

INDIAN CHRONICLE

Siege Of Two Wine Shops

At High Prices Nick Attacks Following Complaints Of Selling

Indian Chronicle" kumram bheem, Asifabad, District Reporte, Jade Srinivas, January, 22 "Bejjur Excise and State Task Force police officers seized two wine shops in Godeem and Bejjur areas under Kagaznagar Excise Division on Wednesday. Extensive searches were conducted in the liquor shops under the supervision of Excise, Task Force and local excise officers. On this occasion, cases have been registered against both the shops as they were found to be selling liquor at high prices, officials said. Kagaznagar Excise CI V. Ravi informed that cases have been registered against Gudem Renuka Wines and Bejjur Tirumala Manikantha Wines. State Task Force CI Biksha Reddy, S/C Suresh, Lopanand, Head Constable Ambaji, Constable Kumar and excise officers participated in these searches. [7:04 PM, 1/22/2026] +91 99485 55073: End..

Tirupati takes over as Kagaznagar Municipal Commissioner

Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, January 22 (Indian Chronicle) "B. Tirupati on Thursday formally assumed charge as the Municipal Commissioner of Kagaznagar. "Until now, Municipal RO Rajender had been serving as the in-charge Municipal Commissioner. Tirupati, who was earlier working as the Municipal Commissioner of Koratla, was transferred to Kagaznagar by higher authorities. "Speaking on the occasion, Tirupati assured that top priority would be given to sanitation and drinking water supply across all wards within the municipal limits. He appealed to town residents to pay municipal taxes on time and extend their cooperation for the city's overall development. "He also stressed the need for strong coordination between officers and staff to ensure effective resolution of public grievances and improved civic administration.



No reliable evidence: Delhi court acquits Sajjan in 1984 riots case

New Delhi, Jan 22

A Delhi court on Thursday acquitted former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar in a case linked to the alleged instigation of violence during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

The decision is likely to be seen as a setback for survivors and families seeking justice in decades-old cases related to the riots.

However, hours after the national capital's Rouse Avenue Court cleared Kumar in the Janakpuri violence case, senior advocate HS Phoolka, who has represented riot victims for decades, said the order would be challenged in the Delhi High Court. He accused the Congress of conspiring to prolong proceedings so that the passage of time itself worked in favour of the accused.

According to Phoolka, repeated delays ensured that witnesses either died or were rendered incapable of testifying, undermining the prospects of justice in riot cases involving influential political figures.

He maintained that though several witnesses had named Kumar, their testimonies were not given due weight by the court.

The Rouse Avenue Court, however, acquitted Kumar after holding that the prosecution had failed to prove his guilt beyond reasonable doubt. Special Judge Dig Vinay Singh found no reliable evidence establishing Kumar's presence at the scene on November 1, 1984, or his role in leading or instigating a mob in Janakpuri following the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

The court ruled that neither Kumar's political standing nor his involvement in other riot-related cases could justify lowering the standard of proof required in a criminal trial. It held that criminal culpability must be established strictly on evidence relevant to the case at hand.

While acknowledging the prolonged suffering of riot victims and their families, the court said emotional considerations could not substitute legal proof. It reiterated that decisions in criminal trials must be guided by evidence, not sentiment, regardless of the gravity of the crime or the time elapsed.

The case was based on allegations of arson, looting and targeted violence against the Sikh community in West Delhi's Janakpuri area. An FIR was registered years after the incident, charging Kumar under multiple provisions of the Indian Penal Code, including murder, attempt to murder, rioting with deadly weapons, promoting enmity between groups, defiling a place of worship and dacoity.

The prosecution alleged that Kumar led an unlawful assembly that attacked Sikh homes and religious sites, including a gurdwara. However, after examining 18 prosecution witnesses, the court found that many testimonies were either hearsay or involved delayed identification of the accused, often made decades after



the violence.

The court expressed serious reservations about the reliability of such delayed statements, noting that unexplained silence over long periods weakened the prosecution case. It rejected the argument that fear alone could justify witnesses not naming the accused despite suffering personal losses, including deaths of family members.

Phoolka, however, contested this assessment, pointing to specific instances where witnesses had come forward but their statements were allegedly ignored or sidelined by investigators. He recalled the case of Gurcharan Singh, a minor at the time of the riots, who was allegedly thrown from his father's truck, set on fire and left with severe burn injuries. According to Phoolka, Gurcharan remained bedridden for over two decades before dying in 2008.

Phoolka claimed that Gurcharan had given a statement to the CBI stating that he had seen Kumar leading the mob, but the agency did not act on it as it was probing another case at the time. He described this as a grave failure that cost the prosecution critical evidence.

He also referred to another victim, Harvinder Singh Kohli, who, he said, went door to door seeking justice but died before he could record his statement after the case was reopened in 2015.

The investigation in the Janakpuri case was carried out by a special investigation team (SIT) constituted in 2015 following recommendations of the Justice GP Mathur Committee to re-examine serious 1984 riot cases that had earlier been closed or marked untraced. The SIT filed a chargesheet against Kumar in 2022.

While the court held that the SIT's investigation was legally permissible as further investigation, it concluded that the evidence collected did not meet the threshold required for conviction. Kumar remains lodged in Tihar Jail, serving life sentences awarded in two other 1984 riot cases, one by a trial court in the Saraswati Vihar case and another by the Delhi High Court in the Palam Colony killings.

Deputy CM Bhatti: Budget mirrors ground realities seen during Praja Yatra



Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, January 22 (Indian Chronicle) "Budget Reflects Voices Heard During Praja Yatra: Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu on Thursday said that while preparing the Budget, the government has carefully considered every issue and hardship expressed by people during his Praja Yatra, ensuring that no concern is overlooked. "Addressing a public meeting at Modi village in Asifabad district on Thursday evening, the Deputy CM recalled his visit to the village during the Praja Yatra. He said he had stayed in the village for three days on the occasion of the Ugadi festival. Recounting those moments, he said that during the Eruvaka (traditional agricultural ritual), he had ploughed a furrow in farmer Venkata Rao's field and fed jaggery and coconut to the bullocks. "He further reminisced about sharing guggilli and meals with villagers at the residence of Laxman Rao Patel. Emphasising the emotional connect of the yatra, Bhatti Vikramarka said he has not forgotten a single village he walked through, the people he met, or the problems they shared. "As part of addressing those concerns, he said the government introduced free RTC bus travel for women to ensure hassle-free mobility. He added that the 200 units of free electricity scheme has been implemented and that power-

related issues are being resolved through the "Palam Bata-Praja Bata" programme conducted twice every week. "Stating that the children he saw during the Praja Yatra represent the future of the nation, the Deputy CM said the government is establishing 'Young India Integrated Residential Schools' to enable students to compete at a global level. He also announced that ₹17,000 crore has been allocated under the ST Sub-Plan to strengthen ITDAs, as was done in the past. "Taking note of difficulties faced by women while purchasing clothing, he said quality sarees are being distributed free of cost. He also stated that complaints raised earlier about worms in coarse rice have been addressed by supplying fine rice free of cost under the present people's government. All these initiatives, he said, are direct responses to issues raised by the public during the Praja Yatra. "The programme was attended by MLC Dande Vithal, TRICAR State Chairman Bellayya Naik, GCC Chairman Kotnak Tirupati, MPDCL CMD Varun Reddy, District Collector K. Haritha, District SP Nitika Pant, DFO Neeraj Kumar, Additional Collector Deepak Tiwari, ASP Chittaranjan, AMC Chairman Irukulla Manga, Congress district president Atram Suguna, former president Vishwa Prasad Rao, constituency in-charge Azmeera Shyam Naik, former MLA Atram Sakku, and others.

Grand Conclusion of Atmarpana Day Celebrations at Manthani Sri Vasavi Kanyaka Parameshwari Temple.



P. S. ASHOKAN "KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. "The Atmarpana Day celebrations were conducted with great devotion and spiritual fervour at the Sri Vasavi Kanyaka Parameshwari Temple, from 19 January 2026 to 20 January 2026. "The sacred observances commenced at 8:00 AM with an Ekahama Nirantara Nama Sankeerthana (continuous chanting of divine names), creating a deeply devotional atmosphere. This was followed by Mangala Snamam (holy ritual bath), Abhishekams (sacred ablutions), and the distribution of Anna Prasadam (holy food offering) to devotees. "In the evening, the programme was spiritually enriched by Geya Ramayanam, rendered melodiously by Gattu Madhavi Teacher, which captivated the audience and elevated the devotional spirit. Subsequently, the sacred Agni Gunda Pravesham was performed by devotees belonging to 102 Gotras, symbolising supreme devotion and surrender. The celebrations concluded with Lali Pata and Jola Pata (lullaby hymns) and other traditional concluding rituals. "Addressing the gathering on this auspicious occasion, Temple Committee President Sri Kotha Srinivas Gupta appealed to the Government of Telangana to officially recognise and organise the Vasavi Mata Atmarpana Utsavams across the state, on the lines of the initiatives undertaken by the Govern-

ment of Andhra Pradesh. "The event concluded on a spiritually uplifting note with the resonant chants of: "Jai Vasavi | Jai Shri Ram

CHANGE OF NAME

I, NAJEEBUNNISA W/O TAUFEE QUE AHMED (Old name) born on 28-06-1973 residence of hno. 9-425/1, Teachers Colony Adilabad-504001 Telangana. Presently holding passport No. U8695401 issued on 24-02-2021 hereby changing my name and my Husband name in future we will be known as SYEDA NAJEEBUNNISA and SYED TAUFEEQ AHMED (Husband) (New Name) for the sake of my passport to be corrected accordingly.

DECLARANT.
SYEDA NAJEEBUNNISA
W/O SYED TAUFEEQ AHMED
Place: Adilabad
Date: 22-01-2026

Be ready with complete arrangements for conducting the municipal elections: State Election Commissioner Rani Kumudini



(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 22): State Election Commissioner Rani Kumudini said that all necessary arrangements should be made for conducting the municipal elections. On Thursday, she held a review meeting from Hyderabad with the election officers/collectors, additional collectors, and municipal commissioners of Nalgonda, Suryapet, and Yadadri Bhuvanagiri districts regarding the arrangements for conducting the municipal elections. On this occasion, the State Election Commissioner stated that they should be ready with the necessary arrangements for conducting the municipal elections. She instructed that arrangements should be made for the ballot boxes and materials to be used in the elections, arrangements for ballot printing, and arrangements at the nomination receiving centers. She also instructed that training should be provided to the Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, Nodal Officers, Zonal Officers, Flying and Static Surveillance Teams, POs, and APOs, and that necessary arrangements should be made for webcasting in problematic polling stations, material distribution and receiving centers, counting centers, and strong rooms. She stated that they should be ready with complete arrangements to ensure that the election process proceeds smoothly in a peaceful atmosphere. On this occasion, Additional Collector for Local Bodies Bhaskar Rao informed the State Election Commissioner that they are fully prepared



in all respects for conducting the municipal elections. He said that a total of 212 polling stations have been set up for the 104 wards under the six municipalities in the district. He added that the details of these polling stations have already been registered in T.Poll. He stated that the objections raised regarding the polling stations have been resolved. He informed that the necessary staff for conducting the elections would be appointed. He said that ballot boxes and other materials are available, and that SST and FST teams are being appointed to ensure strict enforcement of the election code of conduct as soon as the schedule is released. He stated that arrangements have been made for ballot boxes, materials, printing of ballot papers, and adequate facilities at the nomination receiving centers. He mentioned that the staff for appointing Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, Nodal Officers, and Zonal Officers has already been identified. He brought to the attention of the State Election Commissioner that necessary arrangements have been made for webcasting in problematic polling stations, distribution and reception centers for materials, counting centers, and strong rooms. State Election Commissioner Rani Kumudini instructed that measures should be taken to conduct the elections smoothly without any errors. RDOs Krishna Reddy and Shekhar Reddy, Municipal Commissioners, and other concerned officials participated in this video conference.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

New ideas to fight digital arrest

India has the dubious distinction of registering the highest number of cyber frauds in the world. Among various forms of cybercrime, digital arrest has emerged as the most devious one. It poses a threat not only to the country's financial security and stability but also to public trust in the law enforcement machinery. In digital arrest scams, fraudsters impersonate law enforcement officials via video calls, claiming that victims are under investigation for serious crimes. Using leaked personal data for credibility, they create fear and urgency, keeping victims on calls for hours with fake IDs and arrest warrants. Victims are coerced into transferring large sums to avoid arrest. Against this backdrop, two new ideas, proposed recently to check the menace of digital arrest, deserve serious consideration. First, a high-level committee constituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs is believed to be actively considering a technology solution called 'kill switch' that will allow users at the receiving end of a potential digital scam to immediately stop all financial transactions from their accounts. It is akin to an emergency button integrated into the payment applications that can instantly freeze all banking operations when a user suspects s/he is being targeted by a fraudster. Second, the Reserve Bank of India has mooted an insurance mechanism to cover fraud-related losses in the banking system. Both ideas deserve to be tested.

Culvert Works Worth Rs35-50 Lakhs to Begin Soon in Venkat Sai Nagar — Residents' Long-Standing Problems to Be Resolved

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 22 (Indian Chronicle):”“Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkata Rao has announced that new culvert construction works in Venkat Sai Nagar, which falls under the Ramanthapur Division, will begin within the next two to three days. She stated that although administrative approval was granted



last month for the construction of a culvert at an esti-



mated cost of ₹34.50 lakhs, the works could not be started due to certain technical reasons. As those issues have now been resolved, the construction will commence shortly. On this occasion, Uppal Deputy Commissioner Godhumala Raju assured residents that, keeping in view the needs of the colony, approvals would soon be obtained for the construction of an additional culvert, and the related works would also be taken up at the earliest. The programme was attended by Deputy Engineer Vinil Goud, Assistant Engineer Shweta, Work Inspector Mahender, BJP women's leader Keerthi Mudiraj, and several others.

Grand Prasadam Distribution Marks Ram Lalla Pratishtha Anniversary Devotional fervour in Kapra on second anniversary celebrations

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal-Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 22, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“?”“On the occasion of the second anniversary of the Ram Lalla Pratishtha at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya, a grand prasadam distribution programme was organised with devotional fervour at Kamalanagar, Sattireddy Galli, under the Kapra Circle. The entire area witnessed a spiritually charged atmosphere as devotees gathered in large numbers to take part in the event. The programme was jointly organised by local business establishments and traders, who coordinated efforts to ensure its smooth conduct. Devotees began arriving from early morning hours. The event commenced with special prayers

offered to the image of Lord Rama, accompanied by Vedic chants and collective chanting of the Ram Naam. Following the rituals, prasadam was distributed to devotees. Organisers stated that such service-oriented devotional activities help strengthen spiritual values among the public, especially the youth, while fostering unity and harmony in the community. Local residents extended full cooperation to ensure the programme was conducted peacefully and in an orderly manner. The event concluded successfully with the participation of local representatives, shop owners, women, youth, and a large number of devotees.

Dedicated Building for Senior Citizens in Uppal Due to the Initiative of Corporator Rajita Parameshwar Reddy Building to be made available soon



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 22 (Indian Chronicle):”“A dedicated building for senior citizens will soon be made available in Uppal. With the special initiative of Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajita Parameshwar Reddy, a building has been constructed on approximately 350 square yards of land, adjacent to the main road. The construction works have reached the final stage. The building has been strategically constructed near PVT Mall, ensuring easy accessibility for everyone. Uppal Corporator Rajita Parameshwar Reddy and Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy visited the senior citizens' building along with several senior citizens. On this occasion, Parameshwar Reddy stated that all necessary facilities



required for senior citizens will be provided in the building. He explained that, out of respect for senior citizens, the building was constructed at a cost of ₹28 lakh on land worth several crores, located beside the main road. He also assured that he would always stand by senior citizens and support them at all times. The program was attended by A.E. Raj Kumar, Shamirpet Yadi Reddy, Vakiti Buchi Reddy, Venkatayya Goud, Mekala Venkat Reddy, Mekala Ram Reddy, Narayana Goud, Linga Reddy, P. Venkatesham, Salla Malla Reddy, Mandumula Anji Reddy, Venkata Swamy, Manikyam, Ramulu, Share Narasimha Reddy, Papi Reddy, C. Manohar, G. Anji Reddy, Koteswar Rao, Tumalla Devi Reddy, Lingampalli Ramakrishna, Eega Anjaneyulu, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Rama Rao, and several others.

District Collector Jitesh V. Patil Conducts Surprise Inspection of Markodu Ashram School

“Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, January 22, Indian Chronicle:”“District Collector



Jitesh V. Patil conducted a surprise inspection of the Ashram School in Markodu village on Thursday, as part of ongoing efforts to ensure quality education and student welfare in residential schools. “During the inspection, the Collector thoroughly examined the school premises, classrooms, hostel rooms, toilets, dining hall, and other basic infrastructure facilities. While inspecting the toilets, he observed irregularities in the water supply and immediately directed the concerned officials to ensure continuous and adequate water availability. “Teachers informed the Collector about leakage issues in the school building during the monsoon season. Responding promptly, the Collector instructed the relevant departments to take up immediate repair and maintenance works to prevent further inconvenience to students. “Inspecting the dining hall, the Collector reviewed stock registers, food preparation processes, and hygiene practices. He stressed that students must be provided with clean, nutritious, and tasty meals without compromise. He directed the cooking staff to strictly adhere to hygiene norms and emphasized the importance of creating awareness among students about personal hygiene. Warning of strict action in case of lapses, the Collector also instructed officials to submit proposals at the earliest for the construction of a dedicated kitchen shed. Observing dependence on firewood for cooking, he suggested



making arrangements for a proper LPG gas supply to ensure safety and efficiency. “Later, the Collector visited Class III, VI, and VIII classrooms, interacted with students, and enquired about the facilities being provided to them. He motivated students to set high goals and work diligently to achieve them, advising them to focus on their studies and avoid wasting time. To assess academic standards, he evaluated students' reading and writing skills by asking them to read from textbooks and write on the board. “Addressing the occasion, the Collector stated that Ashram Schools must provide a safe environment, quality education, adequate infrastructure, and nutritious food

Protecting the Public from Mosquito Menace Is Our Responsibility: Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj Appeal for Support from the Entomology Department



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 22 (Indian Chronicle):”“Chilkanagar Division Corporator and former GHMC Standing Committee Member Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj held a review meeting with officials and staff of the GHMC Entomology Department to address the growing mosquito menace in the division. “Speaking during the meeting, Corporator Geetha Praveen stated that the failure to remove water hyacinth (Gurra Pudukku) from the High Court Colony Nacharam Lake in a timely manner has led to a severe increase in mosquito breeding. She urged the Entomology Department to take the issue seriously and ensure regular anti-larval spraying in and around the lake and its surrounding residential areas. “She further instructed that fogging operations must be carried out strictly as per schedule every evening in all colonies and bastis of the Chilkanagar Division. Stressing the ur-



gency of the situation, she called upon the department to declare a war against mosquitoes and continue intensified measures without any relaxation until the water hyacinth is completely removed from the lake. “The responsibility of protecting the public lies with all of us,” she said, appealing to the staff to work in coordination and remain accessible to the public while ensuring that residents face no inconvenience. Corporator Geetha Praveen also recalled that Zonal Commissioner Radhika Gupta had assured that arrangements would be made at the earliest to remove the water hyacinth from the lake. The meeting was attended by Entomology Department Supervisors Ajay and Mahender, along with a large number of departmental staff.

Poster Unveiled for Admissions at 'Devagiripattanam Minority Girls Gurukul

“Mulugu, January 22 (Indian Chronicle):”“A poster unveiling programme for admissions was held on Thursday at the Minority Girls Gurukul School located in Devagiripattanam town of Mulugu Mandal, Mulugu District. The programme was conducted under the leadership of Principal Srilatha. “Speaking on the occasion, she requested parents to apply for admissions into Class



V. Out of a total of 80 seats in Class V, 51 seats are allotted to Muslim minorities, 5 seats to Christian minorities, 1 seat each to Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis. In addition, 10 seats are allotted to BCs, 5 seats to SCs, 3 seats to STs and 2 seats to OCs. “She also informed that for backlog vacancies in Classes VI, VII and VIII, only Muslim minority students are eligible. “Parents were requested to apply online through the website <http://tgmreis.telangana.cgg.gov.in> on or before February 28. For further details, they can contact 93980 19134, 73961 94275, or 97019 07575. “MD Maqbool Pasha, MD Sarvar Ahmed, MD Haji Pasha, S.K. Muzammil and others participated in the programme.

Road accident near Gautapur village... Labourer dies after falling from lorry

“Indian chronicle Vikarabad, Tandur (Jan, 22)““Tandur mandal Gautapur village resident Vadde Laxman (30), son of Bakkappa, died after falling from a lorry near Gautapur village on Thursday. “Laxman, a labourer, used



to unload napar stones from lorries to earn a living. On Thursday, while unloading napar stones from a lorry at Tandur, he fell from the lorry near a mosque in Gautapur and got crushed under the wheels, resulting in his death on the spot. “Locals informed the KaranKote police station about the accident. Police arrived at the scene, examined the body, and shifted it to Tandur government hospital for post-mortem. “Tandur Rural CI Prem Kumar Reddy and SI Rathod Vinod stated that a case has been registered, and an investigation is underway.

Uppal MLA Attends Birthday Celebrations of BRS Kapra Division President: BAIRY NAVEEN GOUD

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal-Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 22, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“?”“The birthday celebrations of BRS Kapra Division President Bairy Naveen Goud were held in a grand manner at Mallareddy Garden, Ellareddyguda. Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy attended the event



as the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA extended birthday greetings to Bairy Naveen Goud and appreciated his contributions towards strengthening the party and serving the people. He stated that Naveen Goud has been actively working at the grassroots level and playing a key role in party activities. He expressed confidence that Naveen Goud would continue to grow as a leader and remain committed to public service in the future. Several BRS party leaders, workers, and supporters participated in the programme in large numbers, making the celebrations vibrant and successful.

Tribal Museum Plays Key Role in Preserving Indigenous Culture: Bhadrachalam D.Ed College Principal



““““Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, January 22, Indian Chronicle: Bhadrachalam D. Ed College Principal Bhavani stated that preserving tribal traditions, customs, practices, social norms, and ancient artifacts in the Tribal Museum not only makes learning engaging for students but also provides them with a valuable opportunity to understand the lifestyle and heritage of earlier generations of tribal communities.”““On Thursday, faculty members and students of Bhadrachalam D. Ed College visited the Tribal Museum located at the ITDA premises. The visitors closely observed various tribal artifacts, tools, traditional attire, and cultural exhibits displayed in the museum. After exploring the exhibits, students participated in recreational activities within the museum premises.”““Speaking on the occasion, Principal Bhavani said that the museum has made commendable efforts to showcase endangered tribal traditions, customs, and cultural practices in a manner that is easily understandable to present-day students. She appreciated the initiative of displaying artifacts along with their historical background printed in Telugu, which helped students gain a comprehensive understanding of tribal heritage.”““She further noted that museum officials provided clear and detailed explanations for each exhibit, enabling students



to acquire in-depth knowledge about tribal culture. She suggested that by offering special visit packages for schools and colleges, students could learn about tribal traditions in an interactive and recreational environment, which would enhance their intellectual curiosity and cultural awareness.”““The Principal also highlighted the importance of preserving traditional tools, indigenous languages, cultural practices, and tribal attire from fading away. She particularly appreciated the efforts of ITDA Project Officer Rahul, who has taken initiatives to learn and promote the Koya language, ensuring that its cultural essence is preserved and passed on to future generations. On behalf of the institution, she expressed gratitude for his contributions toward safeguarding tribal heritage.”““Additionally, Bhavani said that facilities such as the boating point, selfie zones, replicas of traditional houses, and a dedicated children’s play area within the museum premises were visually appealing and added to the overall learning experience, especially for young visitors.”““The visit was attended by faculty members Nageswara Rao, Baby Rani, Sudhakar, Suresh, B. Nagesh, Museum In-Charge Veeraswamy, Madhavi, Chalapathi Rao, along with students and other staff members.

ITDA PO B. Rahul Urges Tribal Youth to Acquire Skills for Sustainable Livelihoods



““““Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, January 22, Indian Chronicle: ITDA Project Officer B. Rahul has urged unemployed tribal youth to enhance their vocational skills and make effective use of available opportunities to secure sustainable livelihoods, particularly in the public and private sector enterprises.”““On Thursday, the Project Officer visited the Youth Training Centre (YTC) located at the ITDA premises, where tribal youth are being provided training in Guest Service Associate, Electronic Hardware, and Drone Service Electrician courses. During the visit, he interacted with trainees and assessed their learning progress through practical demonstrations.”““Addressing the trainees, Rahul advised them not to wait solely for government jobs after completing higher education but to utilize ITDA-sponsored skill development programs to gain employable skills and seek opportunities in various private sector industries to support their families. He emphasized that the 60-day training programme should be used productively by following the guidance of training agency coordinators and improving technical competence.”““Highlighting emerging opportunities in the agriculture sector, the Project Officer noted that drone services are increasingly being used for spraying, crop monitoring, and other farm-related activities. He encouraged trained youth to form groups and start small-scale drone service enterprises based on market demand. He also instructed drone training instructors to educate trainees on basic repair and maintenance of drone equipment.”““Rahul further directed trainees undergoing computer electronics and hardware training to learn with dedication and master every component through hands-on practice. He instructed trainers to ensure that all topics are taught practically for better understanding. For those enrolled in the Guest Service



Associate course, he stressed the importance of patience, discipline, and customer-friendly behaviour, stating that such qualities would help them progress in any organization.”““He informed that youth completing Electronic Hardware and Guest Service Associate courses would be provided placement opportunities in various private sector companies in Hyderabad.”““The Project Officer also advised trainees of all three courses to communicate exclusively in English on a daily basis, stating that it would significantly improve their confidence and professional skills. He observed that the current skill levels of trainees were not fully satisfactory and urged them to make consistent efforts over the coming weeks to improve their competencies by thoroughly understanding every topic taught by the trainers.”““Later, Rahul reviewed the preparatory arrangements for the CSR Summit scheduled to be held on January 27 at the Tribal Bhavan.”““The programme was attended by Assistant Project Officer General David Raj, JDM Hari Krishna, trainers Srinivas, Aruna, Sulochana, Abdul, Bhavani, Anuhya, Vineetha, and Sammaiah, along with trainees and other staff members.

GHMC Uppal Ward Re-Delimitation Irregularities: High Court Issues Crucial Orders

““““Uppal residents’ grievances reach the High Court

““““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 22 (Indian Chronicle): ““““The Telangana High Court on Thursday heard a writ petition challenging alleged irregularities in the re-delimitation of GHMC wards, particularly concerning the Uppal ward, following the expansion of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation from 150 wards to 300 wards up to the Outer Ring Road (ORR). During the hearing, the petitioner’s counsel

brought to the court’s attention that in the preliminary notification dated December 9, Uppal was shown as a small ward after division. However, in the final Gazette notification dated December 25, additional areas were merged into Uppal, inflating its population to 65,000–70,000 and declaring it a large ward. In contrast, it was pointed out that Chilkanagar and Beerappa Gadda divisions have populations of only 25,000–32,000, resulting in a serious imbalance.”““The petitioner argued that the re-delimitation process violated: “The principle of ‘One Vote – One Value’, “Rule 5 of the GHMC Delimitation Rules (±10% population variance), and “Rule 8 relating to claims and objections.”““Since the preliminary notification appeared reasonable, no objections were filed at that stage. However, the subsequent unscientific changes in the final notification were termed unjust.”““Justice Lakshminarayana Alashetty remarked that such arbitrary changes are unfair and questioned the rationale behind them. The court directed the Telangana Government to submit: Complete population details of Wards 23, 24, and 28, Current population as well as future growth projections, including rapid development in the Uppal Bagayath

area.”““The High Court further ordered the government to file a counter affidavit explaining the basis on which ward boundaries and populations were decided, and how such a decision was taken within just 16 days. The judge made strong observations, stating that rules must be followed without being influenced by personal interests or extraneous considerations. The case has been adjourned to February 13, 2026, for further hearing.

Road Safety Awareness Program Held Under Arrive Alive Campaign–2026



Grand Sri Bhakta Markandeya Jayanti Celebrations at Sri Markandeya Temple, Chiluka Nagar

Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy attends as Chief Guest



““““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 22 (Indian Chronicle): ““““Sri Bhakta Markandeya Jayanti was celebrated with great devotion and grandeur on Thursday at the Sri Markandeya Temple in Chiluka Nagar. The festivities were organized under the aegis of the Sri Bhakta Markandeya Padmashali Welfare Association, Chiluka Nagar, and were conducted in a spiritually vibrant and festive atmosphere.”““After many years, the Markandeya Temple was beautifully decorated, drawing the attention and admiration of devotees. The Jayanti celebrations began early in the morning at 7:00 AM with abhishekas, archana, and special prayers, followed by traditional rituals performed as per Vedic customs to the presiding deity. Special pujas were offered to Sri Bhakta Markandeya Swamy on a magnificently decorated stage. Around 300 devotees and members of the Padmashali community participated in large numbers, observing the celebrations with deep devotion and enthusiasm, making the event a grand success. Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy attended the event as the Chief Guest, along with local Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen, BC movement leader Tadoori Srinivas, leaders from various political parties, community elders, youth association representatives, and local dignitaries. Addressing the gathering, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy said that it was his first visit to the Markandeya Temple and expressed that the divine blessings of Sri Bhakta Markandeya Swamy were abundantly upon him. He conveyed his happiness at participating in such a spiritual program and assured that, as per the

request of the local Padmashali Association, he would ensure the completion of roofing works with sheet covering in the vacant area of the temple.”““Later, annaprasadam (free meal) distribution was conducted in a grand manner by the family members of Sangishetty Sridhar. Prominent participants included Sakinala Prasad (President, Sri Bhakta Markandeya Padmashali Welfare Association, Chiluka Nagar), Bezagam Srinivas (General Secretary), Pendem Nagarjuna (Treasurer), chief advisors Devasani Balachander, Guda Srisailem, Dasari Srinivas, Boda Vidyasagar, along with Vaddepalli Kishore, Sangishetty Sridhar, Basapathi Chandrasekhar, Thalla Srinivas, Addagatta Bhavanandam, Badugu Ramulu, Dr. Raju, Sultan Jagannadham, Boda Ashok Kumar, Chinnam Naveen, Thati Sampath, Pedda Bomma Ramesh, Pagala Vinay, Desidi Srinivas, Sakinala Chandu, Sabbani Sathish, youth leader Pamu Rajesh, Gunjari Kumar, Devasani Vivek, and many others.

Special Focus on Minority Welfare in People’s Governance

Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Parameshwar Reddy

Parameshwar Reddy, along with Corporators Swarnaraj Shivamani and Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy, distributed sewing machines to women



““““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 22 (Indian Chronicle): ““““Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy stated that people’s governance is being carried out in the state under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. He said the state government is working with strong commitment towards the welfare of SCs, STs, BCs, and minorities. Under the Indiramma Mahila Shakti Scheme, implemented through the Telangana State Minority Finance Corporation, a total of 175 sewing machines have been sanctioned for minority women in the Uppal constituency.”““The sewing machine distribution program was held at the Uppal Division Ward Office, with Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, Uppal Corporator Rajitha

Parameshwar Reddy, and Kapra Corporator Swarnaraj Shivamani attending as chief guests. Along with Congress leaders from the Uppal constituency, they distributed sewing machines to the beneficiaries.”““Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said that the sewing machines are being provided to minority women in the Uppal constituency with the objective of promoting self-employment. He explained that the scheme would help women enhance their vocational skills and create opportunities for self-reliance, especially benefiting unemployed women.”““He further added that the government remains continuously committed to the welfare of the poor and marginalized sections of society. Several Congress party leaders and workers from the Uppal constituency participated in the program.

Kushaiguda Traffic Police Station SHO Rama Lakshman Raju actively participated in the event and created awareness among the public on traffic rules and road safety measures. As part of the campaign, the police, along with students, organized a road safety rally from Talluri Theatre Junction to ECIL X Roads. After reaching ECIL X Roads, participants formed a human chain to highlight the importance of road safety and responsible driving. Addressing the students, ACP Y. Venkat Reddy explained various traffic rules and regulations, with special emphasis on the importance of driving only with a valid driving licence and following traffic norms. To further engage the public, students performed a flash mob at ECIL X Roads, effectively conveying road safety messages in an innovative and impactful manner. The programme was attended by Kushaiguda Sub-Inspectors N. Sudhakar Reddy, B. Srinivas, M. Vijay, K. Satish, along with other police personnel.

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal-Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 22, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): ““““As part of the “Arrive Alive Campaign–2026,” Kushaiguda Police Station organized a road safety awareness program at Talluri Theatre Junction and ECIL X Roads. The programme was conducted under the supervision of ACP Y. Venkat Reddy. Kushaiguda SHO L. Bhaskar Reddy and

BRS Senior Leader Jitender Reddy Launches Fogging in Uppal with Personal Funds

Effort to Relieve People from Mosquito Menace MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Inaugurates Fogging Vehicle



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 22 (Indian Chronicle): “With the mosquito problem worsening and causing severe inconvenience to residents in Uppal, BRS senior leader of Uppal Division, Puduri Jitender Reddy (Uppal PJR), has taken an initiative using his own funds to provide relief to the public. To control mosquitoes, he has made a fogging machine available on a personal basis. The fogging vehicle was formally inaugurated on Thursday by Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA appreciated the initiative and said that it is commendable to recog-

nize public problems and take personal responsibility to address them by introducing fogging services. Addressing the gathering, Jitender Reddy stated that the people of Uppal Division are suffering greatly due to mosquitoes and assured that fogging will be carried out daily in colonies and bastis across the division to control the mosquito menace. MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy also mentioned that the program was launched with a strong sense of public service. Several BRS leaders of Uppal Division, women leaders, and youth participated in large numbers in the program.

Failures in Life Should Be Considered as Experiences: Prof. Dr. Mahzarin R. Banaji

BRJC Parsi High School celebrates 107th anniversary in Grand manner



“Indian Chronicle“Secunderabad, January 22. “Prof. Dr. Mahzarin R. Banaji of Harvard University, USA, said that failures in life should be viewed as experiences and stepping stones towards success. She was speaking as the Chief Guest at the 107th anniversary celebrations of BRJC Parsi High School, held on Thursday at the school premises in Park Lane, Secunderabad. The programme commenced with the traditional lighting of the ceremonial lamp by Dr. Banaji, formally inaugurating the celebrations. This was followed by colourful cultural performances by the students, which impressed and entertained the guests. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Banaji advised students to read autobiographies of great personalities, stating that such books

help one understand how failures, struggles, and setbacks in life eventually lead to success. She encouraged students to learn from challenges and move forward with confidence. She congratulated the school trustees, headmaster, and teachers for their commitment to education and for providing scholarships worth approximately ₹16 lakh to support the educational development of economically backward students. Dr. Banaji particularly appreciated the efforts of Principal Vishnuvardhanachari and senior teacher M.B.B. Satyanarayana for making elaborate arrangements to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the anniversary celebrations. The event witnessed the participation of trustees, parents, teachers, and students in large numbers, making the 107th anniversary celebrations a memorable and meaningful occasion.

Ramanthapur Division Congress President Mohammed Rafiq Distributes Sewing Machines to Minority Women



that through this initiative, women would not only acquire vocational skills but also achieve self-reliance, ensuring that their families do not face financial burden. He emphasized that every woman would be able to stand on par with her husband by earning independently, and that unemployed women, in particular, would benefit greatly from this scheme. Those who participated in the programme included Ramanthapur Division Congress Women's President Sandhya Rani, Indramma Committee Member Gayatri Goud, Tabassum Begum, Mogili Lingam, MD Shakeel Jilani, Anwar Sadiq, and others.

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 22 (Indian Chronicle): “Under the Telangana State Government's Minority Finance Corporation, 20 sewing machines were sanctioned to women of Ramanthapur Division under the Indira Mahila Shakti Scheme. The sewing machines were distributed at the Gandhi Nagar Committee Hall, Ramanthapur, by Ramanthapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafiq. Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed Rafiq stated that with the cooperation of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamulla Parameshwar Reddy, the scheme was implemented with the objective of providing self-employment opportunities to women of Ramanthapur Division. He said



Are Regulations Regarding Sand Transportation Being Eased?

“Indian Chronicle“ kumram bheem, Asifabad, District Reporte, Jade Srinivas. January, 22 “Wankidi Mandal “Will the authorities pave the way for the sand transport across the country? If sand tractors continue to move freely in broad daylight, will they find answers to the trend of “sand transporters for the sake of the rule”? Allegations are being made that the authorities are moving sand for their own purposes after the state government gave permission for the construction of Indiramma houses for the poor who do not have houses. Allegations are being raised in the mandal that illegal sand trading is continuing in the name of Indiramma houses. In the past, too, scenes have been seen of sand sellers moving sand from Bhimpur via Wankidi in their tractors. It seems that doubts are being expressed whether the illegal sand trading is going on without any permits. Many believe that the sand sellers are taking advantage of this as public representatives have requested the authorities to grant sand permits for the construction of Indiramma houses. There are serious allegations that sand is being transported directly in the name of Indiramma's houses without paying taxes to the government and that an illegal business

is being carried out. This has raised suspicions that the sand sale business is going on in the backdrop of a shortage as the Forest Department Revenue Department officials are not conducting inspections. Without paying taxes to the government “Sand moving scene” There are criticisms that they are being made anonymous. Many people are demanding that the authorities monitor and check the illegal sand trade as per the rules and not to engage in illegal sand trading. It is noteworthy that what is the point of not doing the monitoring properly. In the past, sand traders used to do the illegal business at night and transport it by tractors. Now, there are criticisms that the authorities are not monitoring properly, as they are accused of transporting sand in broad daylight in the name of Indiramma's houses. Questioners say that it should be known whether the sand traders, public representatives and officials are getting the usual treatment. There are criticisms that they are doing the illegal business. It is important to know whether there are any rules as sand is being transported at night and in broad daylight. People and others are demanding that the authorities monitor and put a stop to the illegal sand trade according to the law.

Parameshwar Reddy Hands Over Rs 3 Lakh LOC Document to Vijay Varanasi's Family

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 22 (Indian Chronicle): “Mandamulla Parameshwar Reddy, Congress Party In-charge of the Uppal Assembly Constituency, facilitated the sanction and handed over a ₹3,00,000 Letter of Credit (LOC) to the family of Vijay Varanasi, a resident of Vivek Nagar Colony, Venkat Reddy Nagar Division, for brain surgery treatment. The matter was brought to the notice of Parameshwar Reddy by Aakarapu Arun Patel, President of the Uppal Constituency Youth Congress. Standing by the poor in times of need and ensuring immediate assistance to those facing emergencies, Parameshwar Reddy and Arun Patel extended timely support, for which the family members of Vijay Varanasi expressed their heartfelt gratitude. Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy stated that the Chief Minister's Relief Fund has become a boon for the poor. He emphasized that the CM Relief Fund is bringing hope and light into the lives of underprivileged families. He also mentioned that cheques and LOCs are being sanctioned at the earliest possible time for eligible beneficiaries who submit applications.



Bambara Sub- Sarpanch Jade Santosh Receives A Grand Tribute From His Classmates



Bambara Gram Panchayat in Wankidi Mandal, was felicitated by his fellow classmates. Santosh, who has leadership qualities since his student days, said that it is a matter of pride for him to serve the people of the village as Upasarpnach. Santosh assured that he will continuously work for village development, resolution of public problems, and transparency in Panchayat governance. Bendare Prakash, Petkar Raja, Jade Srinivas and others participated in the program.

Anganwadi compound wall inaugurated at Belkatur village under Adani Cement Company



“Indian Chronicle, Tandur (January, 22) “The Anganwadi compound wall constructed under Adani Cement Company was inaugurated at Belkatur village in Tandur mandal on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, KV Srinivas, Chief Plant Manager of Adani Cement Company, stated that the company is committed to social responsibility and is working towards the development of infrastructure, education, and healthcare in the area. The compound wall was constructed as per the request of the

village elders, and now the children can study and play safely. Village Sarpanch Nagalakshmi thanked the Adani Cement Company for fulfilling their request and providing the compound wall. The event was attended by Adani Cement Company Chief Plant Manager KV Srinivas, Nagarajuna, Programme Incharge of Adani Cement Company, Sarpanch Nagalakshmi, Panchayat Secretary Papatamma, Anganwadi teachers Padmavathi and Mahananda, Karobar Narsimulu, company representatives, village elders, youth, and women.

E-rickshaw driver poses as Haryana cop to evade toll tax, get free stay in hotels



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

The Gurgaon Police on Saturday arrested a 34-year-old man for allegedly posing as a Haryana Police sub-inspector (SI) to avoid paying toll taxes, secure free stays in hotels, and intimidate people by projecting his false authority. Police said the accused, Mukesh Kumar, a graduate and resident of Kasni village in Jhajjar district, was ap-

prehended on January 17 from the Civil Lines area following a complaint lodged by the manager of Shubham Hotel in Gurgaon, police said. According to police, on January 17, the hotel manager had informed that a man, dressed in the uniform of the Haryana Police, had checked into the hotel and provided an Aadhaar card as identification. Later, the same individual returned to the reception and made unnecessary inquiries about the room, raising suspicion among the staff, officials added.

"When questioned, the man panicked and attempted to flee but was detained with the help of hotel employees. During initial police questioning, he admitted that he was not a police officer and had been wearing the uniform merely to create an impression of authority among the public," a police spokesperson said. A case was registered at Civil Lines police, following which a police team arrested Mukesh Kumar the same day. "During questioning, the accused revealed that he drives a rented e-rickshaw in Khatu, Rajasthan, and frequently travels between Jhajjar and Khatu. To avoid repeated toll tax payments on the route and to display false influence, he obtained a fake Special Police Officer (SPO) identity card for Rs 500 from an individual in Jhajjar. He also got a Haryana Police SI uniform stitched for Rs 2,200 from Jharoda Kalan in Delhi," the spokesperson added. Items recovered by the police from his possession include an Aadhaar card, a PAN card, a fake SPO identity card, and the sub-inspector police uniform. Police said Kumar was produced before a Gurgaon court on Sunday and remanded to a day in police custody for further questioning to ascertain if he had accomplices or was involved in additional offences. He will likely be remanded to judicial custody later on Monday, officials said.

Fake cops snatch Rs 13 lakh from retired teacher in Wadala, caught after chase

GNS News Agency, Jan 22

A gang of four men allegedly posing as policemen snatched a bag containing Rs 13 lakh in cash from a 58-year-old retired school teacher in Wadala on Sunday evening. The accused were caught after the victim's associates chased their car and alerted patrolling policemen, who intercepted the vehicle and recovered the entire amount. The Wadala police arrested Nisar Sheikh 46, Sanjay Kumar Dubey 59, Pravin Pandey 32 and Alwin, and registered a case under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for robbery, cheating and impersonation. Police have also seized the car used in the crime.

According to the police, the complainant Anita Miranda, a retired teacher who now works as a private tutor in Dongri, lives in Vasai with her husband. She was looking to buy a flat in Wadala to reduce travel time. On Sunday around 5 pm, she visited the area with a neighbour and his wife and was carrying cash to pay in advance. Police said one of Miranda's acquaintances informed her that a man named Alwin would meet her in Wadala to show the flat. She reached the area around 4.30 pm, where Alwin and his associate Nisar Ahmed alias Salim Sawan Sheikh met her and took the group to a construction site opposite Lodha Tower. A few moments later, two persons came in a white Ertiga car, claimed to be policemen, forcibly snatched a bag from Nisar and made him sit into the vehicle, and sped away, said a police officer.

Miranda, her neighbour and his wife immediately chased the Ertiga and managed to intercept it near KD junc-



tion in Govandi. Police personnel from the Deonar police station, who were on patrol, noticed a scuffle and rushed in to nab the accused. During investigation, police found that the accused were using an Ertiga with a fake number plate MH 01 KL 6482. The accused were initially taken to the Deonar police station and later handed over to the Wadala TT police, under whose jurisdiction the offence took place.

During interrogation, police established Alwin's role in the crime and arrested him as well.

The accused impersonated police personnel and attempted to flee with the cash. But the timely chase by the complainant's associates and alert patrolling police managed to nab the culprits, said a senior officer from the Wadala TT police station. Police said further investigation is underway to trace the owner of the car and check if the gang was involved in similar offences.

NITI Aayog to launch evaluation of MGNREGS in 8 Punjab districts amid protests against VB-G RAM G



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

The NITI Aayog has initiated an evaluation study of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), 2005, in select districts of Punjab amid ongoing protests by workers and mounting political opposition to the newly introduced Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission-Gramin (VB-G RAM G). As per a letter dated January 14, 2026, addressed to the deputy commissioners of Amritsar, Ferozepur, Fazilka, Gurdaspur, Moga, Malerkotla, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar and Sangrur, the evaluation by the Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO) of NITI Aayog will be conducted during January-February. The study has been entrusted to Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP, working in a consortium with ORG India, which will carry out extensive field surveys as part of the initiative. Directions, restrictions

In the official communication, S Arputhaswamy, Economic Advisor, DMEO, has sought the cooperation of district administrations to ensure smooth conduct of the survey. "You are requested to issue appropriate directions to the concerned officers to facilitate the field survey by providing the field teams timely access to the institutions/offices, representatives of local bodies, scheme beneficiaries and field functionaries associated with the implementation of the scheme, and provide them with the requisite information related to the scheme implementation in the district," the letter states. It further lays down clear instructions on the role of local-level functionaries in the survey. "Local functionaries, such as Rozgar Sahayaks, etc, should restrict their role only to facilitating the surveyors in reaching out to the identified beneficiaries. They are neither supposed to answer questions on behalf of the beneficiary nor to be present in the beneficiary's premises during the time of the interview," it reads. The DMEO has also shared the contact details of nine core team members from Deloitte, ORG India and NITI Aayog in an annexure to facilitate coordination and communication during the evaluation process. The decision to undertake the evaluation has come at a politically sensitive time, with MGNREGS workers protesting in villages across Punjab against the proposed VB-G-RAM-G scheme, which they fear may dilute or replace the employment guarantee framework. Opposition parties have also

hardened their stance. The Congress has launched a state-wide "MGNREGS Bachao Sangram", while the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has passed a resolution opposing the new VB-G RAM G Act.

Selective nature of evaluation Though Punjab has 23 districts, for now, the study will be conducted only in eight districts. Similar selective district-wise evaluations are being carried out in other states as well. In Himachal Pradesh, the districts chosen for the study are Kangra, Kullu, Mandi and Sirmour. The selective nature of the evaluation and its timing amid protests have triggered discussions among worker unions and political observers. The evaluation will also look into the complaints related to irregularities in MGNREGS, sources added. Tarsem Peter, president of the Pendu Mazdoor Union, Punjab, said, "It is really strange that such an evaluation is to be conducted in the state which has passed a resolution against VB-G RAM G, thus raising questions over the political action by the AAP. We find it as a mere lip service. This evaluation can influence the future direction of VB-G RAM G in the country, particularly in Punjab, and workers should be told about it in a transparent manner."

Andhra CM lauds milestone as over 50,000 students enrol for quantum course

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu lauded the massive enrolment of more than 50,000 learners from the state in the Advanced Quantum Skilling course jointly offered by IIT-Madras and IBM Research under the NPTEL platform.

National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) is a Ministry of Education, Government of India-funded joint venture by the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), which offers more than 600 certification courses. In a post on X, Naidu said, "Happy to see an overwhelming response to the Advanced Quantum Skilling course offered by IIT Madras and IBM Research under NPTEL, with over 50,000 learners from Andhra Pradesh already enrolled." This momentum strengthens our resolve to achieve the goal of creating one lakh highly skilled quantum professionals trained to global standards, firmly positioning Andhra Pradesh as a leading destination for quantum research, innovation, and long-term investments, he said.

How a 'successful businessman' promised marriage and duped a Bengaluru engineer of Rs 1.53 crore



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

A 29-year-old software engineer in Bengaluru recently filed a police complaint alleging she was defrauded of over Rs 1.53 crore by a man who promised marriage while soliciting investments in his purported business venture. The Kengeri Police registered a First Information Report (FIR) on January 6 against Vijay Raj Gowda, his father, Boregowda UJ, and his wife, Soumya, under multiple sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). According to the woman's complaint, she met Vijay Raj Gowda on a matrimonial website in March 2024. Gowda allegedly claimed to be a successful businessman running VRG Enterprises and said he owned properties in upscale Bengaluru localities, including Koramangala, Rajajinagar, and Sadashivanagar.

To bolster his credibility, Gowda allegedly told her about a 2019 Enforcement Directorate case against him, claiming his assets were frozen and that he owned properties worth Rs 715 crore. The two subsequently entered into a relationship and discussed marriage. The alleged fraud began in April 2024, when Gowda claimed there were issues with his bank account, and asked for Rs 15,000 for an urgent matter. He later persuaded her to invest in multiple business ventures by promising high returns. Trusting him, she transferred Rs 1.53 crore through several transactions.

According to the FIR, the accused also introduced his father, Boregowda U J and a woman named Soumya, whom he claimed was his sister. He arranged a meeting near Kengeri Metro Station where the complainant met them, and reinforced the promise of marriage and business opportunities. When Gowda repeatedly delayed returning the money, he allegedly shared fabricated court orders, claiming his accounts were frozen. Following this, the complainant's family began investigating and discovered that Soumya was actually Gowda's wife, and that the couple had been married for three years with one child. The complainant alleged that Gowda had taken Rs 1.75 crore from her, of which he only returned Rs 22 lakh. The police said the accused and his family are currently absconding. A case has been registered under Sections 61(2) (criminal conspiracy), 318(4) (cheating), 316(2) (criminal breach of trust), and 351(3) (criminal intimidation) of the BNS, and further investigation is underway.

2 sandalwood trees stolen from Pune lawyer Asim Sarode's office premises; probe on

GNS News Agency, Jan 22

Pune sandalwood theft, Asim Sarode Lawyer Asim Sarode said the trees were stolen around 4 am and people residing nearby had heard the trees being felled. The Pune police have launched an investigation after unidentified individuals allegedly stole two sandalwood trees from the office premises of prominent lawyer Asim Sarode near Deccan Gymkhana early on Monday. On receiving information about the incident, a team from the Deccan police station visited the spot. Girisha Nimbalkar, Senior Police Inspector at the station, said, "We have spoken to lawyer Asim Sarode for lodging a First Information Report (FIR) in connection with the sandalwood theft incident."

Sarode said the trees were felled and stolen around 4 am and people residing nearby had heard the trees being cut down. "The spot is not covered by the CCTV cameras in our office, but a youngster has taken a video of the sandalwood theft from a building nearby. It shows four people leaving the place with the sandalwood logs in a four-wheeler," the lawyer said. "Roads in the area are closed due to the Pune Grand Tour 2026 cycling race. The FIR will be filed later in the day," he added. Asim Sarode is known for taking up cases related to human rights violations and is vocal about his anti-BJP, RSS stand. He was among the activists who had launched the "Nirbhay Bano" campaign against the BJP during the Lok Sabha elections. Previously too, there have been multiple reports of thefts in the Deccan Gymkhana area and surrounding places. In the early hours



of August 11, 2024, a gang of about eight people stole a 70-year-old sandalwood tree from the premises of a bungalow in Bharati Nivas colony, Erandwane, in the Prabhakar Road area. The huge noise created while felling the tree woke up the bungalow's residents who rushed to the spot. The thieves, however, threatened to kill them by pointing sharp weapons before escaping.

The FIR in this case was also lodged at the Deccan police station. On October 22, 2024, thieves who were stealing sandalwood from the premises of an old, unused bungalow on Abhinav School Road in Erandwane attacked police personnel, injuring one of the officers. Subsequent investigation led to the arrest of a gang of sandalwood thieves.

CRPF constable, wife arrested for assaulting 10-yr-old child at their home in Greater Noida



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

The Greater Noida Police on Sunday (January 18) arrested a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) constable and his wife for allegedly assaulting a 10-year-old girl whom they had kept at their government accommodation for domestic work without official permission. The girl is fighting for her life on a ventilator at a private hospital in Noida after allegedly being subjected to prolonged physical abuse and starvation by the couple. According to police, the accused, identified as Tariq Anwar, Commandant of the 235th Battalion of the CRPF, and his wife Rimpa Khatoon, had brought the child, a relative of Rimpa Khatoon's, to their residence inside the CRPF camp in Greater Noida. The girl was reportedly tasked with household chores and taking care of their children.

"The couple allegedly subjected the child to physical abuse over minor issues. On the night of January 14-15, the girl was allegedly beaten so badly that she had to be hospitalised. Subedar Major of the CRPF lodged a written complaint at Ecotech-III police station, based on which a case was registered under Section 110 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)," said a Noida police officer in a press statement. "Tariq has also been suspended by the CRPF and a departmental inquiry has been initiated. The minor had been staying with the couple at their residential quarters inside a CRPF camp in Greater Noida, but no permission or intimation was made by him to his department. The child is currently undergoing treatment at a local hospital, and officials from the child welfare department have been informed," a senior official said. The girl was first admitted to Sarvodaya Hospital and later moved to Max Hospital, Sector 128, where she was put on ventilator support. "The medical reports of the victim indicate severe malnutrition and multiple injuries - fractured bones, torn nails, broken teeth, deep bruises and swelling across the body. Her haemoglobin level had dropped to a dangerously low 1.9," the official added. A complaint filed by a CRPF Assistant Commandant expressed concern over the delay and alleged that the residential quarters where the girl was found was being vacated without being sealed for forensic examination - raising fears of evidence tampering. The CRPF confirmed the constable's suspension and said internal proceedings were underway to assist the police probe.

Dagger-wielding bike rider arrested for threatening family in Bengaluru road rage

GNS News Agency, Jan 22

The Bengaluru police Sunday arrested a 25-year-old man for allegedly threatening a family travelling in a car with a dagger in a road rage incident at Whitefield. The accused has been identified as Sayed Arbaz Khan, a resident of RT Nagar who works in a fish shop. The incident took place Friday near the Nexus Shantiniketan mall.

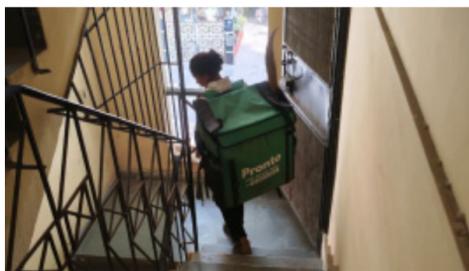
According to the FIR registered by the Kadugodi police, Khan, riding his bike, allegedly blocked the complainant's car, abused him, pulled out a dagger, and threatened the occupants of the vehicle before fleeing from the spot. The dashcam footage from the complainant's car showed the accused getting off his two-wheeler following an argument over a traffic issue and brandishing the weapon in a threatening manner, the police said.

The police tracked the accused after the scooter's registration was captured by the car's dashboard camera. The scooter was registered in Khan's name, the police said. The police booked the accused under relevant provisions of the Arms Act and under sections 126 (wrongful restraint), 351 (criminal intimidation), and 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke a breach of peace) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The police said Khan previously had four



cases against him, including two for causing injury, one for conspiracy to commit dacoity, and one for bike theft in Bengaluru.

'Feels good to be working... else family would get me married,' Life and (hard) work of a 21-year-old in Gurgaon



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

She had arrived early in the morning for a cleaning job commissioned on Pronto, with a large, wide, green bag slung over her shoulders. It carried five types of chemical cleaners and at least eight kinds of cleaning tools, including a broom. "Namaste sir, good morning. Can I keep my kit bag inside?" she asked pleasantly. That's how she opened conversations with every client; she would explain later — she'd been taught to do so during the five days of coaching she'd received after she signed up on the platform. She went about her job efficiently and with focus, and at the end, asked for feedback and a good rating on the app — again, as she had been taught. Asked if she liked what she did, she answered quickly.

"It feels good to be working; my family would otherwise be getting me married off." She said she was 21, and her surname suggested she was a Dalit. Her family, originally from Bihar, now lived in West Bengal, she said. She had come to Gurgaon to work about a year ago, and she had been with Pronto for six months.

How much does she make?

"We are promised Rs 36,000 per month if we work 12-hour shifts, and Rs 27,000 for 8-hour shifts, with two days off every month," she said. "But the actual income is less than that. I usually earn about Rs 800 daily." "What she earns is not her main grouch, though — it's the heavy bag she has to lug around, and the fact that she often gets no time between jobs, not even for lunch." "Forget eating in

peace, there is hardly any time to even rest for a few minutes. When I get too tired, I have to tell my manager I will not take slots for some time," she said. The manager has promised her though, that a provision for a lunch break between slots is in the works, along with plans to make the bag lighter, she said. All workers on the app — Pronto calls them "professionals" — are women, and the 21-year-old goes to her gigs riding pillion on a bike with a male 'rider'. Women professionals who know how to ride come on Yulu electric bikes.

Has she ever had an unpleasant experience with a client?

Yes, she said, and mostly in homes that seem more affluent than the average. "They act as though they have bought us for that half hour or one hour, and want us to do whatever they want. They know we only have basic chemicals, but they demand deep cleaning that would take hours." In her experience, young male professionals who live alone or with other men have been the most polite. "They always tell me to do only as much as is reasonably possible within that time frame, and they never raise their voices," she said. She said she shared a room in Gurgaon's Sector 52 with a woman who did the same job as hers at Pronto. "She her shift at noon usually, and does 8 hours. We have not told our landlord or neighbours what we do, we remove our uniforms and leave the kit bag at the 'hub'. People will talk if they get to know, and the landlord may want to increase the rent." Her roommate and she pay a monthly rent of Rs 5,500.

Does she manage to save?

Her uncle and aunt who moved to Gurgaon a few years ago had told her parents that women could work in the city, and that made it easier for her to leave home, she said. She got on to the app just as a lot of Bengali Muslims were leaving for fear of being rounded up as Bangladeshis last year, and she benefited from the spike in demand. She worked up to 16 hours daily in the Diwali week, and hit Rs 45,000 in earnings that month, including incentives. "I send at least Rs 10,000 home every month. Right now, I don't mind doing this, but if I find 4-5 good homes who will employ me long-term, I will switch. In a way I will get to choose who I work for, unlike now."

MC to organise land earmarking ceremony for compressed biogas plant at Dadumajra

GNS News Agency, Jan 22

Officials said the CBG plant will play a crucial role in reducing landfill pressure, cutting greenhouse gas emissions and producing clean fuel. (File Photo) Officials said the CBG plant will play a crucial role in reducing landfill pressure, cutting greenhouse gas emissions and producing clean fuel. The Municipal Corporation of Chandigarh will hold a land earmarking ceremony on January 19 at the Dadumajra dumping ground for the compressed biogas (CBG) plant, which is expected to enhance the city's waste processing capacity, reduce methane emissions from landfills, decrease dependence on fossil fuels and generate renewable energy in the form of compressed biogas.

The ceremony will be held in the presence of UT Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria, marking a major milestone in the transformation of the Dadumajra dumping site into an environmentally sustainable facility. The land earmarking follows the successful bioremediation of legacy waste at Dadumajra, carried out by the MC in a phased manner since 2019. Through this process, nearly 28 acres of land have been reclaimed, reducing environmental hazards and opening avenues for scientific and productive utilisation of the site, said an MC official. Building on this achievement, the MC has partnered with Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) to set up the CBG plant under the design-build-finance-operate (DBFO) model. Importantly, the project involves no financial investment from the MC, including operation and maintenance costs. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between MC and IOCL was signed on November 20, 2025. During the ceremony, around 10 acres of land



will be formally handed over to IOCL. The land has been leased at a nominal rate of Re 1 per acre per month. Provision has also been kept for future expansion on an additional five acres. Once operational, the plant will process around 200 tonnes per day (TPD) of segregated organic municipal solid waste, with up to 10 per cent mixed waste, along with 30 TPD of cow dung. The estimated project cost is around Rs 125 crore. The project will adhere to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) norms.

As part of environmental safeguards, IOCL will develop a mandatory 33 per cent green belt in the project area. Officials said the CBG plant will play a crucial role in reducing landfill pressure, cutting greenhouse gas emissions and producing clean fuel. The project is also expected to bring long-term environmental and health benefits, particularly for residents living in and around the Dadumajra area.

Shooter linked to Lawrence Bishnoi gang held in West Delhi



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

A shooter with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang was arrested on Friday from West Delhi's Uttam Nagar area by the Delhi Police Crime Branch's Anti-Gangster Squad (AGS) in coordination with Rajasthan Police, officers said. The accused, identified as Pradeep Sharma (23), a resident of Agra in Uttar Pradesh, was arrested in connection with two FIRs registered in Rajasthan relating to extortion, firing incidents, and illegal arms supply.

According to police, Sharma's case dates back to March last year, when members of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang allegedly demanded an extortion amount of Rs 4 crore from a businessman in the Jawahar Nagar area of Sri Ganganagar in Rajasthan. After the businessman refused to pay, Sharma was allegedly tasked with carrying out a firing attack to intimidate him, officers said. In May last year, Sharma and his associates allegedly opened fire at the businessman's residence, following which a case was registered and the accused were arrested, they added. According to police, Sharma was later released on bail but continued his criminal activities and began supplying arms and ammunition to members of the Bishnoi gang. In December 2025, four Bishnoi gang members were arrested in Jaipur's Jawahar Nagar area with a large cache of weap-

ons. During the investigation, Sharma was identified as the source of the illegal arms, officers said. A separate Arms Act case was subsequently registered against him in Rajasthan. Following intelligence inputs, an AGS team tracked Sharma to Uttam Nagar in West Delhi. A raid was conducted on Friday, leading to his arrest. After questioning, he was handed over to Rajasthan Police for further investigation. Police said Sharma is an active associate of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang and was operating mainly in Rajasthan by supplying weapons and assisting in crimes. Further investigation is underway to identify his associates and trace the wider network, officers said.

Delhi CM inaugurates development projects worth Rs 100 crore

CM Rekha Gupta inaugurates Rs 100 crore development projects in RK Puram, focusing on roads, community spaces and parks. CM Rekha Gupta inaugurates Rs 100 crore development projects in RK Puram, focusing on roads, community spaces and parks.

Maintaining that development activities had remained stalled in the Capital under the previous governments, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday inaugurated development projects worth approximately Rs 100 crore in the RK Puram Assembly. Under these projects, roads in the area will be constructed and repaired, old and dilapidated community platforms (chaupals) will be renovated, community centres will be upgraded, and parks will be beautified, officials said.

To promote public health, open gym equipment will also be installed in parks, while boundary walls will be constructed at locations where required. "Under previous governments, Members of Parliament and MLAs had access to limited funds, due to which local development projects remained stalled for years," Gupta said, adding that immediately after assuming office, the BJP government released a budget of nearly Rs 700 crore to ensure development works worth Rs 10 crore in each Assembly constituency.

International drug cartel busted in Delhi: 2 Nigerian nationals held, drugs worth Rs 5 cr seized



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

An international drug cartel was busted with the arrest of two Nigerian nationals and the seizure of cocaine and MDMA tablets worth an estimated Rs 5 crore, police said on Sunday. The arrests were made after Delhi Police's Crime Branch conducted sustained surveillance of a drug supply network operating across South and South-west Delhi, officers said. During the operation, 418 grams of cocaine and 925 MDMA (ecstasy) tablets were recovered, they added.

According to police, the probe began after an officer received a tip-off about an individual previously involved in cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS). "On December 2, a tip-off was received by Head Constable Sandeep Kadian that one Nigerian citizen, Frank Vitus, who was previously involved in NDPS cases, was again supplying prohibited psychotropic drugs and MDMA in various parts of South Delhi. Soon, a team started technical as well as manual surveillance on

the suspect, who was constantly changing his location throughout South and South-west parts of Delhi," said DCP Crime Branch Harsh Indora. A raid was conducted, resulting in Vitus's arrest, DCP Indora said, adding that 418 grams of cocaine and 910 tablets of MDMA were also recovered.

"Vitus told police that he was involved in supplying psychotropic drugs in various areas of Delhi and adjoining states. Efforts were then concentrated on nabbing the source of the recovered drugs, who was using a Nigerian number for WhatsApp communication," DCP Indora added. According to police, analysis of Vitus's phone and further technical investigation led them to Southwest Delhi's Mehrauli, where the second accused, identified as another Nigerian national, Sunday Otuu (53), was arrested from a rented accommodation.

Fifteen ecstasy tablets were recovered from Otuu's room, police said. Otuu told police that he had been living in Delhi for the past two years and had been supplying drugs to Vitus, officers said. According to police, he told investigators that the syndicate was being run by a kingpin based in Nigeria, who coordinated deliveries through intermediaries, including an African woman residing in Delhi. Police said Vitus came to India in 2012 on a business visa for garment exports and was arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in 2015. After being released on bail in 2024, he allegedly re-established contact with drug dealers in Nigeria and began distributing narcotics in Delhi. Otuu, who arrived in India in 2015 for business, joined the racket after suffering losses in the garment trade, police said. Police said further investigation is underway to identify other members of the syndicate, including the overseas handlers and local facilitators involved in the supply chain.

Two men break into argument at dhabha in East Delhi, one beats another to death; arrested

GNS News Agency, Jan 22

A 26-year-old rickshaw puller was arrested on Sunday hours after he allegedly killed a man in East Delhi's Geeta Colony, said police. The 36-year-old victim was allegedly beaten to death with a wooden log after they had a heated argument at a dhabha, officers said. A PCR call, said police, was received around 9:49 pm on Saturday to report that a man was lying in a pool of blood in Mahila Colony of Gandhi Nagar. When officers reached the spot, they found the man dead with severe head injuries.

The deceased was identified as Danua, a resident of Hathras district in Uttar Pradesh, worked as a pot maker and also pulled a cycle rickshaw in the area. The crime team inspected the scene and the body was sent to Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital for post-mortem, said police. According to the statement of the complainant, Khushi Ram (62), who runs a roadside dhabha in the area, Danua and another rickshaw puller, Bunti, had allegedly arrived together at the eatery in the evening and consumed liquor. An argument broke out between the them and they began abusing each other. During the altercation, Bunti allegedly



picked up a wooden log lying nearby and struck Danua on the head with force, causing him to collapse and bleed from the mouth. Danua later succumbed to his injuries. A case of murder has been registered at Geeta Colony police station. The accused, Bunti, a resident of Aligarh district in Uttar Pradesh, has been arrested and the weapon of offence has been recovered, said officers, adding that further investigation is underway.

They jailed me ... remove your fear to bring change in Gujarat: Kejriwal to party workers

GNS News Agency, Jan 22

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal Sunday accused the BJP of running the government in Gujarat through "fear and corruption" and asked the party workers to remove fear from their minds to bring change in the state. "These (BJP) people have ruled the state for 30 years through the strength of fear and corruption... Now, it is time to remove the fear," he said, addressing the party leaders and workers at an AAP convention held in Loderiyal village of Sanand. "They scare people of (sending them to) jail... They can only send (you) to jail, they cannot strangle you... There is no need to be scared of jail," Kejriwal said. He cited the examples of AAP Gujarat leaders such as Pravin Ram and Raju Karpada who are in jail and Chaitar Vasava who has been jailed a number of times by the BJP government. He said that Ram and Karpada will come out of jail soon. The former Delhi Chief Minister said, "These people had jailed me. I stayed in jail for six months. There is no need to be scared of jail." He also cited instances of national AAP leaders like Sanjay Singh, Satyender Jain and Manish Sisodia who were jailed in Delhi. "We did not commit theft. False cases were imposed on us. They thought that by sending top leaders of AAP (to jail), the party would break down. AAP has not broken down and it will now bring a change of power in Gujarat," he said. Kejriwal said that as the Assembly elections come closer, the ruling BJP will bring in agencies like Enforcement Directorate, Central

Bureau of Investigation and police to jail people. "If all of us are ready to go to jail, nobody can stop the change of power in Gujarat," he said. The AAP convention was scheduled to take place at a private party plot in the Nikol area of Ahmedabad. However, the party changed the venue to a farm in Loderiyal village of Sanand after the owner of the plot 'withdrew' permission for the function allegedly following "pressure from the ruling BJP". Gujarat BJP president Jagdish Vishvakarma is an MLA from Nikol constituency. Speaking on the change of venue for the convention at a press conference, AAP MLA Gopal Italia alleged that the ruling BJP was behind the development. Quoting Italia, a party release stated, "All preparations for this programme (in Nikol) were completed nearly 20 to 25 days in advance. A private party plot was booked for the programme, the police were informed in advance, and all arrangements including sound systems and chairs were finalised. However, at the last moment, due to threats and pressure exerted by BJP members on the owner of the party plot, the programme was forced to be cancelled." Chief spokesperson of Gujarat AAP Karan Barot said that the owner of the party plot in Nikol withdrew permission for the venue for the AAP event. The convention was attended by top leaders of Gujarat AAP such as Gopal Rai, Isudan Gadhvi, Sagar Rabari, Manoj Sorathiya, Gopal Italia and others. When asked about the AAP allegations, Gujarat BJP spokesperson Anil Patel said, "We are not reacting to AAP.

'Police report inconsistent with medical reports... raised suspicion': Why court ordered FIR against cop

While ordering the registration of an FIR against the then Sambhal Circle Officer Anuj Chaudhary, the then inspector of Sambhal police station Anuj Kumar Tomar and other policemen in connection with the bullet injuries sustained by 23-year-old biscuit seller, Mohammad Alam, during violence over the survey of the historic Jama Masjid in November 2024, a Chandausi court observed that the report submitted by the police raised "suspicion" and appeared to be "inconsistent with medical reports and circumstances of the incident". The incident took place on November 24, 2024, when Alam, a street vendor selling pape biscuits on a handcart, was injured with gunshot injuries. His father, Mohammad Yamin, in his plea in the court, said his son sustained three gunshot wounds. Yamin said he had been unable to lodge a complaint earlier due to fear and added that after approaching officials with no success, he decided to seek the court's intervention to direct the registration of an FIR. While the Sambhal police, in its response, denied the allegations and said the bullet allegedly removed from Alam's body was not one used by the police, they also claimed that Alam was wanted in one of the violence-related cases and that his name had surfaced during investigation. The court, in its order on January 9, said: "...medical documents filed in relation to the victim, Alam, record that he sustained a 'gunshot wound' and also refer to 'police firing in a riot', rendering the matter suspicious and indicating the commission of a cognisable offence arising from the incident." As per the police report submitted, it was stated that the bullet removed from Alam was sent to



the Forensic Science Laboratory, Agra, for examination. According to the FSL report, police said the recovered bullet was of 7.65 mm (32 bore), a calibre not used by the police. Based on this, police claimed the available evidence does not establish that Alam was injured by a bullet fired by police personnel. The court, however, said, "The medical records clearly show Alam suffered two bullet injuries to his back and one bullet injury to his hand. They further indicate a fracture to a bone in his hand, with relevant medical papers and X-ray reports placed on record... The police have themselves placed Alam's medical documents on record and recorded statements of treating doctors. However, these statements appear to be inconsistent with medical reports and circumstances of the incident, thereby casting doubt on the police version and indicating the commission of a cognisable offence."

Restart of Japan's Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant, 15 years after Fukushima disaster, delayed due to alarm malfunction



equipment testing over the weekend and the new restart date should be within a few days. A TEPCO spokesperson said the company was examining the impact of the malfunction. Kashiwazaki-Kariwa's total capacity is 8.2 gigawatts. TEPCO has planned to resume commercial operations of reactor No. 6, which has 1.36 GW capacity, on February 26.

Test for TEPCO The restart of Kashiwazaki-Kariwa, the world's biggest nuclear power plant, is being closely watched as a test for TEPCO and the Japanese nuclear power industry at a time when Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is pushing for new reactor build-ups, including via a new public funding scheme, to boost energy security. Japan shut down all its 54 reactors after the Fukushima meltdown but has since restarted 14 of the 33 that remain operable. This month, Japan's nuclear watchdog said it would order Chubu Electric Power to submit a detailed report on falsified seismic data and pause its review of the utility's application to restart Hamaoka, its only atomic plant. Chubu Electric's President Kingo Hayashi stepped down as chairman of the Federation of Electric Power Companies on Friday, as he apologised for the incident. "The electric power business cannot exist without public trust. The erosion of that trust is extremely serious," Hayashi told a briefing on Friday.

Tokyo Electric Power will delay the restart of its Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant, which was originally scheduled for Tuesday (January 20, 2026) for a few days, public broadcaster NHK reported on Monday (January 19), after an alarm malfunction. It would have been the first reactor restart for TEPCO since its Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant was destroyed by a tsunami in 2011.

The company had planned to restart Unit No. 6 at Kashiwazaki-Kariwa on January 20 and Unit No. 7 around 2030, as Japan seeks greater energy security and lower fossil fuel import costs. NHK, citing sources, said the delay was due to an alarm malfunction that occurred during

Pakistan says Trump invited PM Sharif to join Board of Peace for Gaza



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

Pakistan on Sunday (January 18, 2026) said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has also been invited by U.S. President Donald Trump to join the Board of Peace for Gaza. India has also been invited to join the board by Mr. Trump, sources in New Delhi said. Apart from India and Pakistan, at least four more countries have been invited to join the board on Sunday (January 18) — Hungary, Jordan, Greece, Cyprus.

The White House released a list of appointed mem-

bers to the founding Executive Board of the Board of Peace on Friday (January 16) as the country moved to the second phase of Mr. Trump's 20-point peace plan for Gaza. President Trump has already declared himself as the chair of the body. In response to media queries, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tahir Andrabi confirmed that Pakistan did get a formal invitation. "The Prime Minister of Pakistan has received the invitation from the President of the United States to join the Board of Peace on Gaza," Mr. Andrabi said in a statement. "Pakistan will remain engaged with international efforts for peace and security in Gaza, leading to a lasting solution to the Palestine issue in accordance with United Nations resolutions," he added. He, however, did not elaborate on the issue. The White House said the Board of Peace comprises leaders with "experience across diplomacy, development, infrastructure, and economic strategy" as it invited the heads of around 60 states, including those of Turkey, Egypt, Argentina, Indonesia, Italy, Morocco, the U.K., Germany, Canada, and Australia to join the peace body. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, World Bank President Ajay Banga, and Mr. Trump's senior negotiators Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff are also part of the panel.

Artemis II mission: NASA targets February 6 to return humans to the Moon



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

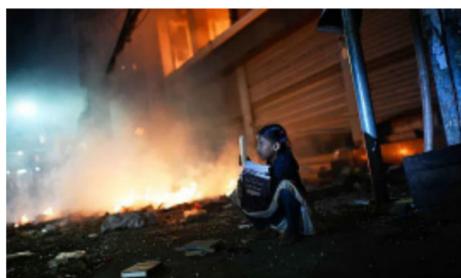
New Delhi: After 50 years of the Apollo 17 mission in December 1972, when man first landed on the Moon, NASA is planning to send a team of four astronauts on a journey around the Moon on February 6. The Artemis II crew includes NASA's commander Reid Wiseman, pilot Victor Glover, and mission specialists Christina Koch and the Canadian Space Agency's (CSA) Jeremy Hansen. In preparation, the US space agency has moved the Orion spacecraft and the Space Launch System (SLS) rocket to the launch pad in Cape Canaveral, Florida, on Sunday.

"Artemis II will be a momentous step forward for human spaceflight. This historic mission will send humans farther from Earth than ever before and deliver the insights needed for us to return to the Moon — all with America at the helm," said NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman. "Artemis II represents progress toward establishing a lasting lunar presence and sending Americans to Mars. Boldly forward," he added. The 10-day mission will

set the stage for Artemis III, slated for launch in 2027, when humans will land on the lunar South Pole for the first time and set up a long-term presence there. "Under the Artemis campaign, NASA is returning humans to moon," the US space agency said.

In August 2022, NASA tested Artemis I — the first integrated flight test of NASA's Deep Space Exploration Systems — the Orion spacecraft and SLS rocket. With Artemis II, NASA will rigorously test its Orion spacecraft and deep-space exploration systems in real conditions. The spacecraft will not make a landing on the lunar surface. The four-member crew will launch from Kennedy Space Centre in Florida and complete an initial orbit around Earth to check life support and other critical systems. While still close to Earth, the crew will assess the performance of the life support systems necessary to generate breathable air. Further, using the Moon's gravity, the astronauts will attempt a trans-lunar injection burn, where Orion's service module will provide the last push needed to put the spacecraft on an outbound trip of about four days and around the far side of the Moon, tracing a figure eight. The mission is expected to take the astronauts more than 230,000 miles from Earth at their farthest point, following a free-return path that allows them to coast back to Earth without additional engine burns. The flight will conclude with a high-velocity atmospheric reentry and Pacific Ocean splashdown. "In the coming days, engineers and technicians will prepare the Artemis II rocket for the wet dress rehearsal, a test of fueling operations and countdown procedures," NASA said. The team will also load the rocket with cryogenic, or super-cold, propellants, run through the countdown, and practice safely draining the propellants from the rocket — all essential steps before the first crewed Artemis mission — by February 2, the space agency said.

BNP urges EC to work with 'complete impartiality' ahead of Feb 12 elections



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

Dhaka: The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has urged the Election Commission to work with "complete impartiality", weeks ahead of February 12 general elections. BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir made the remarks on Sunday evening after a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin at the Election Commission building in Agargaon, Dhaka, state-run BSS reported. Alamgir said the BNP has always cooperated with the Election Commission to ensure a free, fair and impartial election. "However, we are now observing certain issues where arrangements appear biased and conduct raises concerns. We have urged the commission to refrain from such practices and to act with complete impartiality," he said. The BNP leader, elaborating on the meeting's agenda, said "the postal ballot issue is still not fully resolved". "Specifically, we believe that the way ballot

papers have been printed for registered voters residing abroad is not correct. There seems to be an attempt to give special advantage to a particular political party here. We have demanded a change in these ballot papers," Alamgir said. "We have also requested that those who will be on election duty within the country receive their postal ballots after the allocation of symbols. This is so that they can also have the opportunity to vote according to their judgment, just like any other voter," he added. On alleged violations of the electoral code of conduct and collection of personal information, he said, "A political party's activists are going door-to-door collecting copies of voters' NIDs, bKash numbers, and mobile numbers. This is a violation of personal privacy as well as a criminal offence. We have urged the commission to take urgent action to this end." "A political party is resorting to unethical tactics by transferring voters from various parts of the country to Dhaka," he claimed. "We have requested the commission to urgently provide us with a detailed list of which areas, how many voters, for what reason, and when they were transferred to Dhaka," he added. The veteran BNP leader alleged that they have received complaints that in various electoral areas, "officials were working in favour of a specific political party". For the sake of a fair, free, and acceptable election, we have requested their withdrawal subject to investigation," he said. Meanwhile, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin has urged cooperation from all stakeholders to hold a free, fair and inclusive election. He made the remarks while addressing appellants and lawyers after a nine-day-long hearing on appeals against returning officers' decisions on nomination papers for the 13th parliamentary election at the EC auditorium in the capital's Agargaon area.

When rescue workers fumbled, delivery agent entered water-filled pit to help Greater Noida techie



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

A delivery agent, who reached the accident site after a 27-year-old software engineer's car fell into a water-filled deep pit in Greater Noida, on Sunday (January 18, 2026) said he himself jumped into the pit in a desperate attempt to help the victim when he saw rescue workers struggling. Moninder, the delivery agent, said he was at the accident site in Sector 150 at around 1:45 a.m. Saturday (January 17, 2026) and alleged that rescue personnel were initially reluctant to enter the water because of the cold, poor visibility and the presence of iron rods at the construction site.

"I tied a rope around my waist and went into the water myself. I searched for the youth and his car for around 30 minutes," Mr. Moninder told reporters, adding that he was later told that "if help had reached 10 minutes earlier, the techie could have been saved". He claimed that Mehta was initially seen standing on the roof of his car, using his mobile phone's torch to signal passers-by and pleading for help.

Mr. Moninder also said the same ditch had earlier wit-

nessed another accident in which a truck driver was rescued by locals using ropes and a ladder. Police, however, rejected allegations of negligence. Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Rajeev Narayan Mishra said police and fire department teams made efforts to save the youth and deployed a crane, ladder, makeshift boat and searchlights, but visibility was near zero due to fog. According to the Knowledge Park police station, information was received around 12:15 a.m. that a car had fallen into a pit dug for the basement of an under-construction building near Sector 150. After an over five-hour search operation, the body was recovered later on Saturday (January 17, 2026) morning with the help of teams from the fire department, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the local police. Mehta's father, Raj Kumar Mehta, described his last conversation with his son and demanded accountability for what he termed negligence at the site.

"I spoke to him shortly before the accident. He told me he was on his way home," the grieving father said. "A little later, he called again in panic and said his car had met with an accident and fallen into a drain. He asked me to come immediately." Sensing the urgency, he rushed to the spot. "Police were called and some people nearby also tried to help, but nothing could be done to save my son," he said. The father said when he reached the spot, he again called his son but could not locate the vehicle as the visibility was low. "Somehow, when I called him, he opened the torchlight of his phone inside the car because of which we could see a faint little light from the water body. But it was so difficult for anybody to get inside the water body. Police and other rescue officials tried throwing a rope, but to no avail," he told reporters. The father also claimed if expert divers could have gone in then maybe his son would have been saved.

China's population falls for a fourth straight year



ence of the one-child policy that was in force from 1980 to 2015 helping to tackle poverty, but reshaping Chinese families and society. Population key issue in economic strategy. Population movement has exacerbated the demographic challenge, with large numbers of people moving from rural farms to the city, where having children is more expensive. China's urbanisation rate stood at 68% in 2025, the data showed, from about 43% in 2005. Policymakers have made population planning a key part of the country's economic strategy and this year Beijing faces a total potential cost of around 180 billion yuan (\$25.8 billion) to boost births, according to Reuters estimates. Key costs are the national child subsidy, which was introduced for the first time last year, as well as a pledge that women throughout pregnancy have "no out-of-pocket expenses" in 2026, with all medical costs, including in vitro fertilisation (IVF), fully reimbursable under its national medical insurance fund. China has one of the lowest fertility rates in the world at around 1.1 births per woman, well below the 2.1 replacement rate. Other East Asian economies, including Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore, have similarly low levels of fertility at around 1.1 births per woman. China's pool of women of reproductive age, defined by the U.N. as women aged from 15 to 49 years old, is set to drop by more than two-thirds to less than 100 million by the end of the century.

China's population fell for a fourth consecutive year in 2025 as the birthrate plunged to a record low, official data showed on Monday (January 19, 2026), with experts warning of further decline. The country's population dropped by 3.39 million to 1.405 billion, a faster decline than in 2024, while the total number of births dropped to 7.92 million in 2025, down 17% from 9.54 million in 2024. The number of deaths rose to 11.31 million from 10.93 million in 2024, figures from China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed. China's birth rate dropped to 5.63 per 1,000 people.

Births in 2025 were "roughly the same level as in 1738, when China's population was only about 150 million," said Yi Fuxian, a demographer at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. China's death rate of 8.04 per 1,000 people in 2025 was the highest since 1968. China's population has been shrinking since 2022 and is ageing rapidly, complicating Beijing's plan to boost domestic consumption and rein in debt. The number of people aged over 60 years old reached around 23% of the total population, the NBS data showed. By 2035, the number of over-60s is set to hit 400 million — roughly equal to the populations of the United States and Italy combined — meaning hundreds of millions of people are set to leave the workforce at a time when pension budgets are already stretched. China has already increased retirement ages, with men now expected to work until they are 63 rather than 60, and women until they are 58 rather than 55. Long shadow of one-child policy

Marriages in China plunged by a fifth in 2024, the biggest drop on record, with more than 6.1 million couples registering for marriage, down from 7.68 million in 2023. Marriages are typically a leading indicator for birth rates in China.

Demographers say a decision in May 2025 to allow couples to marry anywhere in the country rather than only their place of residence is likely to lead to a temporary boost to births. Marriages rose 22.5% from a year earlier to 1.61 million in the third quarter of 2025, putting China on course to halt an almost decade-long annual decline in marriages. Full data for 2025 will be released later this year.

Authorities are also trying to promote "positive views on marriage and childbearing" as they try to undo the influ-

Billionaires 4,000 times more likely to hold political office than ordinary people: Oxfam

Davos: As the rich and powerful from across the world start filling snow-clad lanes here, a new study said billionaires are 4,000 times more likely to hold any political office than ordinary people, and their wealth jumped three times faster in 2025 than the past-five-year average to a record high of USD 18.3 trillion. In Indian currency, it translates to more than Rs 1,660 lakh crore.

Hours before the 56th World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2026 begins in this Swiss ski resort town, rights group Oxfam International released its own annual inequality report to highlight that the ever-deepening wealth divide was also sparking dangerous political inequality.

The meeting is being attended by over 3,000 global leaders, including more than 60 heads of state or government, as part of an over 400-strong political leadership presence in this small town in the Alps. Oxfam International said the billionaire wealth jumped by over 16 per cent in 2025, while it has increased by 81 per cent since 2020. "This comes as one in four people don't regularly have enough to eat, and nearly half the world's population live in poverty," it added. The report, titled "Resisting the Rule of the Rich: Pro-

tecting Freedom from Billionaire Power", analysed how the super-rich were securing political power to shape the rules of our economies and societies for their own gain and the detriment of the rights and freedoms of people around the world. Oxfam said the surge in billionaire wealth coincided with the US Trump administration pursuing a pro-billionaire agenda, as it has slashed taxes for the super-rich, undermined global efforts to tax large corporations, reversed attempts to address monopoly power and contributed to the growth of AI-related stocks that have provided a boon to super-rich investors worldwide. Trump is among the top global leaders attending the WEF meeting.

Oxfam said the Trump presidency has sent a clear warning sign to the rest of the world about the power of the ultra-rich and the rising oligarchy, which is undermining societies worldwide rather than being solely a US phenomenon. It said the collective wealth of billionaires last year surged by USD 2.5 trillion, almost equivalent to the total wealth held by the bottom half of humanity, or about 4.1 billion people. This increase itself would be enough to eradicate extreme poverty 26 times over, it pointed out. The

number of billionaires topped 3,000 last year for the first time, while the richest, Elon Musk, became the first ever to surpass half a trillion dollars. "The widening gap between the rich and the rest is, at the same time, creating a political deficit that is highly dangerous and unsustainable," Oxfam Executive Director Amitabh Behar said. Oxfam estimated that billionaires are 4,000 times more likely to hold political office than ordinary citizens. It cited a "World Values Survey" of 66 countries that found that almost half of all people polled said that the rich often buy elections in their country. "Governments are making wrong choices to pander to the elite and defend wealth while repressing people's rights and anger at how so many of their lives are becoming unaffordable and unbearable," Behar said. Billions of people are being left facing avoidable hardships of poverty, hunger and death from preventable diseases because the system is rigged against them, while one in four people worldwide face food insecurity, having to regularly skip meals, Oxfam said. It further said civil liberties and political rights are being rolled back and suppressed, while last year there were more than 142 significant anti-government protests across 68 countries.

Delhi HC cracks down on alleged use of pirated surveillance software at Udyog Bhawan



The Delhi High Court has passed a restraining order against a private firm that allegedly installed a pirated copy of a proprietary video management software for the surveillance security systems at Udyog Bhawan, which houses several Ministries, including the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in the national capital. The order was passed on November 10 in a suit filed by Mirasys India Private Limited, a technology company, seeking a permanent ban on the unauthorised use of its registered trademark and copyright protected software. "As there is no purchase order of the Mirasys software from the plaintiff, for installing the same at the project site (Udyog Bhawan) and that the software found at the project site was licensed by the plaintiff for a different site, the Mirasys software installed at the project site is prima facie a pirated and unauthorised copy of the Mirasys software," Justice Tejas Karia noted.

Mirasys, represented by senior advocate Swathi

Sukumar, submitted that pirated copies of its software system had been installed and used at the project site at Udyog Bhawan since 2020, without any authorisation, licence, or consent from the company. Her client first became aware of the piracy when the officials of Telecommunications Consultants India Limited, raised a malfunction complaint concerning Mirasys Software telephonically, Ms. Sukumar said. Acting on the complaint, Mirasys's representatives visited the premises in May 2025 and carried out an inspection, when the unauthorised use of its software was detected. Subsequently, Mirasys's internal investigation confirmed that multiple unauthorised copies of the Mirasys software, originally licensed for another site in Gurugram, had been illegally copied and surreptitiously installed at the premises of Udyog Bhawan, New Delhi, without their "knowledge, consent, or contractual authorisation".

The software was allegedly installed by an ex-employee of Mirasys's erstwhile distributor, who had access to licence numbers and encrypted files. Acting on the plea, the court restrained the defendants, their directors, employees, agents, and associates from reproducing, copying, installing, distributing, using or otherwise dealing in any unlicensed or pirated copies of the Mirasys software, in any manner. The court also appointed local commissioners, who would visit the defendants' premises to inspect and seize computer systems, servers, storage devices, installation logs, licence documents, and other material linked to the alleged infringement. The commissioners have been authorised to seek police assistance and break open locks if access to the premises is denied.

Warner Bros asks investors to reject takeover bid from Paramount Skydance

Warner Bros. is telling shareholders to reject a takeover bid from Paramount Skydance, saying that a rival bid from Netflix will be better for customers. "The Board reviewed Paramount Skydance's most recent unsolicited tender offer with the same care and discipline it has applied throughout this process, including its review of multiple prior proposals," Warner Bros. said Wednesday (December 17, 2025). "The Board's evaluation followed a thorough and consistent process and is grounded in its fiduciary duties." Paramount went hostile with its bid last week, asking shareholders to reject the deal with Netflix favoured by the board of Warner Bros.

Paramount is offering \$30 per Warner share to Netflix's \$27.75. Paramount's bid isn't off the table altogether. While Wednesday's (December 17) letter to shareholders means Paramount's is not the offer favoured by the board at Warner Bros., shareholders can still decide to tender their shares in favour of Paramount's offer for the entire company, including cable stalwarts CNN and Discovery. Unlike Paramount's bid, the offer from Netflix does not include buying the cable operations of Warner Bros. An acquisition by Netflix, if approved by regulators and shareholders, will close only after Warner completes its previously announced separation of its cable operations. Paramount has claimed it made six different bids that Warner leadership rejected before announcing its deal with Netflix on December 5. Only after that did it take its offer directly to Warner's shareholders.

Beyond a greenlight from shareholders, both takeover bids face tremendous regulatory scrutiny. A change in ownership at Warner would drastically reshape the entertainment and media industry — impacting movie making, consumer streaming platforms and, in Paramount's case, the news landscape. Critics of Netflix's deal say that combining the massive streaming company with Warner's HBO Max would give it overwhelming market dominance, whereas the Paramount+ streaming service is far smaller. "This is something that we've heard for a long time—including when we started the streaming business," Netflix co-CEOs Greg Peters and Ted Sarandos said in a filing through Warner Bros. "Our stance then and now is the same—we see this as a win for the entertainment industry, not the end of it." Bids from both Netflix and Paramount have raised alarm for what they could mean for film and TV production. While Netflix has agreed to uphold Paramount's contractual obligations for theatrical releases, critics have pointed to its past busi-



ness model and reliance on online releases. Yet Paramount and Warner Bros. are two of the "big five" legacy studios left in Hollywood today.

Paramount's attempt to buy Warner's cable networks and news business would also bring CBS and CNN under the same roof. In addition to further accelerating media consolidation that could raise questions about shifts in editorial control, as seen at CBS News, both leading up to and following Skydance's \$8 billion purchase of Paramount, which it completed in August. U.S. President Donald Trump has already been vocal about his future involvement in the deal, indicating that politics will play a role in regulatory approval. Mr. Trump previously said that Netflix's deal "could be a problem" because of the potential for an outsized control of the market. The Republican president also has a close relationship with Oracle's billionaire founder Larry Ellison — the father of Paramount's CEO, whose family trust is also heavily backing the company's bid to buy Warner Affinity Partners, an investment firm run by Mr. Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, previously said it would be investing in the Paramount deal, too. But on Tuesday (December 16), the firm announced that it would be dropping out of the bid. Still, Mr. Trump also has a tendency to make decisions based on gut and his personal mood. He has continued to publicly lash out at Paramount over editorial decisions at CBS' "60 Minutes." "For those people that think I am close with the new owners of CBS, please understand that 60 Minutes has treated me far worse since the so-called 'takeover' than they have ever treated me before," Mr. Trump wrote on his platform Truth Social on Tuesday (December 16). "If they are friends, I'd hate to see my enemies!"

Does India need to upgrade its biosecurity measures? | Explained

The story so far: New age biotechnologies endow powers to understand biology better and, consequently, harness biological agents to target humans. Thus, biosecurity measures need to be upgraded.

What is biosecurity?

Biosecurity refers to the set of practices and systems designed to deter the intentional misuse of biological agents, toxins or technologies. In other words, it covers everything from safeguarding labs handling dangerous pathogens, to detecting and containing an intentional outbreak of a pathogen. Biosecurity is not only about protecting human health from pathogens, but extends to agricultural and animal health too. Biosecurity differs slightly from biosafety, which is a set of practices meant to prevent the accidental leakage of pathogens. A robust biosafety protocol feeds into biosecurity. After a few instances of bioweapons development, the Biological Weapons Convention came into existence in 1975. It became the first international treaty that not only prohibited the use and development of biological weapons of mass destruction, but also asked its signatories to destroy existing stockpiles. Over the past many decades, the use of bioweapons has been muted.

Why does India need biosecurity?

India's geography and ecology make it vulnerable to cross-border bio-risks. India's dependence on agriculture and large population makes the threat more dangerous. While India has not had any explicitly known biosecurity attack, there have been reports of the alleged preparation of the toxin Ricin (derived from castor oil) for potential use in a terror attack. This incident underscores how non-state actors are pursuing biological tools, reinforcing the urgency of robust biosecurity. Further, the rapid spread of biotechnologies have endowed humans with increased control over biology, increasing the chances of malicious actors experimenting with bioweapons development. The Department of Biotechnology oversees research governance and safety frameworks for labs. The National Centre for Disease Control manages outbreak surveillance and response. The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying monitors livestock biosecurity and transboundary diseases. The Plant Quarantine Organisation of India regulates agricultural im-

ports and exports. India's biosafety and biosecurity laws include the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, which governs hazardous microorganisms and genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005, which criminalises biological weapons. India has also developed Biosafety Rules (1989) and specific guidelines were released in 2017 for the purposes of Recombinant DNA Research and Biocontainment. The National Disaster Management Authority has a detailed guideline on the management of biological disasters. India is also part of international platforms that emphasise biosecurity, such as the Biological Weapons Convention and Australia Group.

Although India has multiple agencies engaged in bio-risk reduction, lab regulation, public-health surveillance, agriculture protection, a unified national biosecurity framework is still evolving. Further, most of the current policies and laws have to be also updated to keep pace with new forms of biothreats that are emerging. India is currently ranked 66 on the Global Health Security Index, and while its score for detecting biothreats has increased, its score for being able to effectively respond to threats has reduced.

What are other countries doing?

The U.S. anchors its biosecurity framework under the National Biodefense Strategy (2022-2028) which integrates health, defence, and biotech oversight. In 2024, the U.S. further strengthened this system through the Federal Guidance on Synthetic Nucleic Acid Screening, requiring gene synthesis companies to verify DNA orders against pathogen databases to prevent misuse. The European Union regulates through the EU Health Security Framework (2022) and Horizon Europe's dual-use research guidelines, embedding biosecurity in its One Health model. China's Biosecurity Law (2021) treats biotechnology and genetic data as matters of national security, mandating centralised control over research and material transfers. Australia's Biosecurity Act (2015) provides a unified legal framework across human, animal, and plant sectors, now extending to synthetic biology. The United Kingdom's Biological Security Strategy (2023) focuses on biosurveillance and rapid response.

Crypto investors show caution, shift to new strategies after crash



The recent crypto market bust has left some investors more cautious, after hitting some of the hottest and most-hyped corners of the industry the hardest. It may also provide a boon to emerging strategies that seek to more actively manage risks. The universe of crypto investment alternatives has expanded dramatically in just a few years and now includes direct cryptocurrency purchases, spot ETFs, derivatives like put and call options and futures, shares in mining and treasury companies, crypto exchanges and infrastructure providers.

But that is also bringing different investment results, with leverage, high valuations and funding concerns among the factors that have hurt various corners of the crypto markets. "Investment vehicles for bitcoin have exploded across both retail and institutional markets, fundamentally expanding access," said John D'Agostino, head of strategy at Coinbase Institutional. However, "the nuances matter in terms of how people want to express leverage and to what degree they want to hedge their exposure."

Bitcoin tumbled as much as 36% from a record \$126,223 on October 6, and remains around 30% below its high. Bitcoin treasury companies, led by Strategy Inc, have suffered even more. These companies hold a significant portion of their corporate assets in cryptocurrencies as a treasury reserve and often raise capital through stock or debt to acquire more digital assets. For years, their share prices traded at a premium to the value of the bitcoin they owned and many investors assumed that premium would keep growing forever.

But when bitcoin's price fell, those premiums collapsed. Strategy's stock has dropped 54% from bitcoin's October peak and is down 63% from its mid-July level. Japan's Metaplanet and a long list of smaller imitators were hit just as hard. It became "a localized bubble," said Lyn Alden, founder of Lyn Alden Investment Strategy. "Investors are now a lot more cautious of overpaying for those." Mining companies like IREN, CleanSpark, Riot, and MARA Holdings, which have been investor favourites, have also faced setbacks. These firms, which secured cheap electricity under long-term contracts, are now pivoting to AI data cen-

tres for tech giants. "Those stocks have been the best performers of the year because they combine two powerful themes: digital assets via their bitcoin exposure and AI," said Matthew Sigel, portfolio manager of VanEck Onchain Economy ETF, which invests in the crypto ecosystem. But many saw weakness on concerns about some of these companies' profitability as they carry heavy debt and constantly need fresh cash to pay for the switch. "The macro environment turned a little bit and those companies got punished," Sigel said.

Over the next few years, crypto and AI investments are expected to be increasingly intertwined, with crypto infrastructure seen as crucial for addressing power needs. Morgan Stanley estimates U.S. data centres are facing a power shortfall of 47 gigawatts through 2028, but notes that converting crypto miners could alleviate a significant portion, potentially 10-15 GW or more. "If you want to get a company with exposure to crypto, but also with exposure to an important growth story for the next five or ten years with the development of AI data centers, you've got to look at a lot of these miners," said Brian Dobson, managing director of disruptive technology equity research at Clear Street. For some companies, a solution to poor performance rests with offering actively managed and/or hedged strategies that can outperform during drawdowns. Sigel's VanEck Onchain Economy ETF has seen a 32% return since the fund launched in May this year by deliberately underweighting over-leveraged names, he said. "Our conviction is that active management is the way to go in this space because it's still an immature asset class." Activist investor Eric Jackson's EMJ Crypto Technologies (EMJX) has developed the first actively hedged digital-asset treasury holding bitcoin, ethereum and selective alts, which also generates yield by selling options instead of repeatedly issuing equity or debt. The company is now live, after SRX Health Solutions announced on Tuesday that it will purchase EMJX, with the combined company to be headed by Jackson. The ticker will switch to EMJX from SRXH after closing, which is expected in the first quarter of 2026. Through all the noise, bitcoin itself has strengthened its position as the clear leader among currencies, bolstered by strong institutional backing. Harvard University's endowment now holds BlackRock's iShares Bitcoin Trust as its largest publicly disclosed stock position. Sovereign wealth funds in Luxembourg, Abu Dhabi and the Czech Republic are building stakes. It is also a favorite currency among crypto miners. As more investment choices appear, Coinbase's D'Agostino argues that the overall market is starting to look like traditional commodities or stocks with regulated exchanges, safe custody options, and precise tools to bet on price direction, volatility, or steady income. "If you're comfortable owning commodities, real estate, art, or gold, but crypto still scares you — you're simply misinformed."

Why has the claimed dark matter discovery sparked debate, caution?

Is it a false alarm or a discovery that solves one of the greatest mysteries in cosmology? This is the question weighing on astronomers as they examine a study published recently in the Journal of Cosmology and Astroparticle Physics, which claims to have finally detected the elusive 'dark matter'. Dark matter is believed to have been around for most of the 14-billion-year history of the universe. Astronomers began searching for it in the early 1930s after the Swiss astronomer Fritz Zwicky observed that galaxies in the Coma Cluster were moving too quickly for the amount of ordinary matter it contained. He realised the speed of their rotation was so great that they should have flown apart as they didn't have enough matter to generate the gravity needed to hold them together. He deduced that some hidden mass could be providing the 'extra gravity' required for the galaxies to stay intact. He named this dark matter.

According to the Standard Model of particle physics, ordinary (baryonic) matter that makes up the world around us consists of elementary particles such as baryons (protons and neutrons) and electrons, along with the massless photons of electromagnetic radiation such as light. Baryons themselves are made up of even smaller particles called quarks and gluons. But all these fundamental particles form just 5% of all mass in the known universe. Dark matter accounts for 27%, while a mysterious force called 'dark energy' makes up the rest. Physicists don't know what dark matter is made up of, but one hypothesis they have is a hitherto unknown type of subatomic particle called WIMPs. The name is short for 'weakly interacting massive particles'. According to physicists, WIMPs barely interact with normal matter and not at all with any form of electromagnetic radiation. Since dark matter doesn't emit, absorb or reflect light, astronomers can only study its gravitational effect on visible matter, such as stars and galaxies. The trick to finding it then is to spot its tell-tale signature: high-energy particles, such as gamma-ray photons that are released when two WIMPs collide and annihilate each other. Tomonori Totani of the University of Tokyo has now claimed to have identified just such a gamma-ray signal in his study, using data from the Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope.

"We detected gamma rays with a photon energy of 20 giga-electron-volts (or 20 billion electron-volts, an extremely large amount of energy) extending in a halo-like structure towards the centre of the Milky Way galaxy" Prof. Totani said. "The gamma-ray emission component closely matches the shape expected from the dark matter halo." He added that the measured gamma ray energy spectrum "closely matches model predictions for the annihilation of hypothetical WIMPs with masses roughly 500-times that of a proton." Astronomers always knew dark matter must be virtually hiding in plain sight and that they'd find it sooner or later. Has Prof. Totani found it, however? Not quite, say experts, as the research data have to survive rigorous scrutiny and critical evaluation by more independent researchers. "When we see a signal that looks like it could be dark matter, we can check other regions that are rich in dark matter to look for a comparable signal there," Tracy Slatyer, professor of physics and Director, MIT Centre for Theoretical Physics, told this correspondent via email. "Studying the detailed properties of the signal would tell if it's consistent with what we expect from dark matter or if it has traits more consistent with an alternative source. So far, we have had many signals that seemed at first glance like to be dark matter, but subsequent in-depth analysis revealed they were from a different source. Moreover, the overall size of the signal is not what you would expect from classic WIMP models (it is too large), and when we do the test of looking at other dark-matter-rich regions, we do not see a corresponding signal." According to Rishi Khatri of the Department of Theoretical Physics at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, the findings suggest the detection of an excess of radiation compared to what cosmologists expect from the model of the Milky Way



Physicists don't know what dark matter is made up of, but one hypothesis is it's made of a new type of subatomic particle called WIMPs. According to physicists, WIMPs barely interact with normal matter and not at all with light. The trick to finding them then is the high-energy particles released when two WIMPs annihilate each other

galaxy. An illustration of the two gigantic X-ray/gamma-ray bubbles (blue-violet) known to be associated with the Milky Way (centre). "It is possible that this excess is just pointing to something missing in the model of our galaxy rather than dark matter." Prof. Khatri said in an email interview. "Based on what the study claims, we can predict what kind of signal we can expect from other nearby galaxies and then try to observe these signals. There have been similar claims many times in the past about detection of dark matter but which turned out to be false." Radiation from other sources

Discoveries in particle physics have to typically reach a confidence level called '5 sigma' before they are considered valid. Where does the new finding stand on this scale? "The excess reported in the paper seems to be quite more than 5-sigma, without taking into account the uncertainty in modelling," Prof. Khatri said. "The author has not given a number with the modelling uncertainty included. This should give you an idea about how uncertain we are about the uncertainty (i.e. error on the error bars) which is very important in such studies." An immediate task for astronomers would be to rule out the possibility of the radiation coming from some other sources of high-energy radiation like supernovae, the explosive deaths of massive stars; neutron stars, the ultra-dense collapsed cores of massive stars after supernova explosions; or black holes. The gravity of dark matter, like normal matter, should cause the light passing nearby to bend, in a phenomenon called gravitational lensing. A spectacular example of this is the Bullet Cluster, where the collision of two clusters of galaxies resulted in the separation of dark matter from normal matter, and astronomers could discern the halos of dark matter around the galaxies by how they bent the path of light. If the findings stand up to scrutiny and it turns out that a dark matter particle has actually been found, the widely accepted Lambda-Cold Dark Matter model of the universe wouldn't have to be modified. This is because, as Prof. Khatri said, "A new particle that would form dark matter is actually included in the LCDM model." Instead, "what we do not know is the exact nature of dark matter." And "if the dark matter is a 500 GeV WIMP as is claimed, it would be expected to have only very tiny interactions with other dark matter particles or with ordinary matter," Prof. Slatyer said. "So it would be safe to treat it as having only gravitational interactions, and many of the predictions of LCDM could remain almost unchanged." One thing that can be said with certainty is that this grand cosmic narrative is at an exciting stage as astronomers untangle the fabric of the universe to try to understand its evolution and nature.

Village on UP-Nepal border was trapped between a river and forest for years — now it gets a new address



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

Residents of this village on the Indo-Nepal border rarely leave their homes. The only way in and out is via boat, across a river teeming with gharial. The settlement is surrounded by water on three sides, the only land route cutting through the dense Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary. It has no hospital, no police station, and its only school has classes up to Grade 5. This is Bharthapur. Located about 130 km from the Bahraich district headquarters, it is accessible only via Lakhimpur Kheri or Bahraich after crossing the Kaudiyala and Girwa rivers. The village, however, is about to witness a major change. After five residents were killed when a boat with 22 on board capsized on its way to a market in Lakhimpur Kheri, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on November 2 ordered that the people of Bharthapur be relocated within a month. Approving Rs 21.55 crore for the project, he directed officials to ensure prompt provision of land, housing, and financial assistance to all displaced families. Village A 4.2-acre plot in Semrahna village, 50 km away, has been identified for relocation. (Express photo by Vishal Srivastav) For residents, who had been demanding relocation for the past 15 years — meeting forest officials, the Bahraich district administration, and even visiting Lucknow five years ago to hand over an application to an official at the CM's Janata Darbar — this comes as a welcome development. The Indian Express makes the long journey to Bharthapur to speak to residents about life in the village and what the decision means for them.

From Bahraich, the journey begins with a three-hour drive, traversing 40 km through the dense forests of Katarniaghat. The car halts at the Ghagra river bank, where a motor boat waits to ferry one across. Along the 6-km route, gharials and mugger crocodiles can be seen lying on the sandbanks, soaking in the sun, their scales shimmering in the light. Village Gharials can be seen lying on the sandbanks en route to the village. (Express photo by Vishal Srivastav) Near the village, the Ghagra branches out into the Girwa and Kaudiyala rivers; both rivers originate in Nepal. Soon, thatched huts with solar panels glinting atop rooftops, lining a sandy bank, come into view. A few residents watch the approaching boat. Inside Bharthapur, it appears time has stood still. Every house is made of grass and straw, and the only concrete building is a small, single-storey government primary school. There are no concrete roads, just narrow earthen paths. Only two small shops serve the entire village of about 600 people — most of them from the Maurya community. At the centre is an open space where people gather to celebrate festivals and perform rituals. Village The only concrete building is a small, single-storey government primary school. (Express photo by Vishal Srivastav)

"Our elders used to say the village was once much bigger," said 83-year-old Asa Ram, the oldest resident of Bharthapur. "But over the years, the river kept cutting into the land and the village kept shrinking... We don't remember when we ended up settling deep inside the forests of Katarniaghat." Government officials said revenue records show the village has existed since before Independence. The residents are mostly illiterate, while some have studied only up to Class V at the primary school. They subsist mainly on farming and fishing; the younger generation has moved out to earn a living and send money back home. Doodhnath Maurya (46), who claims he was part of the group who attended the CM's Janata Darbar in Lucknow, said the river has claimed most of their farmland. "Only a few people are left with small patches where they mostly grow turmeric and peppermint." To buy household essentials, he said, villagers have to travel long distances — some go to Khairatiya market in Lakhimpur Kheri, about 7 km away. Others head to the Bichiya market in Bahraich, nearly 10 km away.

"For grinding wheat, mustard seeds, and other work, we go to Bardiya district in Nepal," said Doodhnath. "We have to cross a stretch of the Bardiya National Park to get there... it's quite an adventure," he smiled.

For Uma Devi, the river has proved treacherous — her husband, Shiv Nandan (50), was among those who died in the boat tragedy last month. "Crossing the river is never easy — the water is deep and flows fast, and is full of crocodiles. If a boat ever overturns, people think twice before jumping in to help because they fear these reptiles." The journey through the forest isn't safe either. "That's why we avoid going out of the village too often and always make sure to return before sunset," Uma added. Education is also a challenge. Anyone who wants their children to study beyond Class V has little option but to send them to live with relatives in other villages or districts. "It's too risky for children to cross the river and the forest every day, so we send them away if we want them to continue studying," said another resident. "But only a few families can afford to do that. Most simply have to give up on the idea."

The fact that there are no doctors or even a clinic is also a cause for worry — the nearest hospital is in Bahraich. Then the monsoon brings its own troubles. The river floods the village and residents have to build machans to stay above the water, said Jagat Ram (35). Some seek refuge on the roof of the primary school. As their only source of electricity is solar lights, they usually retire early, around 8 or 9 pm. But nights in Bharthapur are anything but calm. "There's always the danger of wild animals," said another resident, Mohan Lal (27). He works in Delhi and returned home recently. "Every night, groups of villagers take turns keeping watch. The biggest threats are elephants and tigers, so we keep firecrackers ready to drive them away. Years ago, an elephant destroyed several houses and killed a villager — since then, we've kept watch at night," said Mohan Lal. There is also no police station in the village. Asked how disputes among residents are resolved, another resident, Ram Naresh Yadav, said, "We settle it among ourselves. If there's something serious, we call the village pradhan to resolve it. No one calls the police — and honestly, we know they wouldn't come here anyway." An officer at the Sujauli police station, under whose jurisdiction the village falls, admitted that they rarely go to the village as there are no complaints from there. The village falls under the Amba gram sabha. Amba's pradhan, Ikrar Ansari, said, "I visit the village once or twice a month; whenever they face any dispute, they call me to resolve it." During elections, a team from the district administration arrives at Bharthapur a day in advance and sets up the polling booth — the first booth of the district — at the primary school

campus. Locals said they don't recall any senior political leader visiting them to canvass for votes. "But we are relieved," said Doodhnath. "We are hopeful that the shift will happen soon." Relocation plan

Following the Chief Minister's directive, the Bahraich district administration has identified government land for the relocation — a 4.2-acre plot in Semrahna village, 50 km away. It has prepared a detailed layout plan and cost estimate, which has been sent for approval to the government, officials said. As per officials, the plan includes giving each family a 700-800 sqft plot where they can build a house and toilet under government housing schemes. Bahraich District Magistrate, Akshay Tripathi, said in addition to allotting plots, the administration is also arranging electricity, drainage, and road facilities. The new settlement will have 8-foot-wide roads, water and sewer pipelines, streetlights, and a dedicated space for keeping animals, said two-time MLA Saroj Sonkar. She won the election from Balha assembly seat in Bahraich on BJP ticket; Bharthapur falls under Balha constituency.

An official said the identified land is well-connected — a panchayat bhawan, primary school, and anganwadi are located about 550 metres away, while a private school is at a distance of 250 metres. Sources also said the government plans to provide 2.5 bighas of farmland to every family. Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Ram Dayal said that so far, the revenue and development departments have identified 135 families for relocation. After obtaining approval from the government, SDM Dayal said the PWD will develop the site and officials will take consent from each family before the move.

Sources said that if names of any residents have been left out of the initial list, the administration will prepare a revised one and send it to the government for approval. Alongside this, a separate Forest Department proposal to relocate Bharthapur residents following a spike in man-animal conflict was also approved. The plan was proposed in 2016. "The forest department has been pursuing the matter with the central government for several years, and approval was received last month," Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Sooraj, said. "We submitted the names of 118 villagers who had consented to relocate (when the report was prepared). They have been informed of the government's decision," he said.

Sooraj said the approved plan offers each beneficiary Rs 15 lakh in cash, along with compensation for all immovable assets — including land, houses, and handpumps. After the village is vacated, it will be merged into the forest. He also clarified that the Forest Department scheme is independent of the CM's directions issued to the district administration. Apart from the residents, two government school teachers, Vinod Kumar and Begraj Singh, are also relieved by the decision. They have been teaching at the village for nearly a decade — it was their very first posting after joining the Education Department. The duo lives in Girjapuri Colony and make the gruelling 12-km commute back and forth to the school every day — starting with a 6-km drive through the Katarniaghat forest, crossing a 1-km stretch across the river via boat, and then traversing another 5 km through the forest.

"We load our motorcycle onto the boat daily because once we cross the river, we still have to ride 5 km to reach the school," said Vinod (45), who hails from Jaunpur district. He added that they have often faced danger from wild animals, particularly elephants, and have had to abandon their vehicle and run for cover. The two teachers even hired a local resident to guide them through the forest each day. The school's strength has also fallen over the last four years. Vinod said there used to be over a hundred students before, but now there are just 47. Both teachers have sought transfers, but their applications were rejected. "The department told us we could be shifted only if we found another government teacher willing to come here — and no one agreed," Vinod added.

Daughter-in-law of pan masala baron dies by suicide at Delhi home, note mentions marital discord



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

The daughter-in-law of a pan masala baron allegedly died by suicide at her home in Southwest Delhi's Vasant Vihar, police said. A purported note she left behind pointed to marital discord, police said. As per sources in the Delhi Police, the woman, aged 40, was found dead in a room at a bungalow in Vasant Vihar, which is one of several owned by her husband's family in the area.

Police said it was the husband who discovered the body around 12.30 pm on Tuesday and made the PCR call. He was at the gym when his mother told him his wife was not picking up her calls. "The husband got home, went up to the second floor and entered the bedroom, where he found his wife... They were both living together in the house," a police officer investigating the case said.

The woman was taken to the Safdarjung hospital, where she was declared dead on arrival. "A diary and some notes recovered from her room mention marital discords between the two," the officer said.

Another investigator claimed that the notes mentioned terms like "no love and trust" and that she doesn't blame anyone. Police said that apart from seven to eight domestic help, no one else was at home when the incident happened. The couple got married in 2010, the officer said, and have a 14-year-old son and a 5-year-old daughter. "A team of doctors will carry out the post-mortem today. Inquest proceedings have been initiated but no formal complaint has been received from the woman's family. The statement of all her family members would be recorded. Further inquiry is underway," a police

Indonesia landslides, flash floods kill 17, six still missing in North Sumatra



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

Medan: Rescuers recovered more bodies in the search for dozens of people buried under landslides or swept away after torrential rains unleashed flash floods and triggered landslides on Indonesia's Sumatra island, increasing the death toll to 17 and leaving six people missing, officials said Wednesday. Rescue teams were struggling to reach affected areas in six regencies of North Sumatra province after the monsoon rains over the past week caused rivers to burst their banks, tearing through hilly villages as mud, rocks and trees tumbled down, leaving destruction in their wake, the National Police said in a statement. Rescue workers by Wednesday had recovered at least five bodies and three injured people in the worst-hit city of Sibolga and were searching for four villagers who were reported missing, the statement said. In the neighbouring district of Central Tapanuli, landslides hit several homes, killing at least a family of four, and floods submerged nearly 2,000 houses and buildings.

Rescuers retrieved seven more bodies in South Tapanuli district, raising the death toll to eight, after floods

and landslides also uprooted trees, prompting more than 2,800 residents to flee to temporary shelters and injuring 58 others, said National Disaster Mitigation Agency's spokesperson Abdul Muhari. He said landslides also hit 50 houses in North Tapanuli district and destroyed at least two main bridges in the region. Floods had cut off a bridge in Mandailing Natal and submerged hundreds of houses in the hilly district and its neighbouring Padang Sidempuan city, while a main road was blocked by mud and debris on Nias island. Videos on social media show water cascading down rooftops as panicked residents scramble for safety. In some areas, flash floods rose rapidly, transforming streets into raging torrents carrying tree trunks and debris.

Sibolga police chief Eddy Inganta said emergency shelters have been set up and authorities urged residents in high-risk zones to evacuate immediately, warning that continued rainfall could trigger more landslides after six landslides in the hilly city flattened 17 houses and a café. "Bad weather and mudslides hampered the rescue operation," Inganta said, adding that access remains limited as rescuers battle harsh conditions. Tuesday's disasters occurred the same day the National Disaster Mitigation Agency declared the official end of relief efforts in two areas of Indonesia's main island of Java after 10 days of operations. More than 1,000 rescue workers had been deployed to search for people buried under landslides triggered by torrential rains that left 38 people dead in Central Java's districts of Cilacap and Banjarnegara. At least two people in Cilacap and 11 in Banjarnegara were still unaccounted for when the operations ended, as unstable ground, bad weather and the depth and extent of the landfill material pose a high safety risk to rescue teams and residents, the agency said. Heavy seasonal rain from about October to March frequently causes flooding and landslides in Indonesia, an archipelago of 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near fertile floodplains.

Hong Kong high-rise blaze kills four, leaves several injured

GNS News Agency, Jan 22

Hong Kong: A fire ravaged a high-rise Hong Kong housing complex on Wednesday, killing four people and leaving others trapped inside, authorities said. The Hong Kong government reported four deaths and said three other people were hospitalised. Two of the injured were in critical condition and the other person was stable, a brief statement said. Hong Kong media said that one of the deceased was a firefighter, but that could not be immediately confirmed. Police said they had received multiple reports of people trapped in the affected buildings. The raging fire sent up a column of flames and thick smoke as it spread on bamboo scaffolding that had been set up around the exterior of the complex in the city's Tai Po district. Live video from the scene showed firefighters aiming water at the intense flames from high up on ladder trucks. The blaze was reported mid-afternoon and upgraded to a No 4 alarm fire, the second-highest level of severity, the Fire Services Department said. Tai Po is a suburban area in the New Territories, in the northern part of Hong Kong and near the bor-



der with the mainland Chinese city of Shenzhen. Bamboo scaffolding is a common sight in Hong Kong at building construction and renovation projects, though the government said earlier this year that it would start phasing it out for public projects because of safety concerns.

Pakistan's economic crisis driven by corruption, elite control: IMF

GNS News Agency, Jan 22

New Delhi: A new 186-page report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has again highlighted an uncomfortable reality: Pakistan's economic troubles are mainly the result of internal weaknesses, not outside pressure. The report says corruption, weak institutions, and powerful vested interests have pushed the country to the edge of economic collapse, according to Pakistan Observer website.

According to the IMF, corruption affects almost every level of governance in Pakistan. Policymaking is often controlled by influential groups that use state institutions for personal gain. The report said Pakistan has no reliable system to measure corruption, but one indicator is the National Accountability Bureau's recovery of 5,300 billion rupees in just two years. Even this massive figure, the IMF says, represents only a small part of the bigger problem, as per the report. The report states that ordinary people face corruption in everyday services, while the judiciary is widely seen as compromised. Public trust in state institutions has been steadily falling. It also notes how powerful business and political groups manipulate regulations and laws to protect their interests. The IMF cites the 2019 sugar crisis as a clear example. Influential business networks hoarded sugar, increased prices, and moved billions through fake accounts, while the state did little to stop them.

Beyond such scandals, the IMF points to deeper structural issues such as a complicated tax system, weak financial management, non-transparent government buying processes, and poor performance in public institutions. It says Pakistan could add 5 to 6.5 percent more GDP growth over five years if it implements serious governance reforms. The IMF report also highlights that corruption in Pakistan is not new. Both civilian and military governments have promised reforms but ended up creating new forms of misuse. Many leaders dismiss corruption allegations as political attacks, which allows the problem to continue unchecked. The IMF's findings, however, cannot be brushed aside as political — they are based on independent analysis.

The report warns that unless Pakistan breaks the power of strong business families, political dynasties, and elite groups, the country will remain in crisis. Citizens pay heavy taxes and high utility bills, yet public wealth benefits only a small group. The IMF says this imbalance harms not just the economy but also the moral foundation of the country. The report also points to global examples where strong action against corruption led to major reforms. Countries like China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Rwanda have punished powerful officials, business leaders, and even former presidents. Their common principle is that no one is above the law. For Pakistan to follow the same path, the report suggests that accountability institutions must work independently, without political control. Judicial appointments need transparency. Political influence in state departments must end. Taxes should be simplified, government procurement must be transparent, and political financing must be regulated so that policymaking reflects public interest, not elite pressure. The IMF says its report is not meant to punish Pakistan, but to give it one last opportunity



to fix its governance system. If Pakistan continues to borrow from the IMF, then it must also implement the governance reforms recommended in the report. Those responsible for the current crisis must show restraint and accept accountability.

Trump says envoys headed to Putin, Ukrainian officials as he 'fine-tunes' Ukraine peace plan

Washington: President Donald Trump said Tuesday his plan to end the war in Ukraine has been "fine-tuned" and he's sending envoy Steve Witkoff to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Army Secretary Dan Driscoll to meet with Ukrainian officials.

Trump suggested he could eventually meet with Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, but not until further progress has been made in negotiations. Speaking to reporters on Tuesday evening aboard Air Force One, Trump said resolving the war was difficult, and described what had been a 28-point plan as a work in progress. "That was not a plan — it was a concept," Trump said. Trump's plan for ending the nearly four-year war emerged last week. It heavily favoured Russia, prompting Zelenskyy to quickly engage with American negotiators. European leaders, fearing for their own future facing Russian aggression but apparently sidelined by Trump in drawing up the proposal, scrambled to steer the negotiations toward accommodating their concerns. Trump said he believed Witkoff would be meeting with Putin next week in Moscow, with his son-in-law Jared Kushner potentially joining the meeting. "People are starting to realize it's a good deal for both parties," Trump said.

The president played down the element of his plan that would require Ukraine to cede territory to Russia, suggesting that Russian forces were already likely to seize the land they're seeking. "The way it's going, if you look, it's just moving in one direction," Trump said. "So eventually that's land that over the next couple of months might be gotten by Russia anyway."

EPF withdrawals via UPI by April; likely initial cap at Rs 25,000 per transaction



finied for the three categories in a year. If a member withdraws the amount very quickly in 2-3 transactions, and though he/she may not have availed the full limit in amount terms, the eligible frequency may get exhausted," the official said. The facility would have seen light of the day earlier than this but the notification of Labour Codes in November and the easing of withdrawal norms in October had to be factored in during the software development phase of the proposed UPI facility, the official explained. "The withdrawal rules were changed, so the 75% and 25% balance bit and the changes in Social Security Code had to be all dovetailed into this. The work is now in final stages, and should be available before April," the official said.

The proposed rollout of the new facility comes after the EPFO announced liberalising its withdrawal norms after its Board meeting in October last year, streamlining the withdrawal categories from 13 to three — essential needs (illness, education, marriage); housing needs; and special circumstances. It, however, introduced two other significant changes regarding minimum balance and premature final settlement in cases such as withdrawal at the time of unemployment. The members can withdraw 75% of their corpus and would be required to earmark 25% of the contributions in their accounts as the minimum balance at all times. Withdrawal limits for education or illness were made more flexible: partial draws can now be made 10 times for education during the membership and 5 for marriage, as against the existing limit of 3 partial withdrawals for marriage and education combined. Under illness and 'special circumstances' categories, withdrawals will be allowed 3 times and 2 times every financial year. One of the decisions to extend the minimum period for availing premature final settlement during unemployment from the existing two months to 12 months came under fire from Opposition leaders. The Ministry of Labour and Employment had then clarified that 75% of a member's amount can be withdrawn immediately after leaving the job, in line with the 75% withdrawal allowed for other three part withdrawal categories, and the full 100% amount can be withdrawn after remaining unemployed for one year. This essentially implies that changes in the minimum period for premature final settlement, only affect 25% of the PF contribution — minimum balance requirement — while 75% can be withdrawn at all times.

Come April, and over 8 crore contributing members of the retirement fund body Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) will be able to withdraw their funds using the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) via the BHIM app. The new facility will show members their available balance, which will be segregated to show the eligible balance for withdrawal and the minimum 25% balance separately, with internal discussions converging towards capping the initial withdrawal at Rs 25,000 per transaction, a senior government official told The Indian Express. "Work is going on for the development of the entire system. Three parties are involved in the development of the system — EPFO, C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing), and the NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India) and there is also involvement of the State Bank of India for payment coordination. The withdrawals would be facilitated through the BHIM app initially, which will credit the amount to the UPI-linked bank account directly," the official said.

Every EPFO member will be able to avail the UPI facility through the BHIM app, with the existing guardrails for UPI transactions to apply as it is. The facility is especially expected to help blue-collared workers in the EPFO ambit who may not otherwise be able to avail the withdrawal process through the online portal. "Initially, a cap of Rs 25,000 per transaction has been proposed as anything instantaneous is prone to misuse. The users will also need to be careful with withdrawals with respect to the permissible frequency of withdrawals. Even though we are giving good flexibility now for withdrawals, the frequency has been de-

Aluminium sector is not yet ready for green transition: NALCO CMD

The country's only public sector producer of primary aluminium was not impacted by US tariffs since it does not export directly to America, Singh said, adding that domestic demand for aluminium in India is strong. Edited excerpts: As far as the aluminium sector is concerned, demand is largely driven by power and infrastructure. From this Budget as well, we are hoping for substantial funding for infrastructure and the power sector. If infrastructure expands, power demand will also rise. These two sectors are key—if funding and growth are there, the requirement for aluminium will also be there. NALCO made a record profit in FY25. How has the company performed so far this year?

Our physical performance in the first half of this financial year was the best ever. In terms of financial performance as well, we have done our best-ever first half compared to FY25. Revenues have increased by around 18-19 per cent, and profits by about 47 per cent. Up to Q3, we are again seeing the best-ever physical performance. Financial results for Q3 are yet to be declared, so I will not comment on that, but our expectation is that they will be good. The London Metal Exchange (LME) is supporting us, and metal revenues account for nearly 70 per cent of our total revenues. If, over the next two to three months, LME prices remain around \$2,800-2,900 per metric tonne, we expect our financial performance this year to be close to what we achieved last year.

Has the hike in US tariffs on aluminium impacted NALCO?

NALCO is not directly impacted since we do not export metal or chemicals to the US. Our alumina exports go mainly to the Middle East, Europe, and partly to Southeast Asia, unlike companies such as Vedanta and Hindalco that export directly to the US. If their exports decline and more aluminium is diverted to the domestic market, it can create pricing pressure. That said, domestic demand in India is strong. Around 40 per cent of aluminium consumption comes from the power sector, 10-12 per cent from infrastructure, and 6-7 per cent from automobiles. Solar power is also driving demand. All these sectors are growing, which is why we are getting good prices in India.

The EU has imposed Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). How will it impact Indian aluminium exports?

The aluminium sector is not yet ready for green aluminium. Aluminium is a highly power-intensive sector. If power costs rise sharply, the overall cost of aluminium will also increase significantly. It will take sometime.

Aluminium production is energy- and carbon-intensive. What are the decarbonisation measures planned by NALCO?

Nearly 80 per cent of our carbon emissions come from our power plant. If we want to reduce emissions, it is essential to reduce dependence on thermal power and move towards more green power. We are exploring long-term power purchase agreements with renewable energy producers. We have also engaged a consultant to prepare a comprehensive long-term strategy — whether we should go for solar, wind, hybrid solutions, or solar and wind combined with battery storage. Our objective is to secure around 200-300 MW of round-the-clock green power out of our current consumption of about 800-900 MW. This would mean 20-30 per cent of our power coming from green sources. This transition is expected to take the next three to four years. But many RE projects are struggling to sign PPAs... The problem is that green power is not available round the clock. For aluminium smelting, round-the-clock stable power is essential. Any disruption in power supply has a very serious impact on smelter operations and long-term production. That is why round-the-clock green power is critical. However, green power combined with battery storage is still expensive, and an immediate solution is not available. This is why we have tasked the consultant with evaluating different mixes — solar with storage, solar and wind, or hybrid models with storage — to identify viable options.

Are you considering nuclear power, now that the government has opened it up for private players?

Nuclear power is highly capital-intensive. Thermal power may cost around Rs 6-7 crore per MW, while nuclear power costs around Rs 30 crore per MW. That is a very large capital requirement, and it would significantly increase



power costs and, in turn, aluminium costs.

Moreover, nuclear power is still not fully proven in India at scale. Our competitors in countries like China and Canada rely heavily on hydropower, which is cheap, green, and available round the clock. That gives them a significant advantage. In India, such large-scale hydropower availability is limited, which is a disadvantage we face, even though hydropower can provide round-the-clock electricity.

NALCO is part of Khanij Bidesh India Ltd (KABIL). How has work on critical minerals been progressing?

NALCO holds a 40 per cent stake in KABIL. In Argentina, we already have three blocks where non-invasive exploration has been completed, and we are now moving towards invasive exploration. Non-invasive exploration is done from the surface and does not give the full picture. For invasive exploration, we have appointed a consultant, who will in turn appoint a drilling agency. They will carry out drilling, extract actual samples, and conduct detailed exploration. After that, a pilot plant will be set up. This entire process will take around one to one-and-a-half years. By mid or end-2027, we expect to have the results of the invasive exploration. Based on those results, we will decide whether to move to commercial mining, at what scale, and what kind of commercial mining will be undertaken for lithium. Lithium availability has already been indicated through exploration, and several nearby mines are operational. We are therefore quite positive that the invasive exploration results will be encouraging.

Is there any plan to enter the domestic critical minerals sector?

Initially, we have not participated in any auctions. However, around one to two months ago, we appointed a bid advisory consultant to carry out due diligence on upcoming auctions. The consultant is examining which mines are coming up for auction and what kind of premium would be viable. They are keeping a close watch on all auctions. Based on the due diligence, we will take a decision and place it before the board on whether to bid for rare earth elements or other minerals such as magnesium or chromite. We are quite open to entering the domestic critical minerals sector.

What are the challenges that you foresee in the critical minerals sector?

The main challenge in India is exploration. Resources exist, but converting resources into proven reserves requires extensive exploration, which is still lacking. The level of exploration needs to be significantly improved so that we have a clear picture of how much critical mineral is actually available. Once that clarity is there, more mine auctions can take place.

What are the timelines and financing mix of NALCO's Rs 30,000 crore expansion plan?

For the Rs 30,000 crore expansion, we are currently in the process of appointing a consultant to prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR). We expect to finalise the consultant this month itself. The target is to complete the DPR within the next six to seven months and place it before the board for approval by around July or August this year. Once the board approves the project, the tendering process for the plant will take another six to eight months. By March or April next year, we should be able to complete tendering and place orders. From that point, it typically takes three to three-and-a-half years to build a plant. Based on our internal roadmap, we expect commissioning by the end of 2030 or early 2031. This expansion includes a 0.5 million metric tonne smelter along with a 1,080 MW captive power plant.

40-year-old suffers from UTIs for 6 months, urologist says she was 'one step away from organ failure': 'If this story scared you...'



A 40-year-old woman complained of recurrent Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) for six months despite having no lifestyle issues. The infection "reached" her kidneys so much so that she was "one step away from organ failure". A Jalandhar-based urologist, Dr Varinder Virdi, detailed her case in a post on Instagram, writing: "She was 40. Corporate job. Long hours. Disciplined life. No diabetes. No immunity problem. No kidney stone. No pregnancy. Still...she kept getting UTI (urinary tract infection)?? Again. And again. For 6 months." Even after antibiotics, which gave her "temporary relief", her UTI kept relapsing. "She thought it was stress. She thought it was office hours. She thought it was 'normal in women.' Until one night...high fever. Chills. Vomiting. Weakness. By the time she reached the hospital — the infection had already reached her kidneys. She was fighting urosepsis. One step away from ICU. One step away from organ failure," detailed Dr Varinder.

While "she survived", on closer diagnosis, it was revealed that the cause was neither her job nor lifestyle or "hygiene negligence," but this "one" habit. "For the last 6 months, she was using vaginal washes every 3-4 days on the advice of a friend. She didn't know that over-cleaning kills the body's natural protection. She didn't know intimate washes can increase UTI risk. She just wanted to stay 'clean'. Clean doesn't always mean safe. UTI is not always due to dirt. If this story scared you — it was meant to. Because next time, it could be someone you love," Dr Varinder stressed. Concurring, Dr Aakil Khan, consultant urologist, KIMS Hospitals, Thane, said UTIs are not always linked to cleanliness. "Factors like hormonal changes, incomplete bladder emptying, constipation, sexual activity, anatomical differences, and changes in vaginal bacteria play a significant role. In many instances, 'over-cleaning' can harm as

much as poor hygiene," said Dr Khan. Adding that using intimate washes too often or incorrectly can raise the risk of urinary tract infections in some women, Dr Khan said: "The vagina has a natural balance maintained by healthy bacteria that keep the pH level acidic. Frequent use of washes, especially those that are scented or medicated, can disrupt this balance, allowing harmful bacteria to thrive."

Does this mean intimate washes are unsafe for all women?

No, affirmed Dr Khan. "Intimate washes are not dangerous by nature. Occasional use, particularly during menstruation or excessive sweating, is generally safe. Issues occur when these products are used regularly or too often without a doctor's advice," said Dr Khan.

Can a simple UTI really become life-threatening?

Yes, said Dr Khan. "If left untreated or poorly treated multiple times, a UTI can spread to the kidneys and, in rare cases, enter the bloodstream, leading to urosepsis. While this is uncommon, it is serious and needs immediate hospital care," he told indianexpress.com.

What are the warning signs that a UTI is getting serious?

According to Dr Khan, high fever, chills, vomiting, extreme weakness, back pain, or confusion are serious symptoms. "These should not be ignored, especially in someone with a history of recurrent UTIs," said Dr Khan.

What is the safest way to maintain intimate hygiene?

For most women, plain water is enough for daily cleaning of the outer area. "Avoid washing inside or douching. If an intimate wash is used, it should be mild, free of fragrance, and limited to once or twice a week unless a doctor recommends otherwise," said Dr Khan.

When should women seek medical advice for recurrent UTIs?

If UTIs happen more than two or three times in six months, it's important to get a proper evaluation. "This includes a urine culture, imaging if necessary, and identifying underlying issues rather than just taking antibiotics repeatedly," noted Dr Khan. Cleanliness is important, but balance is essential. "Recurring UTIs are a medical issue, not a failure of hygiene. Self-medication or advice from non-medical sources can sometimes cause more harm than good," said Dr Khan.

From garam paani to soaked almonds: Chitrangda Singh shares her nutritious morning routine for ageless skin and high energy

Actor Chitrangda Singh recently shared her morning routine, saying she has a full tray of antioxidant-rich drinks and fruits. "I drink lukewarm water. A big mug of garam paani. I soak cumin, carom, and then boil them and have it with lemon. Then I have soaked almonds," Raat Akeli Hai: The Bansal Murders actor said on the Let's Talk With Namita podcast. The 50-year-old added, "Then one kiwi and a small bowl of papaya. So, this is my tray in the morning." Taking a cue from her, we reached out to consultant dietitian Garima Goyal, who said Chitrangda's morning ritual reflects a gentle, gut-friendly way to start the day. "Beginning with a large bowl of warm water helps rehydrate the body after overnight fluid loss and supports bowel movement and digestion. Warm water also prepares the gut lining to receive food more comfortably, especially for those who experience morning bloating or sluggish digestion," said Goyal.

Following this with jeera and ajwain water with a squeeze of lemon adds a functional layer to her routine. "Cumin and carom seeds are known to stimulate digestive enzymes, reduce gas and ease gut discomfort, while lemon adds a mild vitamin C boost and enhances hydration. This combination helps activate digestion without being harsh on the stomach, making it suitable for regular use," said Goyal. Ending the morning intake with fruits like kiwi and papaya or a bowl of seasonal fruits provides natural fibre, antioxidants, and enzymes.

What it means when your heart suddenly races mid-workout: 'It can show up unexpectedly during a run...'

A heart that suddenly starts racing can be frightening, especially when it happens mid-workout or during an otherwise normal day. Many people dismiss these episodes as anxiety, dehydration, or overexertion, but doctors say there can be a clear medical explanation behind such sudden spikes in heart rate. Maryland-based physician Dr Kunal Sood, who specialises in Anesthesiology and Interventional Pain Medicine, recently explained this phenomenon in an Instagram post. According to him, these sudden episodes are often due to supraventricular tachycardia (SVT). As he described it, "If you've ever felt your heart suddenly take off mid-workout, this is likely what's happening. What you're seeing here is an episode of supraventricular tachycardia or SVT."

Dr Sood elaborated on how SVT differs from a normal increase in heart rate, saying, "It's the rhythm where the heart suddenly starts beating very fast, often 170 beats per minute or higher, without gradually speeding up." He explained the underlying mechanism as well: "SVT happens because of an electrical short circuit in the upper chambers of the heart. Instead of signals flowing normally, they loop rapidly, forcing the heart to beat much faster than it should."

He also pointed out common triggers, noting, "Episodes can be triggered by things like exercise, stress, dehydration, lack of sleep, or stimulants such as caffeine. That's why it can show up unexpectedly during a run or a workout." Importantly, Dr Sood also outlined immediate steps that may help when such an episode strikes. "When it happens, the best first step is to stop, rest, and stay calm," he said. He added that certain techniques may help reset the heart rhythm: "Sometimes vagal manoeuvres like bearing down as if having a bowel movement, slow deep breathing, or gently splashing cold water on your face can help reset the rhythm." So, how can a person tell the difference between SVT and a normal fast heart rate?



"Papaya contains papain, which supports protein digestion and gut health, while kiwi is rich in vitamin C and helps improve bowel regularity. Consuming fruits after hydration and digestive drinks allows better absorption and reduces the chances of acidity or heaviness."

"So, this routine focuses on hydration, digestive activation, and gentle nourishment rather than heavy or rushed meals. Goyal said that it supports gut health, reduces inflammation, and helps the body ease into the day with steady energy. "While this works well as a morning ritual, it should ideally be followed by a balanced breakfast later to ensure adequate protein and sustained nutrition through the day," Goyal said.

Dr CM Nagesh, honorary secretary of the Indian College of Cardiology and Founder of Cardea Super Speciality Hospital, tells indianexpress.com, "A normal fast heart rate usually builds up gradually and settles down once the trigger, such as exercise, stress, or excitement, passes. In contrast, SVT often starts and stops suddenly, without warning. People describe it as a switch being flipped, where the heart suddenly races very fast, often above 150 beats per minute, even while resting." He adds that SVT may also be accompanied by "symptoms such as dizziness, chest discomfort, shortness of breath, or a feeling of fluttering in the chest," which are less familiar with a normal physiological increase in heart rate. Dr Nagesh informs,

"Excessive caffeine intake from coffee, energy drinks, or pre-workout supplements is a common trigger, as it can overstimulate the heart's electrical system. Poor sleep or chronic sleep deprivation increases stress hormones, making abnormal rhythms more likely. Dehydration and electrolyte imbalance, especially low potassium or magnesium, can also provoke SVT episodes. In some individuals, alcohol intake, smoking, and high emotional stress further increase susceptibility, even in the absence of underlying heart disease."

Tests or evaluations recommended to understand the underlying cause: The first step is a detailed clinical history and physical examination, Dr Nagesh states, followed by an ECG to capture the heart's rhythm. If episodes are intermittent, doctors may recommend a Holter monitor or event recorder to track the heart over several days or weeks.

"Blood tests are often done to check thyroid function and electrolyte levels. In selected cases, an echocardiogram is advised to assess heart structure. If episodes are frequent or severe, an electrophysiology study may be considered to identify the source of the abnormal rhythm precisely," concludes Dr Nagesh.

Fan experiences, lack of a Test No. 3, political instability – the messes, on and off field, that need cleaning up



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

I hope the suits who run sports remember this: the game does not breathe in boardrooms, it breathes in the stands. In 2025, two moments laid bare how far fans have slipped down the priority list — both ending in tragedy: a stampede in Bengaluru, then chaos in Kolkata. There were other times when the disregard was less dramatic but just as telling. In Ahmedabad, those trying to catch the India-South Africa T20 action chased water instead. In Delhi, they were lathi-charged for wanting to see Kohli. At the India Open, badminton was watched from broken, filthy chairs. The list is endless. Sport survives because people call in sick at work, spend their last rupee on costly flights and match-day tickets (laying hands on them is another task!) and raise their voices from the stands. The least they deserve is drinkable water, clean toilets, sturdy seats and dignity.

No more fiascos With the hosting rights of the 2030 Commonwealth Games in the pocket, and an active bid for the hosting rights of the 2036 Olympics, India is actively trying to place itself as a favourable sporting destination. However, the memories of the last time India hosted a big international event in the form of the 2010 Commonwealth Games remain fresh. A recent incident at the World Para Athletics Championships in New Delhi, where two coaches were bitten by a stray dog led to further embarrassment. The Messi GOAT tour fiasco in Kolkata only added to that, effectively implying that there are visible gaps when it comes to India's management of big-scale events. The 2026 Badminton World Championships are scheduled in August and will be hosted in New Delhi; one can only hope that there is no moment there that turns into another tale of embarrassment.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup will be the biggest till date with 48 teams, but with the Donald Trump administration imposing partial or total travel bans on citizens of several participating countries, there is uncertainty over who would be allowed in, whether they are fans or officials of national football federations. People from Iran and Haiti, two countries that have qualified for the tournament, are banned from entering the United States. Others like Senegal and Ivory Coast face additional travel restrictions. This will be the first World Cup co-hosted by three countries — the US, Canada and Mexico — which don't see eye to eye on all matters. How they and individual US host cities, as well as the federal government, welcome the world would be looked at with interest. A team that had not been beaten at home since

2012 has been whitewashed twice in two years (New Zealand 3-0 in 2024, South Africa 2-0 in 2025) in their backyard. Although there have been sparkling moments when the inexperienced side managed to square the series in England, the disappointing series against South Africa raised questions about the health of Test cricket in the country.

India failed to reach the WTC Final last year and are placed 6th on the table in the current cycle. Four Tests in Sri Lanka and New Zealand, and one at home against Afghanistan, will be plenty to show if India can improve to be as good in whites as they are in blues. For 27 years since 1996, India's premier Test batting greats at No. 4 were guarded with utmost surety by their immediate predecessors. Grafters of assured mind, wrists and feet, the likes of Rahul Dravid and Cheteshwar Pujara, were products of the domestic game that now lies in bits and pieces. Devoid of a dependable system, the Ranji Trophy cannot immediately produce a clone to fill India's great No. 3 void anymore.

Even as the top Test nations grip with the falling standards of the No.3, India seems the least equipped in their transition. They have drafted four men in their last nine games under a new captain, and the most recent home debacle only protracted this specific woe. With a largely dormant first semester ahead, India will have time on their hands to prepare and zero in on a No. 3, but will one resounding name emerge from India's domestic wilderness? This one is less looking forward to, more watch in mild amusement. Nothing screams the confluence of the American political right and a combat sport that caters to that spectrum wholeheartedly more than a bevy of mixed martial art title fights on the lawn of the White House.

The Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), whose president Dana White campaigned for Donald Trump, will be holding a fight event with some of the best fighters in the world clamouring over each other to be a part of the event under the eyes of the American president. In a year filled to the brim with a FIFA World Cup, a T20 World Cup, a Commonwealth and an Asian Games, as well as multiple World Championships, nothing like a little break from serious sport to watch modern-day gladiators appease their ruling overlords in 2026. When Kedar Jadhav, former India batter, screamed "Ghar ma ghushi ne maris" in Gujarati when his former team Chennai Super Kings beat Gujarat Titans a few years back in the IPL final in Ahmedabad, it brought a smile. Hope floated that the cricket commentary in various regional languages would also take the next step beyond amusement and offer insightful commentary. They — be it Tamil or Bhojpuri — have certainly catered to the people who aren't that comfortable with English or Hindi, but the real letdown has been the English and Hindi commentary over the years. Will 2026 change that? Some of the players who joined the commentary world in the last decade have been more or less disappointing. It's time they move beyond parochialism and mind-numbing cliches. This is not to say that they need to get too serious and "boring". A look at Pakistan's A Sports, fronted by Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis, can be a good example of how to marry fun with insight.

'Too many World Cups, so it's little bit of an overkill': R Ashwin urges ICC to follow FIFA's pattern to hold marquee event once in 4 years



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

R Ashwin on too many World Cups 2025 had the Champions Trophy tournament for the men and the ODI World Cup for the women while 2026 will host both the Men's as well as the Women's T20 World Cups. (AP) Ravichandran Ashwin urged the International Cricket Council (ICC) to reconsider their scheduling, saying that nowadays every year has a marquee tournament like a World Cup and a Champions Trophy which are there mainly because of revenue generation. 2025 had the Champions Trophy tournament for the men and the ODI World Cup for the women while 2026 will host both the Men's as well as the Women's T20 World Cups.

"The ODI format has become redundant and to top it, ICC needs to see how they are conducting these World

Cups. Every year, there is an ICC tournament for revenue generation pattern, but look at how FIFA is doing it. There are leagues (EPL, La Liga, Serie A, Bundesliga) happening and they do their World Cup once in every four years. The World Cup has value as it's a marquee tournament. (But in cricket) too many bilaterals, too many formats, too many World Cups, so it's little bit of an overkill," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel 'Ash Ki Baat'.

While many like the legendary Sachin Tendulkar have suggested a split-innings format for one-dayers to revive them, Ashwin said that having just one 50-over event, the World Cup every four years, could also be a possible option. "If you really want to make ODI cricket relevant, then just play these (T20s) leagues and play ODI World Cup once in four years. So when people turn up for events, there will be sense of expectation. (Otherwise) I feel (ODI cricket) is going towards slow death," he said. Ashwin had also opined that the ODIs might struggle once established stars like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma retire from it, adding that the format was once amazing that produced a player like Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who knew how to control the innings as required by the game then. "...Dhoni (would) take singles for 10-15 overs before he went berserk at the end. You don't have players like that (Dhoni) anymore. There isn't any requirement to play like that, as you are playing with two new balls and five fielders inside circle," said Ashwin, asserting that modern ODIs are either a 'BashaThon' or a tale of collapse if the wicket happens to be slightly difficult," he said.

Todd Murphy is hopeful for spinners having a big role in Sydney Test



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

Australian off-spinner Todd Murphy is hopeful of spinners having a role in the fifth and final Test of the Ashes 2025-26 series at Sydney Cricket Ground. Spin hasn't played much of a role in the ongoing series, with pacers dominating the proceedings right from the Perth Test. The SCG has historically favoured spinners. While England have sidelined their frontline spinner, Shoaib Bashir, in the four Tests so far, Nathan Lyon too has had only a limited role to play for Australia. However, with Lyon out due to injury and the Sydney Cricket Ground being a favoured venue for spin-

ners, Murphy has reasons to believe that he might have a big role to play in his debut home Test. "I don't think going into the series there was ever that planning or idea that spin wouldn't play a role. I think it's sort of just been how it's eventuated. I think it'll evolve from year to year. Next year it could be completely different," said Murphy. Murphy has picked 22 wickets in seven Tests thus far, all of which have come away from home. He also understands that Lyon will always be a first-choice spinner for Australia at home. "(When I made my debut) I probably understood back then it was never going to be linear for me. I was never going to keep my place in the team when Nathan came back and I was always going to have to go back through Shield cricket and keep developing. At that stage I was only 23 so I still felt like I had a long way to go to be at my best. I still feel like I'm trying to discover that as well and continuing to get better. It's been a couple of years there where I've just been working away and trying to find the best version of myself," he said. Speaking about the conditions at SCG, he said: "I think it definitely can spin. We've played on some BBL wickets here where it has taken spin. I've only played a couple of Shield games and don't think it's ever done anything extraordinary out there. I don't think recently it's been massive spin but there's still been a big part of the game that spin played."

Stuart Broad heaps praise on Josh Tongue: 'Has done himself the world of good being on this Ashes trip'



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

After a match-winning bowling performance in the fourth Ashes Test in Melbourne that saw host England win their first Test against Australia Down Under after 5468 days, fast bowler Josh Tongue's stocks have gone up. A five-wicket haul in the first innings and two scalps in the second, Tongue was the pick of England's pace attack, which led the way for a win after three humiliating losses.

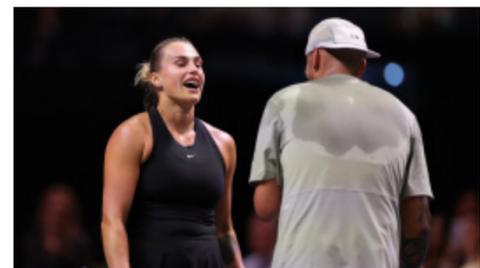
Having missed out on the first two Tests in Perth and Brisbane, Tongue made a serious impact ever since his

inclusion in the playing XI in the Adelaide Test. A four-wicket haul in the second innings of the Adelaide game, followed by a total of seven wickets in Melbourne, Tongue has 12 wickets in two Tests of the series. Former England fast bowler Stuart Broad said Tongue should have played more Tests in the series, and England missed the trick by not including him in the Gabba Test. While evaluating England's pace bowlers, Broad also said Tongue has done himself a world of good in this tour. "Tongue should have played more. He was the Player of the Match in Melbourne and you look now and think did England miss a trick not playing him, certainly at The Gabba and maybe even at Optus Stadium in the first Test?" Broad said to Sky Sports. "He exposes a full length, has got Steve Smith out three times in Test cricket and twice in county cricket, and bowls with a slightly different angle: wider of the crease, but can move the ball away. He needs protecting in the sense that he is going to bowl bad balls, so you need someone in the bowling attack that will defend and hold an area, but Tongue has done himself the world of good being on this trip," he added. Yet to make his T20I debut, Tongue was included in England's provisional squad for the upcoming ICC 2026 T20 World Cup, set to take place in India. England will lock horn with Australia at Sydney Cricket Ground for the fifth and last Test of the tour. The Test will start on 4 January.

Sabalenka wants rematch of 'Battle of Sexes' showdown vs Kyrgios: 'I love revenge'

GNS News Agency, Jan 22

World top-ranked women's player Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka said she wants a rematch of her "Battle of the Sexes" exhibition game against Australia's Nick Kyrgios. "I think I would definitely do it again," said Sabalenka ahead of the Brisbane International, her season-opening tournament as the World No. 1 prepares for the Australian Open, which starts from January 18. Sabalenka said she would like to get revenge on Kyrgios after losing 6-3, 6-3 in the "Battle of Sexes" event in Dubai. "I love revenge and I don't like to leave it the way it is." The Battle of Sexes event modified the typical rules of tennis that divided the fans. Sabalenka's side of the court was reduced in size by nine percent in an attempt to restrict Kyrgios' power and speed advantage, while each player only received one serve. Sabalenka also said she would want a full court and two serves this time. "I think for the next match we will come up with a different format. Before the match I didn't realise I would have to adjust and it was a bit tricky for me. I think I would keep the full court but I would take two serves. That would even our level a lot more," she said. "I always say that when you are losing, you are learning and I learned a lot about his game. I would do it again. I need revenge," she added. The Sabalenka-Kyrgios



showdown faced backlash, with some calling it a "money grab" while others said it did little to promote the women's game. But Sabalenka felt that the exhibition tennis game was important. "I think it's really important for tennis to keep it interesting, keep it fresh, keep it new, keep it fun," she said. "I am happy that I was able to challenge him, make him work and make him physically get tired and mentally get tired. I felt really excited to see a man getting tired and going for his full game. It was a really cool experience," added Sabalenka.

'Could not walk for two days': Stefanos Tsitsipas reveals why he considered retiring from tennis in 2025



GNS News Agency, Jan 22

Former Australian Open and French Open finalist Stefanos Tsitsipas has said that he considered retiring from tennis due to a serious back pain in 2025. The 27-year-old said he was left petrified about his future after he could not walk for two days, following his loss at the 2025 US Open. "I would ask, 'Can I play another match without pain?'" I got really scared after the US Open loss (to Germany's Daniel Altmaier). I could not walk for two days. That's when you reconsider the future of your career," the Greek said.

"I'm most excited to see how my actual training responds with regard to my back. My biggest concern was if I could finish a match," he added. Tsitsipas said that his biggest goal for the upcoming year was to ensure he finished matches and did not have to withdraw due to injuries. He also said he wished to win the United Cup for 2026, before the Australian Open. "My biggest win for 2026 would be to not have to worry about finishing matches. It makes great feedback knowing you had a pre-season without pain — I hope it stays that way. I want to deliver for 2026 and the United Cup. I went to actually visit one of the best sports doctors in the world, and he so far is promising to heal me. I'm hoping this stays for 2026." The thing that I'm most excited about is trying to see my actual training that I've been putting in the last couple of weeks and how it responds in regards also to my back, because my biggest concern has been: can I actually finish a match? "I put in the work. The most important thing is full belief that I can come back to where I was. I will try everything to do that," he said. Tsitsipas will represent Greece in the United Cup, with the team grouped with Great Britain and Japan, who will have the likes of Emma Raducanu and Naomi Osaka. The tournament will run from January 2-11, ending a week before the start of the Australian Open, which begins on January 18.

R Ashwin worried about future of ODI cricket after Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli retire



The One-Day International format could struggle once established stars like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma retire from it, former India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has stated. It is a sentiment that has been expressed by a number of former players, with the number of matches being played in the format, particularly involving the top sides, also dwindling in recent years. "I am not sure about future of ODI after 2027 World Cup. I am a little worried about it. Of course, I am following Vijay Hazare Trophy but the manner in which I followed SMAT, I am finding slightly difficult to follow," Ashwin, India's second highest Test wicket-taker of all time with 537 scalps, said on his YouTube channel 'Ash Ki Baat'.

Ashwin said that he feels Test cricket will continue to have its space even in the age of T20s, but he is not sure if fans want to see too much ODI cricket at the expense of either. "Also, we need to know what audience wants to watch. I feel Test cricket still has space but ODI cricket, I truly feel (it) doesn't have the space," said Ashwin, who also took 156 wickets in 116 ODIs. "Look, Rohit and Virat came back to Vijay Hazare Trophy and people started watching it. We have known that sport is always bigger than individuals but at times these players (Ro-Ko) need to come back to make the game relevant," he observed.

GNS News Agency, Jan 22

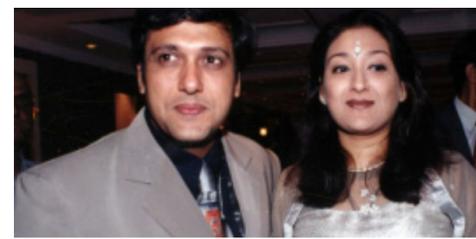
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"Vijay Hazare Trophy (national one-dayers), of course, is a domestic competition that not a lot of people follow, but they did (so now) because Virat and Rohit were playing. Even then, what happens when they stop playing ODIs?" he wondered. The lack of ODI cricket is also something that has resulted in Kohli and Rohit playing the Vijay Hazare Trophy, with chief selector Ajit Agarkar stating that the two veteran players may need to play in the domestic 50-over competition earlier in the year due to the bilaterals being played in the format dwindling in recent years. Both Rohit and Kohli retired from Test cricket earlier this year and T20Is after winning the T20 World Cup last year, making the ODI format the only one they are active in.

Govinda asks Sunita Ahuja not to 'suffocate' him; claims conspiracy against him: 'Even Krushna Abhishek is being used to insult me'



After Sunita Ahuja accused Govinda of having an affair with a younger woman and also alleged that he did not help his son Yashvardhan Ahuja in his career, the actor has reacted strongly to the claims. Govinda alleged that Sunita is being used as part of a conspiracy against him and requested his family members to "not suffocate" him with their statements in the press. Govinda reacts to Sunita's accusations. When asked about Sunita's statement warning Govinda to improve himself, the actor told ANI, "How many times have I gotten married? It has been 40 years. Have I gotten married 2-3 times? Those who have gotten married so many times their wives don't say anything and they roam around and have fun in life. People who are in the film line don't discuss these things socially. I have rarely seen anybody spotless in this industry. However, when you get cornered, you think about how to get out of this."

"Nephew Krushna Abhishek used by people to insult me" Govinda further claimed that his wife, nephew, and co-median Krushna Abhishek are being used against him as part of a larger conspiracy. "Even if you see Krushna Abhishek's TV programmes, you will notice how writers

would make him say things that would insult me. I told him that he is being used to insult me and told him to be cautious of this. When I warned Krushna, Sunita would get upset. Also, I don't know when these people would get upset with each other and when they are okay with each other. I more of a steady person," he said. Talking about why he does not help his children make connections in the film industry, Govinda said, "I am doing work according to my aukat (ability). I don't discuss my kids with producers and directors. The industry is my family, I have earned money and fame from this and which is why I don't want to put a black spot on it."

He added, "But you have to be alert in this industry because it is not that these conversations are happening just like that. There is some conspiracy going on, people are trying to create notions about me." Request family members not to suffocate me" Requesting his family members to refrain from making such statements publicly, Govinda said, "I want to request not to create circumstances in my life that suffocate me, I request this especially from my own family." Govinda also shared that he raised eyebrows when he, an outsider, announced three films when he was starting out in the film industry. He said, "When I started work in film industry and I announce three films or mere baap ki tauba isne kaise himmat kari films announce karne ki. This is what people did, and now when I have joined Shiv Sena and I have just become a pracharak is when this has started. I have stayed in the house without work for 19-20 years. It is a long time. I have spent my whole life working for people and to do this to me is not fair." He further said, "Don't think of me as a weak person. People should look back and before speaking should see the karma of a person and also their own karma."

'Never wished to cause pain': AR Rahman breaks silence after 'communal' comment, Javed Akhtar and Kangana Ranaut react

AR Rahman has clarified the intentions behind his recent remarks suggesting that he may have lost work in the Hindi film industry due to "communal" reasons in the last eight years. The Oscar-winning composer made this insinuation while confessing that he's been getting less work because of a "power shift" in the Hindi music industry. On Sunday, Rahman took to Instagram to share a video statement, clarifying his stance and adding he didn't want to cause pain to anyone while listing his initiatives to further the cause of India and its music.

"India is my inspiration, my teacher and my home. I understand that intentions can sometimes be misunderstood. But my purpose has always been to uplift, honour and serve through music. I have never wished to cause pain and I hope my sincerity is felt. I feel blessed to be Indian, which enables me to create a space which always allows freedom of expression and celebrates multicultural voices," said Rahman in the video. He added, "From nurturing JHALAA, presented at the WAVES Summit in front of the honourable Prime Minister and Rooh-E-Noor, to collaborating with the young Naga musicians to create a string orchestra to mentoring the Sunshine Orchestra, and also building Secret Mountain, India's first multicultural virtual band and the honour of scoring Ramayana alongside Hans Zimmer, each journey has strengthened my purpose."

"I remain grateful to this nation" "I remain grateful to this nation and committed to music that honours the past, celebrates the present and inspires the future. Jai Hind and Jai Ho," Rahman said at the conclusion of his message. The video ended with a cricket stadium singing in unison his 1997 seminal patriotic song "Vande Matram". In the video, AR Rahman also listed recent efforts undertaken by him for the progress of India's music landscape. He referred to JHALAA, a 12-member raga-based music ensemble which he mentored. The band performed in front of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the WAVES Summit in Mumbai last year. Under his music label KM Musiq, Rahman launched an all-women music ensemble called Rooh-E-Noor, led by his daughter Khatija Rahman.

He also cited the example of Sunshine Orchestra, a flagship project under the AR Rahman Foundation, which provides free Western classical music education to children from socioeconomically deprived classes. Rahman also mentioned Secret Mountain, an Artificial Intelligence-powered metahuman digital band conceived by him last year. Rahman is also co-composing the score and music for Nitesh Tiwari's adaptation of Indian epic the Ramayana. He's collaborated with legendary Hollywood composer Hans Zimmer on the two-part project, starring Ranbir Kapoor, Sai Pallavi, Yash, and Sunny Deol among others. Part 1 is slated to release in cinemas this Diwali. Earlier this week, in an interview with BBC Asian Network, AR Rahman confessed that less work has been coming his way in the Hindi music industry. He attributed it to a power shift within the Hindi film industry in the last eight years and also perhaps to "a communal thing." He was answering if there is any prejudice against him in Bollywood given he is a Tamilian



and cannot speak Marathi. "Maybe I never get to know of this, maybe it was concealed but I didn't feel any of this. Maybe in the past eight years because a power shift has happened and people who are not creative have the power now," he answered, adding, "It might be a communal thing also... but it is not in my face. It comes to me as Chinese whispers that they booked you but the music company went ahead and hired their 5 composers. I say good, I have more time to chill with my family. I am not in search for work. I don't want to go in search for work. I want work to come to me; my sincerity to earn work. Whatever I deserve, I get." How industry reacted to AR Rahman's 'communal' comment Shobhaa De: "This is a very dangerous comment. I don't know why he has made it, you should ask him. I have been watching Bollywood for 50 years. And if I have seen any place which is free of any kind of communal tension, it is Bollywood. If you have talent, you will get a chance. If you don't have talent, there is no question of religion being a factor that you are not getting a chance."

Javed Akhtar: "I have never felt this way. I meet people here in Mumbai. They have great respect for him. Rahman is such a big man. Even a small producer is afraid to go to him. But I don't think there is any communal element in this. Why don't you see him? He will definitely come." Shaan: "I don't think there is any communal or minority angle here. Music doesn't work that way. If it did, then even our three superstars of the last 30 years, who also belong to minority communities, would not have continued to grow. The key is to do good work, make good music, and not overthink these things." Kangana Ranaut: "Dear @arrahman ji, I face so much prejudice and partiality in the film industry because I support a saffron party yet I must say I have not come across a man more prejudiced and hateful than you. I desperately wanted to narrate my directorial Emergency to you. Forget narration, you even refused to meet me. I was told you don't want to be part of a propaganda film. Ironically, Emergency was called a masterpiece by all critics. Even opposition party leaders sent me fan letters appreciating the film for its balanced and compassionate approach but you are blinded by your hate. I feel sorry for you #emergency."

Atul Agnihotri shares photo of Salman Khan with MS Dhoni

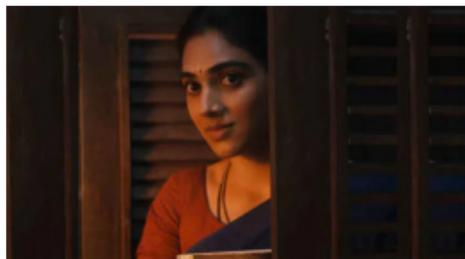
Mumbai: Actor Atul Agnihotri on Sunday shared a picture 'celebrating' his superstar brother-in-law Salman Khan, that also featured cricket legend MS Dhoni. The picture shared by Atul on his social media account featured his wife and Salman's sister Alvira Agnihotri, Arpita Khan Sharma, posing with brother Salman Khan and MS Dhoni and his wife Sakshi Dhoni.

Going by Atul's caption, it seems the picture was clicked during Salman Khan's grand 61st birthday celebrations on the 27th of December. Recently, singer AP Dhillon had also shared a picture of former Indian cricket captain MS Dhoni and Salman Khan joining him for an adrenaline-packed muddy adventure in Bollywood superstar's farmhouse in Panvel, where the trio was seen having a gala time.

Dhillon had taken to his social media account to share a series of photographs capturing the trio in high spirits during the muddy escapade. The images show the handsome

men splattered with mud as they rode an ATV through the muddy slush. In the caption, Dhillon asked: "Who do you think crashed it?" Talking about Salman, who was last seen on screen in Sikandar in 2025, will next be seen in 'Battle of Galwan', based on the Galwan stand-off between India and its expansionist neighbour, China, on June 15, 2020, during the thick of the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in India. The Indian and Chinese troops clashed in the Galwan Valley, eastern Ladakh. It was part of a larger border stand-off along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The clash turned violent when both sides attempted to patrol disputed areas, leading to hand-to-hand combat. The fighting resulted in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers, while China also suffered casualties. This was the deadliest India-China face-off in over four decades, escalating tensions and prompting both nations to increase troop deployments and engage in diplomatic talks to avoid further conflict. Directed by Apoorva Lakhia, the film is set to release on April 17.

Satvika Veeravalli introduced as protagonist of Dulquer Salmaan-starrer 'Aakasamlo Oka Tara'



Hyderabad: The makers of director Pavan Sadineni's upcoming Telugu film, 'Aakasamlo Oka Tara', featuring actor Dulquer Salmaan in the lead, on Monday introduced Satvika Veeravalli as the lead of the film, much to the delight of fans and film buffs. The film, which is being produced by Sandeep Gunnam and Ramya Gunnam under the Light Box Media banner, is being presented by well known production houses Geetha Arts and Swapna Cinema. Geetha Arts, which is one of the firms presenting the film, took to its Instagram page to share the introduction video of the actress.

tress.

It wrote, "She carries a dream bigger than the sky. Introducing Satvika Veeravalli - The dreamer who gives wings to #AakasamLoOkaTara #AOTMovie." The introduction video begins with a child, pointing to the sky and asking "How do I go to space?" Viewers are then given a glimpse of the heroine. The introduction video shows Satvika Veeravalli as a youngster from the rural parts who is dissuaded from pursuing her dream of going to space. We hear a man's voice saying, "Coming from a village that has no roads, you harbour plans of going to space? First, you show us if you can cross the borders of the village. Then, we'll see." It is evident that the film will revolve around the character that Satvika Veeravalli plays and that she is actually the protagonist. The film is about a girl from a remote rural region realising her dream of becoming an astronaut and going to space. The film boasts of a fantastic technical team. It has two-time National Award winner GV Prakash Kumar scoring music for it. Cinematography for the film is by one of the best in business, Sujith Sarang. The film has editing by National Award winning editor KL Praveen. The heroine introduction video also discloses the fact that the film is scheduled to hit screens for summer this year.

Prince Harry returns to court in battle with British tabloids

London: Millions of dollars are on the line as Prince Harry returns to court this week for the third and final chapter that starts Monday in his legal quest to tame the British tabloids. The Duke of Sussex is the lead litigant in a case full of high-profile plaintiffs who accuse the publisher of the Daily Mail of invading their privacy by using unlawful information-gathering tactics to snoop on them for sensational headlines. Harry, Elton John and actors Elizabeth Hurley and Sadie Frost are among a group of seven who allege that Associated Newspapers Ltd. hired private investigators to bug their cars, view their private records and eavesdrop on phone calls.

The publisher has denied the allegations and called them preposterous. The trial in London's High Court is expected to last nine weeks and will see the return of Harry to the witness box for the second time since he made history in 2023 by becoming the first senior member of the royal family to testify in more than a century. The prince vs. the publishers case was one of many that has emerged from the widespread phone hacking scandal in which some journalists began intercepting voicemail messages around the turn of this century and continued for more than a decade. Harry won a court judgment in 2023 that condemned the publishers of the Daily Mirror for "widespread and habitual" phone hacking. Last year, Rupert Murdoch's flagship U.K. tabloid made an unprecedented apology for intruding on his life for years, and agreed to pay substantial damages to settle his privacy invasion lawsuit. Harry's self-proclaimed mission to reform the media is more personal and goes far beyond headlines that attempted to document his party boy youth and romance ups and downs. He holds the press responsible for the death of his mother, Princess Diana, who was killed in a car crash in 1997 while being pursued by paparazzi in Paris. He also blames them for persistent attacks on his wife, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, that led them to leave royal life and move to the United States in 2020. Repairing rift in the royal family

The trial comes as Harry tries to repair a damaged relationship with his family since he moved to America and burned the bridge behind him by penning a scorching 2023 memoir, "Spare," and airing other family grievances in a Netflix series. Frosty relations with his father, King Charles III, appear to be thawing a bit after the two met for tea last fall when Harry was last in town. But a reunion this time looks unlikely. The start of the trial coincides with Charles' trip to Scotland and Harry's visit is expected to be limited to the opening of the trial and his early testimony.

Wins and losses before trial

'Disagree, don't disgrace': AR Rahman's daughters break silence as 'character assassination' over communal remarks intensifies

AR Rahman's daughters Raheema and Khatija have come out in his support. AR Rahman's daughters Raheema and Khatija have come out in his support. AR Rahman has been under fire after his interview last week, during which he noted how less work has been coming to him due to a power shift within the Hindi film industry in recent years and said it could also be due to the "communal thing". He attributed that assumption to what he's gathered from "Chinese whispers" in the last eight years. Now, Rahman's daughters Khatija and Raheema have come out in their father's support.

Rahman's daughters Khatija, Raheema's response Both Khatija and Raheema shared Malayalam music composer Kailas Menon's note in support of Rahman on their Instagram Stories. Menon on Sunday shared a long note on Instagram, titled "Disagree, don't disgrace." "People blaming A. R. Rahman for speaking his mind are missing a basic point. He spoke about how he felt. That is his right. You may disagree with him, but you cannot deny him the freedom to express his experience," he wrote.

Menon noted that what's followed Rahman's confession has gone far beyond disagreement and entered the territory of "abuse and character assassination". "Calling a globally respected artist a 'disgrace', questioning his faith, mocking his recent works, and reducing his lived experience to a 'victim card' is not criticism. It's hate speech presented as opinion," Menon argued. He added that Rahman is not a "random voice", but has given "decades of contribution to Tamil culture, Indian cinema, and global music." He said that all of an artist's contributions should not vanish just because of the expression of a personal view. "What is not fair is public humiliation or attacking his integrity to silence what he said. Freedom of speech applies to Rahman as much as it applies to his critics. Criticism is fine, but outrage without respect says more about us than about him," wrote Menon. Khatija not only reposted Menon's note, but also commented clapping, fire, hundred, and heart emojis on his post. While both of Rahman's daughters have shown support towards their father, his son AR Ameen hasn't re-



The case against the Mail was filed in 2022 and has been the subject of several contentious hearings that have led to rulings that each side has claimed as victories. Lawyers for Associated Newspapers had argued that the case should be thrown out because claims dating as far back as 1993 were brought too late. But in a ruling saying the cases have a "real prospect of succeeding," Judge Matthew Nicklin said the papers had "not been able to deliver a knockout blow" to the claims. In the same ruling, Nicklin handed a win to the Mail in saying Harry and the others could not use records that allegedly showed payments by the Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday to private investigators because they had been disclosed in confidence to a government inquiry into phone hacking. But Harry's lawyers later got permission from U.K. government officials to use the documents.

Private eye with conflicting claims A private investigator whose name is on a sworn statement supporting the claims of Harry and the celebrities has filed another statement denying he ever snooped on them. During an early hearing in the case, attorney David Sherborne said his clients were not aware they were phone hacking victims until Gavin Burrows and other investigators came forward in 2021 to "do the right thing" and help those he targeted. Burrows said he "must have done hundreds of jobs" for the Mail between 2000 and 2005 and that Harry, John and his husband, David Furnish, and Hurley and Frost were "just a small handful of my targets." But he has since signed another statement saying he had not been hired by Associated Newspapers to do any unlawful work. It's unclear what impact his conflicting statements will have on the case. The other claimants are anti-racism activist Doreen Lawrence and former politician Simon Hughes.



sponded to the controversy publicly yet. The backlash was so extreme that Rahman had to post a video message on Sunday in order to clarify his intentions.

"India is my inspiration, my teacher and my home. I understand that intentions can sometimes be misunderstood. But my purpose has always been to uplift, honour and serve through music. I have never wished to cause pain, and I hope my sincerity is felt. I feel blessed to be Indian, which enables me to create a space which always allows freedom of expression and celebrates multicultural voices," Rahman said in the video.

He also listed the details of his contributions to India's growth and diverse culture. "Each journey has strengthened my purpose," said Rahman, adding at the end that he has the "honour" of composing, along with Hollywood legend Hans Zimmer, the two-part film adaptation of Indian epic, the Ramayana, helmed by Nitesh Tiwari. In a BBC interview, when asked whether there is 'prejudice within the Hindi film landscape' against the Tamil community or people who are not from Maharashtra, AR Rahman said: "Maybe I never get to know of this,