previous seasons opened with Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt and Salman Khan, the upcoming season kicks off on a grand note with Priyanka. In The Great Indian Kapil Show promo, an ever-enthusiastic Kapil is seen proudly announcing the new season. Promising bigger laughs, he says, "The fun will be four times bigger, the mischief four times wilder, and the madness four times crazier." He then adds with flair, "Our guest today is known across all four corners of the globe!"

As Kapil welcomes Priyanka Chopra Jonas onto the lavishly decorated stage amid thunderous applause, the banter begins almost immediately. Noticing Kapil's transformed physique, a surprised Priyanka asks, "How did you get so slim?" A proud Kapil replies in English, "Actually, I was acting with four heroines," leaving Priyanka even more amused. "Look at him, jabbering away in English," she quips. Kapil, who often jokes about his discomfort with the language, confidently responds this time, "Now, you can speak to me in English." However, as Priyanka starts using a more sophisticated vocabulary, a nervous Kapil quickly jokes, "This kind of English hasn't come to India yet." Priyanka then poses a playful question: "If you wake up one morning as Priyanka Chopra, what will you do?" "Never missing a chance to flirt, Kapil replies, "I'll immediately call Kapil Sharma and tell him, 'The past is behind us, but you are the true love of my life.'" The promo also features Kiku Sharda and Krushna Abhishek in their Baahubali avatars, sending Priyanka into fits of laughter. "I had forgotten how much they make you laugh on this show," she says. Kapil then asks her how she met Nick Jonas,



joking, "Did you send letters through pigeons?" Priyanka replies with a smile, "Not a pigeon, but the bird on Twitter's logo." A shocked Kapil instantly quips, "I'm on Twitter too—hum par case ho gaye," followed by, "Sajan pardes ho gaye," leaving the audience in splits. The promo also shows Priyanka participating in fun segments with Sunil Grover, who cracks a cheeky line: "Kitne bhi laptop aa jaayein Priyanka ji, par jo baat PC mein hai, woh kisi mein nahi." Priyanka, who was last in India for an event for her film with SS Rajamouli Varanasi, reportedly flew to Mumbai for just 12 hours to shoot for the show. She even shared a reel of her preparations and behind-the-scenes moments from the set. Her appearance was officially confirmed last week when Navjot Singh Sidhu shared BTS pictures from the shoot, further fuelling fans' excitement for the new season.

Madhuri Dixit is glad she didn't act much with 'notoriously late' Govinda: 'Anil Kapoor, Jackie Shroff were always on time'



"Thank god I worked with people who were always on time. They were Anil Kapoor and Jackie Shroff. With me, it never happened," said Madhuri in an interview with Mid-Day, in response to a question on how it was working with stars like Govinda,

Madhuri Dixit had two popular pairings with male actors in the 1990s — Anil Kapoor and Jackie Shroff, who were also her co-stars in Subhash Ghai's Ram Lakhan and

Vidhu Vinod Chopra's Parinda in 1989. Along with their onscreen chemistry, Madhuri also attributes the popularity of their pairings to their punctuality.

"Thank god I worked with people who were always on time. They were Anil Kapoor and Jackie Shroff. With me, it never happened," said Madhuri in an interview with Mid-Day, in response to a question on how it was working with stars like Govinda, who showed up "notoriously late" on set. Madhuri starred opposite Anil in her breakthrough film, N Chandra's Tezaab (1988), along with Rakesh Roshan's Kishen Kanhaiya (1990) and Khel (1992), Indra Kumar's Beta (1992) and Total Dhamaal (2021), and Rajkumar Santoshi's Pukar (2000). Similarly, she starred alongside Jackie in Rajiv Rai's Tridev (1989), Subhash Ghai's Khal Nayak (1993), and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Devdas (2002) among others. With Govinda, Madhuri had done only a handful of films — Paap Ka Ant (1989), Izzatdaar (1990), and Mukul Anand's Maha-Sangram (1990). Their most popular turn, however, was the song "Makhna" in David Dhawan's 1998 hit buddy comedy Bade Miyan Chote Miyan, in which they shook a leg alongside Amitabh Bachchan. Recently, in a conversation with Mukesh Khanna on the latter's YouTube channel Bishm International, Govinda defended the perception that he was always late on set. "I never used to arrive on time on set. I was a follower of Dilip Kumar sahab. I didn't believe in late and all. I used to first set my rhythms right. Jab tak mere sur taal nahi set ho jaaye, main set pe nahi pahuchta tha (Till the time my rhythms wouldn't be set, I would not go to the set)," said Govinda.

Mumbai 26/11 survivor recalls chilling night after watching Dhurandhar, Aditya Dhar says: 'This story had to be told'



There is a moment in Aditya Dhar's Dhurandhar that arrives midway through the film's second half and leaves the audience shaken. As the film depicts the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, Aditya Dhar pauses the narrative for nearly a minute. The screen turns red, and real transcripts of conversations between the attackers and their handlers in the ISI play out. It is a chilling interruption, one that has left a deep psychological impact on viewers. Recently, a survivor of the 26/11 attacks took to X to recall her experience and thank the filmmaker for bringing that moment to the screen. She wrote, "I was in the Taj Hotel on the night of 26/11 with my husband @Ajay_Bagga. We were fortunate to survive the heinous terrorist attack that night and were rescued alive after 14 hours." Reflecting on the film, she added, "The most bone-chilling scene in #Dhurandhar for me was the red screen where the actual voice recordings of the 26/11 terrorists and their handlers were played. To hear what the handlers were instructing the terrorists to do, how brutal, inhuman and disgusting it was — just sent shivers through my body." In her post, she also referred to the scene that immediately follows, where the film shifts to Pakistan and

shows top ISI officials watching the attacks unfold live and celebrating. "To see the scene recreated from the other side—the handlers celebrating at every bomb going off & every person killed — if that doesn't fill us with rage and renewed commitment to national security, what else will?" she wrote. She concluded by thanking both Ranveer Singh and Aditya Dhar for their work, emphasising the emotional weight the film carried for her even years later. "17 years have passed but the memory of what happened and what could have happened to us just shook me to the core. Gut wrenching and painful. Huge credit to Dhurandhar and its makers @AdityaDharFilms for ensuring that an entire new generation understands what truly happened on 26/11 in just those 2–3 minutes. That look of @RanveerOfficial will haunt an entire generation." Aditya Dhar was quick to respond, expressing his gratitude and reiterating the intent behind the film. He wrote, "Your words remind us why this story had to be told. That moment was shaped to reflect the brutal truth. If it leaves a mark, it is to ensure we remember, stand united, and never allow such darkness to return. Thank you for surviving, for speaking, and for strengthening our collective resolve." Your words remind us why this story had to be told. That moment was shaped to reflect the brutal truth. If it leaves a mark, it is to ensure we remember, stand united, and never allow such darkness to return. Thank you for surviving, for speaking, and for strengthening our... Meanwhile, Dhurandhar continues its strong run at the box office and has drawn widespread praise from audiences and members of the film industry alike. Several celebrities, including Vicky Kaushal, Allu Arjun, Shradha Kapoor, and Karan Johar, have publicly lauded the film. Hrithik Roshan also shared his thoughts, appreciating the film while acknowledging his ideological differences with it. Writing on his Instagram story, he said, "I may disagree with the politics of it, and argue about the responsibilities us filmmakers should bear as citizens of the world. Nevertheless, can't ignore how loved and learnt from this one as a student of cinema. Amazing."

Jim Sarbh at SCREEN Film Club: 'Didn't want Sabar Bonda to end in a tragedy, halfway through the film...'

Rohan Parashuram Kanawade's critically acclaimed Marathi film Sabar Bonda (Cactus Pears) was screened as part of the SCREEN Film Club at the National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA) in Mumbai on Tuesday. It was the first Marathi film to be screened at the Sundance Film Festival earlier this year, and even won the Grand Jury Prize Dramatic. It subsequently released in Indian cinemas in August, backed by Rana Daggubati's Spirit Media. After the screening, Shubra Gupta, columnist film critic, moderated a chat with the film's team before opening it up to more queries from the audience. Among the team members present were co-producer Neeraj Churi, actors Bhushaan Manoj and Jayshri Jagtap, and actor Jim Sarbh, who's attached to the film as an Executive Producer.

"I remember halfway through the film, I had this pit in my stomach. Please do not let this end in tragedy because 90% of the films you see about LGBTQ stories, they end in horrible tragedy," said Sarbh after the screening. "And actually, what that does is it creates an impression that that's the reality. That's what is true. Well, it's not what is true. There are myriad stories, and many of them end very happily and successfully. So, I loved this film was such a tender approach to what most often ends in tragedy," he added. Sarbh remarked that he really enjoyed the fact that Sabar Bonda wasn't condescending. "It wasn't like the city boy teaches the village boy about this urban concept. It's a biological fact. It exists all over. And Suraj, in many, many ways, leads Anand very simply and lovingly," he said. The matter-of-factness of homosexuality in the film also emanates from the director's own coming out story.

"Rohan said his coming out was the most anticlimactic situation of his life," revealed Neeraj, adding, "His father wasn't particularly educated. He was a chauffeur. Rohan always felt he wouldn't understand because Rohan's edu-



cated friends, who were from upper class, they had a tough time coming out. There were horror stories. So, Rohan said he was expecting something worse." Neeraj revealed that Rohan's coming out story lasted less than a minute. "His father asked him why he's upset. He said, 'Well, I was with a man who isn't around anymore.' So, his father said, 'Well, at least we know you are.' And that was it. And his mother was also very supportive," said Neeraj, adding, "Obviously, he believes wisdom and education are not necessarily correlated, and that's what he wanted to show through this story." Rohan also sought a semblance of his truth in the actors who played Anand, the protagonist, and Suman, his mother.

"When I met Rohan for the first time, he wanted to cast me because I was quite similar to the character. I was sitting in a corner and not talking much," recalled Bhushaan, who plays Anand. Jayshri was one of the first actors to come on board, and even pushed Rohan to take the film on floors. "The character was mostly based on Rohan's mother. So, I shadowed his mother and observed her mannerisms. Rohan's mother is a woman of few words, but she cares a lot. She speaks through her eyes. So, that's how I modelled the role on her," she revealed.

'Dhurandhar spreads propaganda,' claims Pakistan; announces 'Mera Lyari' based on what was the 6th most dangerous city in the world

Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar has been dominating headlines for shattering multiple box-office records. Set in Karachi's Lyari neighbourhood between 1999 and 2009, the film has stirred controversy across the border despite not being released in Pakistan. The depiction has reportedly offended authorities in Sindh to such an extent that the Sindh Information Department has announced its own film, Mera Lyari, aimed at presenting what it calls the town's "real" story.

The official handle of the Sindh Information Department shared two posters of Mera Lyari and wrote, "Misrepresentation cannot erase reality. Lyari stands for culture, peace, and resilience—not violence. While Dhurandhar spreads propaganda, Mera Lyari will soon tell the authentic story of pride and prosperity." The department further announced that the film will release in January 2026, adding that "Indian propaganda against Lyari will never be successful." The Sindh Information Department is a provincial government entity in Sindh, Pakistan. Its primary role is to ensure effective and strategic media coverage of government activities through both electronic and print platforms. In Aditya Dhar's Dhurandhar, Lyari is portrayed as a violent neighbourhood marked by gang wars, racketeering, police raids, drug trafficking, arms race, and terrorism. Ranveer Singh's character, Humza Ali Mazari, lands in Pakistan and eventually finds his way into Lyari, depicted in the film as part of Karachi—often described as one of Pakistan's most dangerous cities.

According to several reports, Lyari comprises some of Karachi's poorest settlements, where crime has historically thrived amid an alleged nexus between gangs and law enforcement. The area is also shown as the birthplace of Rehman Dakait—played by Akshaye Khanna—who, as per BBC reports, was born to a drug peddler Dad Mohammad and his second wife, Khadija. He made his place early in the crime world in the area, soon rising to its very height. Historically, Lyari is believed to be one of Karachi's



oldest inhabited areas and is often referred to by its residents as the "Mother of Karachi." The name is said to be derived from the Sindh word lyar, a tree that once grew along the banks of the Lyari River. The area was originally inhabited by Sindh fishermen and Baloch nomads.

Lyari was a predominantly Muslim area within Karachi, which was largely Hindu prior to Partition. During the British period, the neighbourhood was reportedly neglected as colonial development focused on the port and the eastern parts of the city. The area's first criminal gangs began to take root in the 1960s. The 1970s saw the emergence of a vibrant local music scene known as "Lyari Disco," even as the neighbourhood increasingly became a hub for drug trafficking. The situation worsened in the 1980s when weapons from the Soviet-Afghan war flooded the area, and drug addiction became widespread. During the 1980s and 1990s, Lyari's gangsters became closely entwined with local politics. Reports suggest that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) backed gangs led by Uzair Baloch and Rehman Dakait to counter the MQM-backed Arshad Pappu.

According to a report by Caravan magazine, Lyari has long been a political battleground—an area where political parties are made or broken. It is also the birthplace of some of Pakistan's most celebrated footballers and boxers.