

# INDIAN CHRONICLE

## Hare Rama Hare Krishna Bhajan Programme at Ashok Nagar

"Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, January 27:"In Uppal Constituency, HB Colony Division, a Hare Rama Hare Krishna bhajan programme was organised under the aegis of the Bihar Samaj at Ashok Nagar. BJP Division President Ram Pradeep Munuganti, along with BJP leaders Ramchander and Narasimha Ashok, participated in the devotional programme and took part in the bhajans. The event was conducted in a peaceful and spiritual atmosphere with the active involvement of the local community.



## Special Grievance Cancellation held every Thursday..District Collector Hanumantha Rao

(Mandava Srisailem..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle..January 27):- As the Telangana State Election Commission released the 2nd General Municipal Election Notification on 27th of this month. The district collector said in a statement that there will be no special grievances and job voice program held every Thursday until the election process is completed as the code has come into force. He said that the people of the district should not come to the collectorate to take notice of this matter and give petitions on various issues.



## Eureka! India seals landmark trade deal

New Delhi, Jan 27

India and the European Union on Tuesday agreed to significantly deepen their strategic partnership, concluding the negotiations on the long-awaited Free Trade Agreement and signing the first-ever overarching Security and Defence Partnership pact at the 16th India-EU Summit in New Delhi.

The summit capped a high-profile state visit by European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who were chief guests at India's 77th Republic Day celebrations — the first time EU leaders have been accorded the honour. They were accompanied by a senior delegation, including EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas and Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, co-chairing the summit with Costa and von der Leyen, said the outcomes reflected the "maturity and ambition" of the India-EU ties, rooted in shared democratic values and a common commitment to a rules-based international order.

"...India has concluded the largest FTA in its his-



tory. It is a happy coincidence that on the 27th day of the month, India is entering into this FTA with the 27-member states of the European Union," Modi said during a joint press conference.

He said this historic agreement would facilitate easier access for our farmers and small enterprises to European markets, create new opportunities in manufacturing, and further strengthen cooperation across our services sectors.

## Telangana municipal elections on February 11; nomination process begins January 28

"Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 27 (Indian Chronicle)"Hyderabad: The Telangana State Election Commission on Tuesday announced the schedule for the second ordinary elections to municipalities and municipal corporations, 2026, as notified in the Telangana Gazette Extraordinary."According to the election programme, the issue of election notification and display of ward-wise electoral rolls will commence on January 28. From the same day, nominations will be received by Returning Officers between 10.30 am and 5.00 pm."The last date for filing nominations is January 30, while scrutiny of nominations will be conducted on January 31 from 11.00 am onwards. The list of validly nominated candidates will be published immediately after the completion of scrutiny on the same day."Candidates can file appeals against rejection of nominations on February 1 up to 5.00 pm, and the disposal of appeals will be completed by February 2. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is February 3 up to 3.00 pm, following which the final list of contesting candidates will be published later that day."The polling for municipalities and municipal corporations will be



held on February 11 from 7.00 am to 5.00 pm. In case of a re-poll, it will be conducted on February 12. The counting of votes is scheduled for February 13 from 8.00 am onwards, and the results will be declared soon after the completion of counting."The notification was issued by State Election Commissioner I. Rani Kumudini.

## The accreditation GO should be thoroughly revised

Remove the 'Press' sticker rule

TWJF leaders met the Minister and Special Commissioner

"(Mandava Srisailem...Hyderabad...Indian Chronicle...January 27):- Telangana Working Journalists Federation (TWJF) leaders expressed their happiness regarding the revision of GO 252 on media accreditations and thanked the State Information and Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and Special Commissioner CH Priyanka. Federation founder president and state convener Mamidi Somayya, state co-conveners Tanniru Srinivas, Kudutadu Bapurao, Hyderabad district convener Ravi Kumar, and leaders Sridhar, Srinivas, Ravi Kumar, and others met Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy at the Secretariat and Commissioner Priyanka at the Information Bhavan on Tuesday and expressed their gratitude. They requested that the GO 252 revision was not thorough and that the GO should be reviewed and revised again. They stated that cable channels and constituency-level reporters were not getting justice in the GO revision, and that previously, 12 state-level and four district-level accreditation cards were given to cable channels through I&PR. They expressed their disappointment that despite bringing this matter to their attention multiple times, the revised GO did not include any provision for cable channels. Although they expressed their opinion as a union, they stated that it is unfair that the government has not responded regarding cable channels and the issuance of press cards to reporters at the constituency level. They also requested the minister and the commissioner to issue accreditation cards to small and medium-sized newspapers that are not empanelled, similar to how it was done in undivided Andhra Pradesh, and to empanel regularly running newspapers."Press' Sticker Rule Must Be Removed"Telangana Working Journalists Federation (TWJF) State Convener Mamidi Somayya demanded the cancellation of the circular issued stating that only journalists with accreditation cards can display 'Press' on their vehicles. Accordingly, he and several federation leaders met with the Special Commissioner of the Information and Public Relations Department, Priyanka, on Tuesday and submitted a memorandum. Mamidi Somayya told the commissioner that this circular is insulting to journalists and the profession of journalism, and that it is inappropriate to consider the accreditation card, which is given to journalists only for welfare schemes, as the standard for recognizing a jour-



nalist. He added that the rule that only those with accreditation cards can display "Press" on their vehicles is not correct, and that this circular's provision harms both the journalistic community and the freedom of the journalism profession. He stated that not all journalists across the state are those who possess the accreditation cards issued by the government, and that there are many journalists who do not have accreditation cards. He said that while there are approximately 50,000 journalists across the state, the government is issuing accreditation cards to only half of them, and the remaining half are working with identity cards from media organizations registered with the Central Government's RNI (now PRGI), without government accreditation cards."He said that journalists working in non-empanelled media organizations do not have accreditation cards, and it is not right for the government to impose rules preventing them from displaying 'Press' stickers on their vehicles, as if they are not real journalists. He said that there are many ways to curb fake journalists in society, and they can be controlled through special rules, and they are not against such measures, but it is not right to insult and obstruct genuine journalists in the name of these measures. He expressed concern that many journalists without accreditation cards are already facing difficulties, and in this context, the circular issued by the government is like "adding insult to injury." Mamidi Somaiah requested that this circular be withdrawn immediately. Commissioner Priyanka assured him that she would reconsider the matter and discuss it with the transport department officials.

## Chaitanyapuri Police Arrest Two Chain Snatchers, Recover Gold and Property



NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal-Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 27, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):"Chaitanyapuri Police successfully arrested two accused involved in multiple gold chain snatching cases reported in the LB Nagar Zone and other parts of Hyderabad. The arrests were made following swift investigation and coordinated efforts by special police teams. According to police, on 17 January 2026 at around 10:20 a.m., the accused arrived in the LB Nagar Zone on a Bajaj Pulsar motorcycle, which had earlier been stolen from the limits of Gopalapuram Police Station. The duo allegedly carried out a series of chain snatchings targeting women in the limits of Hayathnagar, Nagole, and Chaitanyapuri police stations. After committing the offences, they abandoned the motorcycle near Sangeetha Theatre Cross Roads, Secunderabad, and fled to Delhi."Following the incidents, Chaitanyapuri Police formed three special teams. Based on technical evidence, including CCTV footage analysis, tower dump data, call detail records, and field verification, one team tracked the accused to Delhi. The team apprehended Accused No.1 Akshay Kumar Sharma and Accused No.2 Rohit and seized the stolen property. Accused Details Accused No.1: Akshay Kumar Sharma alias Akshay Sharma, 29 years, delivery boy, resident of Sagarapur, New Delhi. Accused No.2: Rohit, 26 years, delivery boy, resident of Street No.3, Laxman Vihar, Gurugram village, Haryana. Police stated that both accused are habitual offenders with a long criminal history involving property offences across Delhi and Nagpur. Ac-



cused No.1 is involved in over 20 criminal cases, including chain snatching, theft, and Arms Act cases registered at various police stations in Delhi and Nagpur. Accused No.2 is involved in more than 10 similar cases registered in Delhi and Nagpur. Investigations revealed that both accused were arrested by Nagpur Police in July 2025 and were released from jail recently. After their release, they allegedly committed seven chain snatching offences in the limits of Nacharam, Jawaharnagar, Shameerpet, Hayathnagar, Nagole, and Chaitanyapuri police stations."Cases Detected Chaitanyapuri Police detected multiple cases registered under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections at Market, Nacharam, Jawaharnagar, Shameerpet, Gopalapuram, Hayathnagar, Nagole, and Chaitanyapuri police stations, relating to chain snatching and robbery. Property Recovered"Police recovered the following articles from the accused in Delhi:"One gold chain weighing 6.4 grams (Chaitanyapuri PS case)"One gold chain weighing 20.8 grams (Nagole PS case) One gold chain weighing 28 grams (Hayathnagar PS case) Two mobile phones" The operation was carried out under the supervision of senior officers, with the investigation team led by the Detective Inspector of Chaitanyapuri Police Station. Police officials stated that the crimes were detected within a short span due to coordinated teamwork and effective use of technology. The Malkajgiri Police Commissioner appreciated the prompt action of the Chaitanyapuri Police team and announced that suitable rewards would be given for their efforts."Police have appealed to the public to remain alert, especially in crowded and isolated areas, and to immediately report any suspicious activity to the nearest police station or by dialing 100.

## I will strive for urban development: Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy



"(Mandava Srisailem... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 27):- Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy participated in various development programs in Ramnagar, Seetanagar, and Jankana Guda areas of the eighth ward in Bhuvanagiri town. On this occasion, Anil Kumar Reddy stated that the development works undertaken by the Congress government will greatly benefit the



weaker sections of society. PCC Delegate Thangallapalli Ravikumar, former Chairman Barre Jahangir, Pothamshetty Venkateshwarlu, District Library Chairman Avez Chisti, Congress leaders Koora Shivakumar, Patnam Mahesh, Bharat Goud, Naresh, Siripanga Nagaraju, Gope Shiva, Kadari Naresh Yadav, Iftekhar, Jalil, ward key functionaries, minority leaders, and women participated in large numbers in this program.

## Report corruption: Telangana ACB releases contact numbers

Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 27 (Indian Chronicle)"

Report Bribery to ACB, Citizens Urged"Hyderabad: Citizens who come across corruption in government offices or are demanded bribes for official work have been urged to immediately report such incidents to the Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB). "The ACB has made multiple contact numbers and a toll-free helpline available to ensure quick reporting and action against corrupt practices. Complaints can also be shared through WhatsApp, making it easier for the public to alert authorities."ACB Contact Details" WhatsApp: 9440446106\* Toll-Free Number: 1064\* ACB Headquarters: 040-23251501\*Range-wise Contact Numbers\* Hyderabad City Range-I: 040-24617291 | 9440446109\* Hyderabad City Range-II: 040-24617408 | 9440446134\* Ranga Reddy Range: 040-24610142 | 9440446140\* Mahabubnagar Range: 08542-242733 | 9491305609\* Nalgonda Range: 08682-225681 | 7382625525\* Warangal Range: 0870-2577510 | 9440446146\* Karimnagar Range: 0878-2243693 | 9440446166\* Nizamabad Range: 08462-237450 | 9440446149\* Medak Range: 08455-276522 | 9440446149\* Adilabad Range: 08732-226307 | 9440446166\* Khammam Range: 08742-228663 | 9440446146\*The ACB has assured that complainants' identities will be kept confidential and strict action will be taken against officials found guilty of corruption.



Anti Corruption Bureau

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Women in STEM — long way to go

While the rise in female enrolment in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) courses in India is a welcome development, what needs to be pondered over is why there is no corresponding growth in their participation in technology sector jobs. This paradoxical situation reflects a broader trend where women face cultural and systemic obstacles in converting education into long-term careers. Workplace cultures that do not promote flexible schedules, maternity, and childcare support play a spoilsport. The unspoken biases in promotion also lead to more and more women exiting the STEM professions. Regional disparities, caste dynamics, and socio-economic factors further complicate the challenges they face. Women account for about 43% of the STEM enrolments, well above the global average. This is largely due to policy interventions, awareness programmes, and educational reforms. STEM degrees are increasingly seen by families as pathways to economic security and social mobility for daughters. The growing presence of women at the postgraduate and doctoral levels further signals that academic barriers are slowly eroding. However, a study has found that only 27% of these women enter STEM careers. The transition from education to employment remains a leaky pipeline. Women are still underrepresented in core engineering roles, research leadership, and technology decision-making. Career interruptions due to caregiving responsibilities, unsafe or inflexible workplaces, and persistent gender bias push many qualified women out of the STEM workforce. The result is a mismatch between educational success and economic participation. The underrepresentation of women is even more pronounced in cutting-edge disciplines such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and engineering, where female participation drops in the range of 12% to 26%. These disparities raise critical questions about the structural and cultural barriers that exclude women from the fields that shape our future. The irony is that girls often perform as well as boys in mathematics and science during early schooling, but their confidence in these subjects erodes over time. A study by UNESCO showed that the decline in self-assurance, rather than aptitude, is a decisive factor in deterring girls from pursuing STEM careers. Women are more concentrated in life sciences and medicine, while fields such as mechanical engineering, core technology, and advanced manufacturing remain male-dominated. Regional disparities further complicate the picture, with some States lagging far behind in encouraging girls to pursue science beyond school. Flexible work policies, re-entry programmes after career breaks, safe campuses and workplaces, mentorship, and transparent promotion pathways are needed to encourage more women to take to STEM careers. Without these, high enrolment risks become a statistical comfort rather than a transformative force.

## Kukatpally Superintendent Engineer Accused of Harassing Contractors, Causing Loss to GHMC Exchequer

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal-Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 27, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): "Allegations of inflated estimates and collection of lakhs in the name of deviations Contractors allege double standards by engineering officials. Accusations of large-scale financial irregularities in Kukatpally Zone Serious allegations have been levelled against Kukatpally Zone Superintendent Engineer Chinnareddy for preparing false estimates, harassing contractors, and causing huge financial losses to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) exchequer. Speaking to the media, contractor Sanghishty Ravinder Sagar alleged that Superintendent Engineer Chinnareddy has been deliberately inflating project estimates and indulging in corrupt practices, resulting in the siphoning of crores of rupees from public funds. He stated that officials from the Assistant Engineer level up to the Superintendent Engineer are allegedly working in coordination and pressuring contractors to comply with irregular demands. The contractor further alleged that contractors are treated differently based on their compliance with unofficial demands. "If contractors agree, one set of calculations is followed; if they question the estimates, another set is imposed," he said, accusing officials of arbitrary decision-making. Ravinder Sagar also alleged that Chinnareddy has amassed assets worth hundreds of crores through such practices. He questioned the logic behind estimates claiming that BT cutting and CC road



cutting works are being carried out manually instead of using machinery, calling such claims misleading and unrealistic. Highlighting another irregularity, he alleged that roads dismantled at water-logging points were shown as being transported with a 10-kilometre lead, even though no such dumping location exists within that distance. According to him, the actual dumping sites are located 25 to 30 kilometres away, making the estimates incorrect and impractical. He stated that contractors are forced to transport dismantled material to private locations after obtaining permission from landowners and paying around Rs. 1,000 per trip, which adds to their burden. When questioned about these discrepancies, the contractor alleged that officials responded by saying that other contractors were following the same process and that he should do the same. He accused engineering officials of collecting lakhs of rupees from contractors in the name of deviations for such works. Expressing strong anger over the issue, Ravinder Sagar demanded that vigilance authorities and senior officials conduct a thorough inquiry into the alleged irregularities and take strict action against those responsible to safeguard public funds and ensure transparency in civic works.

## PDSU Demands Student Union Elections in All Telangana Universities



"Indian Chronicle OU January 27: The Progressive Democratic Students Union (PDSU), Osmania University, organized a signature campaign on Tuesday demanding the conduct of student union elections in all universities across Telangana. The campaign, led by the Osmania University Executive Committee under the leadership of OU President Sk Asif, will continue from January 27 to 29. Arts College Vice-Principal Dr. Konda Nageswara Rao participated in the programme and extended his support by signing the petition. Addressing the gathering, he stated that student union elections are a symbol of democratic values in universities and play a vital role in safeguarding students' rights, welfare, and in addressing academic concerns. He emphasized the need to conduct student union elections in a transparent, fair,

and peaceful manner across all universities. He noted that the prolonged absence of elections in several universities has deprived students of proper representation, which is contrary to democratic principles, and called for the immediate issuance of election notifications. PDSU Greater Hyderabad President Manda Naveen criticized the state government for failing to fulfill its election promise of conducting student union elections. He said that despite completing two years in office and Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy visiting Osmania University twice, the issue of student elections was never addressed. He termed this as a reflection of the government's lack of commitment and urged the Chief Minister to honor the promise made during the elections by immediately initiating the student union election process in all universities. He further demanded that the election process be conducted without political interference and with equal opportunity for all students, irrespective of gender, caste, or religion. He also called upon the authorities to ensure adequate security and discipline during the elections to enable students to democratically elect their representatives. Failing which, he warned that the government would face statewide student protests. Speaking on the occasion, the Osmania University General Secretary stated that student union elections help students develop a clear political perspective and provide opportunities for active participation in democratic processes. The programme was attended by OU Vice Presidents Anil, Treasurer Eshwar, and student leaders Sai, Shravan, Srikant, Kishore, Naveen, Veeru, Anil, Chakri, and others.

## Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Unveils New Year Calendar of Ramanthapur Mudiraj Welfare Association

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 27 (Indian Chronicle): Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy on Tuesday unveiled the New Year calendar of the Ramanthapur Mudiraj Welfare Association. The event was organized under the leadership of Association President Burra Mahender Mudiraj. BRS women leader Sandhya, along with TRS leaders Madhu Goud, JCB Raju, Sooram Shankar, and Alivelu, participated in the program. Speaking on the occasion, Burra Mahender Mudiraj expressed his special gratitude to the MLA for accepting the invitation and attending the calendar unveiling ceremony. He also thanked the MLA for assuring support towards the development of the Mudiraj Welfare Association. Addressing the gathering, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy appreciated the service activities being carried out by the Ramanthapur Mudiraj Welfare Association. He stated that it is commendable for welfare as-



sociations to focus on development along with undertaking various social service activities.

## State Government Should Ensure Christmas Dinners Are Organized on Time at Least From Next Year: Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen

### Corporator Bannala Geetha Participates in Pre-Christmas Dinner Program at Chilkanagar



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 27 (Indian Chronicle): Chilkanagar Division Corporator and former GHMC Standing Committee member Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj participated as the chief guest in the Pre-Christmas Dinner program organized by the Telangana State Government at Chilkanagar. During the program, Corporator Geetha Praveen joined church elders and pastors from Chilkanagar Division in cutting the Christmas cake and extended belated Christmas and New Year greetings to all Christian brothers and sisters. Speaking on the occasion, she conveyed her heartfelt Christmas wishes to the Christian community and stated that it was only through the blessings of Lord Jesus that she got the opportunity to serve as a corporator. She recalled that during her tenure, she had completed all works requested by the Christian community, including those related to the Christian graveyard, and assured that any pending works would also be taken up. She expressed her lifelong gratitude to the Christian com-



munity and prayed that the blessings of the Lord may remain upon all the people of Chilkanagar Division. She further recalled that during the tenure of Telangana's first Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, Christmas gifts and dinners for poor Christian families from marginalized and weaker sections were organized well in advance, nearly a month before Christmas. However, she criticized the present Congress government for neglecting Christians and the Christmas festival by organizing Christmas dinners nearly a month after the festival, instead of at least 15 days before Christmas. She termed this delay as highly unfortunate and described the failure to distribute Christmas gifts on time as a clear example of the government's inefficiency. She urged the state government to follow the example set by former Chief Minister KCR, who treated people of all communities equally and ensured that festival gifts and dinners were arranged on time. She demanded that from next year onwards, all necessary arrangements should be made so that Christmas gifts and dinners reach Christian families at least one month before Christmas. The program was attended by BRS State Leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, senior leaders VB Narasimha, Masa Shekhar, Sunder, pastors James Raju, Panthulamma, Peter Paul, Kiran, John, Jacob, Nagayya, and a large number of Christian brothers and sisters.

## Ramantapur Mudiraj Sangham United Forum Calendar Unveiled

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 27 (Indian Chronicle): The calendar of the Ramantapur Mudiraj Sangham United Forum was unveiled in a grand manner at the Nehru Nagar Baddi Pochamma Temple in Ramantapur. The program was held under the leadership of Sangham President Kompalli Upendar. Several prominent members and leaders attended the calendar unveiling ceremony, including Dr. P. Ashok Mudiraj, Legal Advisor Darshan Vinod, Working President Pesari Shankarayya, Vice Presidents Katikala Chandrakant and Pyata Murali Krishna Mudiraj, General Secretary Kalmkalla Lingam Mudiraj, Korimi Srinivas, Gaddam Krishna, Treasurer Kompalli Manoj Mudiraj, Sukha Ashok Kumar Mudiraj, Kormi Nursing Mudiraj, Rajamaina Nagaraju Mudiraj, Social Media Convener Kormi Dinesh Mudiraj, Advisor Gajula Suresh Mudiraj, and several other members. The event concluded successfully with the participation of numerous community members.



## Thota Srikanth received best employee award for a meritorious service certificate

"Jan 27, Indian Chronicle: For the period 2025-2026, in recognition of outstanding performance and ex-



cellence in service, Shri T. Srikanth of SOT, Balanagar Zone, Cyberabad Commissionerate, received a Meritorious Service Certificate on the occasion of Republic Day 2026. The certificate was presented today at the Medchal-Malkajgiri Collector Office by Shri Mikkilineni Manu Choudary, I.A.S., and Shri Suresh Sir, I.P.S., DCP Malkajgiri."

## Grand Bharat Mata Puja and Ganga Aarti Celebrations in Ramanthapur

### -Organized under the Leadership of BJP Senior Leader Vallapu Jagan Yadav

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 27 (Indian Chronicle): On the occasion of the 77th Republic Day of India, grand Bharat Mata Puja and Ganga Aarti were conducted on Monday night at the Ramanthapur Mini Tank Bund under the leadership of BJP senior leader



Vallapu Jagan Yadav. Speaking on the occasion, Vallapu Jagan Yadav stated that Bharat Mata is the Mother Goddess of India, symbolizing the nation's cultural grandeur, spirit of sacrifice, and unity. He said that Bharat Mata represents the soul, culture, and the collective dreams and sacrifices of the Indian people. He emphasized that the greatness of Bharat Mata reflects the greatness of the nation itself, and devotion to her is a symbol of patriotism. The program was attended by Ramanthapur Division President Vangala Santosh Gupta, BJP senior leaders Talla Balakrishna Goud, Aadi Satyanarayana, Boddupalli Muthyam, Itukala Venkatesh, Chintakindi Praveen, Darshanala Sudhakar, Vemula Venkat Reddy, Ramesh Naik, Thammali Ravi, Masireddy Prabhakar Reddy, Boddupalli Anand, Ramabrahmam, Sharma, Vempati Ram Raj, Bharat, Suresh, Satish, and women leaders Bandi Padma, Ambati Bhagyalakshmi, Bogala Aruna, Konderu Sravanthi, Suvarna Shinde, Sheelam Sudha, Veena, Lavanya, along with party workers and others.

## Woman's Murder in Regondi: Police Crack the Case

"Indian Chronicle, Tandur (January, 27) The police have solved the murder case of a woman in Regondi village, Vikarabad district. DSP Mallesh Yadav revealed the details of the murder at a media conference at Tandur DSP office. The victim, a resident of Pagidyala village, Yalal mandal, was working as a daily laborer in 2004. On January 24, two individuals, Mala Narsimlu from Bandamedipalli village and Kishore Shinde from Karnataka, approached her at the labor market, promising her work. They took her to a secluded area in Regondi village, where they stabbed her to death and stole her jewelry. The stolen jewelry was sold in Shankarpalli, and the police have recovered it. The victim's daughter filed a complaint, leading to the registration of a case and investigation. The police tracked the suspects using CCTV footage, which showed them taking the victim in an auto. The accused, particularly A1 Mala Narsimlu, had a previous criminal record, including a similar case of murder and theft in Yalal police station. The police have registered a case against the duo and are preparing to produce them in court. DSP Narsing Yadav commended the police team for their efforts in solving the case and presented rewards.



### Drugs Inspector G. Ashwini gets Pratibha Puraskar

“Yellandu, January 27 (Indian Chronicle) District Drugs Inspector G. Ashwini. IUMI Chemists and Drugists Association president Pasumarthi Lakshmana Rao, general secretary Gandham Venkateswarlu, treasurer Zaheer Ahmed, district organising secretary Telukuntla Rajinikanth and others were present. Bhadradi Kothagudem dress inspector G Ashwini was presented



the Pratibha Puraskar award on the occasion of the 77th Republic Day by Director General of Telangana Drugs Control Administration Shan Vaz Kasim and Joint Director Ramdhan in Hyderabad on Monday. He was given the award for the best performance in the field of education in Telangana. Speaking on the occasion, Drugs Inspector G Ashwini said that he is very happy to receive the Pratibha Award from the DG, DCA and JD of Telangana State. Bhadradi Kothagudem District Medical Officer G. District president, secretary, treasurer, presidents of Bhadrachalam, Illandu, Manuguru, Palvancha, Sujathanagar and Aswaraopeta, general secretary, treasurer and district organising secretary of Harsha were present on the occasion.

### Efforts to Install CCTV Cameras and Streetlights Near Beerappagadda Ramalayam – Irshad Khan

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 27 (Indian Chronicle):“Local residents of the Beerappagadda area brought their problems to the notice of Uppal Congress leader Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) near the



Ramalayam temple. They complained that due to the lack of proper streetlights in the area, unidentified individuals gather after dark and consume alcohol, creating unpleasant and unsafe conditions. The residents requested the installation of CCTV cameras and streetlights to address the issue. Responding to their concerns, Irshad Khan stated that he would immediately bring the matter to the attention of Uppal Congress Party In-charge Parameshwar Reddy and assured that efforts would be made soon to install CCTV cameras and streetlights in the area. He further said that with the cooperation of Parameshwar Reddy, as part of a people's government, public issues would be resolved one by one. Irshad Khan emphasized that he would always stand by the people and serve them, and affirmed that he would continue to extend constant support and assistance to the public under the leadership of Parameshwar Reddy in the future as well.

### CBC stages ‘Gandhi Margam’ to commemorate Swachhata Pakhwada, Martyrs’ Day in Hyderabad

### CBC stages Telugu version of ‘Vaishnava Jana To’ as ‘Gandhi Margam’ in Hyderabad

27-01-2025, Hyderabad““The Central Bureau of Communication (CBC), Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in association with PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya, Bolaram, organised a dramatised presentation of the bhajan ‘Vaishnava Jana To’, titled Gandhi Margam, here on Tuesday to commemorate Swachhata Pakhwada, Martyrs’ Day and 150 years of Vande Mataram. Following the performance, a Swachhata pledge was administered in the presence of a large number of students. The initiative aims to promote value-based living inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. Officers and staff of CBC, along with the school principal and teachers, took part in the programme. Similar events will be conducted by CBC at various PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalayas across Hyderabad till February 5, 2026.



### Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkatarao Inspects Various Development Works Emphasizes Quality Standards in Development Projects



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 27 (Indian Chronicle):“Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkatarao on Tuesday inspected several ongoing development works within the Ramantapur Division. She personally reviewed the construction of CC roads at Kamakshipuram Road No. 7, Vasavi Nagar, and Srinagar Colony, as well as storm water drain works at Bharat Nagar and Shantinagar. Speaking on the occasion, the Corporator stated that, as promised to the people of the division, continuous development works are being undertaken to place the division on a progressive development path. She instructed the officials to ensure that all works are carried out without any compromise on quality standards and to further increase the pace of the ongoing projects. Assistant Engineer Swetha, Work Inspector Mahender, BJP

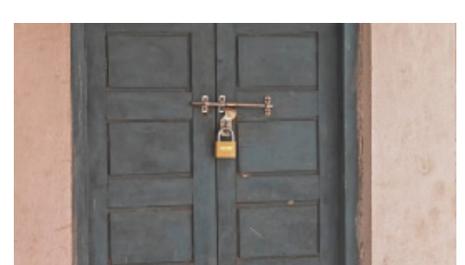


leaders Gaddam Sai, Tammala Ravi, Kalmakala Lingam, Sheelam Sudha, Veena, Vemula Venkat Reddy, and others participated in the inspection.

### Even with an RTO office in Aswaraopet, vehicle owners face endless difficulties S Naga Manoj Kumar, Aswaraopet constituency



January 27, Indian Chronicle: Officials have opened the office only twice in the last six months...“Motor vehicle officials are operating through agents while sitting in Kothagudem...“Whether you buy an old scooter or a new car, you have to go to Kothagudem at least twice for a driving license. An elderly man, who paid money to an agent for the registration of his old TVS moped and then had to travel to Kothagudem on the same moped, recounted his difficulties with great distress... Everyone knows how difficult it is to travel 80 kilometers on a vehicle from here... On the way there, there's the sun and dust, and on the way back, there's the cold and darkness. If you travel by car, it costs over 2000 rupees... Food expenses are extra. Again, someone has to bring the vehicle...“Office bribes, agent bribes—there's no need to even mention them...“It is noteworthy that a journalist himself commented that there is a lot of pressure from journalists in Ashwaraopeta...“In Kothagudem, they say you



can get things done by paying whatever is demanded...“Due to the influence of Ashwaraopeta MLA Jare Adinarayana, even though an office has been set up in Ashwaraopeta, they are not opening the office, citing various excuses and causing difficulties for the public...“Here, if vehicle owners call regarding any problem, the MVI does not answer the phone... He doesn't answer calls from journalists either; he only answers if two specific leaders call...“Those leaders are unaware of the people's hardships... The difficulties continue unabated... A young tribal woman went to Kothagudem five times for a license... Unfortunately, she still hasn't received it... She expressed her distress, saying that it seems impossible to get a license for her scooter and be a responsible citizen...“They are hoping that the authorities will respond and resolve the problem at least now...“

### Dream Big and Work to Achieve Them

### Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy's Message to Students Grand Celebrations at Sagar Grammar School



KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 27 (Indian Chronicle):“Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy urged students to dream big and study with determination to turn those dreams into reality. She recalled the inspiring words of former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who emphasized the importance of dreaming and perseverance. She was speaking as the chief guest at a special programme organized on Monday evening at Sagar Grammar School, Uppal, in connection with Republic Day celebrations. Addressing the gathering, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy said that competition has increased in all fields in today's society, and students must prepare themselves to excel beyond these



challenges. She stressed that India is competing with the world, and today's students must be ready to meet global standards. She also highlighted that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is working towards developing educational institutions with international standards across the state. She noted that in the past, education was accessible only to a few, but today, Congress governments have played a key role in making education accessible to all sections of society. The programme was attended by Sagar Grammar School Principal Batkiri Dhan Sagar, along with Swapna, Gorige Mallesh, Salla Prabhakar, Manda Suman Reddy, Pujala Hanumath, Raghu Gupta, Prashanth Reddy, Bobby, Rangula Shekhar, and Chinna, among others.

### Severe Pollution as Drainage Water Mixes with Drinking Water in Netaji Nagar Residents Express Concern – Congress Leaders Respond Promptly

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 27 (Indian Chronicle):“Residents of Netaji Nagar in Ramanthapur expressed serious concern after drainage water mixed with municipal drinking water, resulting in highly polluted water being supplied to households. The issue was brought to the notice of Ramanthapur contested corporator and Congress Party in-charge Tavidaboyina Giribabu by local residents. Responding immediately to the complaint, Giribabu, along with A-Block Congress Party General Secretary Murali Goud and senior Congress leader Pabboju Bikshapathi Chari,

contacted the concerned officials. They explained the severity of the problem and urged officials to take immediate corrective measures. Later, they inspected the ongoing works in Netaji Nagar and instructed officials to complete them on a priority basis. On this occasion, Tavidaboyina Giribabu met Hyderabad Metro Water Works General Manager Santosh Kumar and AE Srivani Reddy, requesting them to resolve the issue permanently. He also urged that municipal water be supplied

### Uppal Corporator Mandamula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Conducts Extensive Tour in Sri Rama Colony

### Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Resolving Colony Issues Through Development Works

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 27 (Indian Chronicle):“Uppal Corporator Mandamula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy stated that various problems in Sri Rama Colony, under the Uppal Division, are being resolved through continuous development works. She said that development activities are being undertaken on a priority basis in different colonies. On Tuesday, Corpora-



tor Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy toured Sri Rama Colony along with representatives of the colony association to understand the issues faced by residents. During the visit, members of the Sri Rama Colony Welfare Association brought several major problems of the colony to her attention. The Corporator inspected the ongoing underground drainage works and CC road construction in the colony. She assured the residents that the remaining CC roads and drainage construction works in Sri Rama Colony would be completed at the earliest. H.M.W.S.S.B officials Rajanikant Reddy, Satyanarayana, Teega Sudhakar, Ma Shetti Raghavendra, Kannamaina Naresh, Ranga Bhaskar Goud, Anni Reddy Srinivas Reddy, Ismail, Shabuddin, Gumidelli Srinivas, Kummari Sai, Gumidelli Srikanth, Teega Giri, Jagan, and other colony residents participated in the program.

### Free Community CPR Training Camp on February 1& 2 at Gandhi Medical College

“Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, January 27:“If a person suffers a heart attack in front of us, performing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) immediately can save their life, said Dr. G.R. Lingamurthy, President of the Gandhi Medical College Alumni Association. He was speaking at a media conference held on Tuesday at the



GMC Alumni Education Centre. Alumni Director Dr. P. Maheshwar Reddy, Dr. S. Ravinder from the United States, S. Narasimhamurthy, Managing Trustee of Janahitha Seva Trust, and Sridhar were also present and addressed the gathering. Dr. Lingamurthy informed that a two-day free Community CPR training camp is being organized for the general public on February 1 and 2 at the Alumni Education Centre, Gandhi Medical College, under the joint auspices of the Gandhi Medical College Alumni Association, GMC Global Alliance, and Janahitha Seva Trust. He said that for the past 26 years, the Alumni Association has been providing free CPR training to thousands of people. He pointed out that nearly 92 percent of deaths in the country occur due to cardiac arrest, and timely CPR can significantly reduce mortality. The speakers emphasized that awareness and knowledge of CPR can help save lives at home or in public places during emergencies. As part of this initiative, around 5,000 people will be given free CPR training over the two days. Participants will be trained practically using mannequins, teaching them how to perform CPR on their own, and certificates will be issued after completion of the training. They appealed to interested city residents to come forward and make use of this opportunity to learn CPR free of cost.

# Be prepared to conduct the municipal elections efficiently, peacefully and in a free environment:

## - State Election Commission Commissioner Rani Kumudini

(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian... Indian Chronicle..January 26):- State Election Commission Commissioner Rani Kumudini said that they should be ready to conduct the municipal elections efficiently, peacefully and in a free environment.



and scrutiny, and also suggested to prepare the necessary action plans for webcasting in the election process. On this occasion, the Chief Secretary of the State Government, Ramakrishna Rao, said that the Panchayat elections were conducted successfully and also suggested that arrangements should be made to conduct the municipal elections impartially. He said that the code of conduct of the elections should be implemented effectively. He made it clear that the duties should be performed carefully as per the instructions of the Election Commission without any laxity. On this occasion, State DGP Shivdar Reddy said that the police department is making full arrangements to prevent any untoward incidents during the elections. District Collector Hanumantha Rao, SP Akshanshu Yadav, Additional Collector Bhaskar Rao and Additional DCP Lakshmi Narayana participated in the VC. On this occasion, District Collector Hanumantha Rao and Municipal Commissioners said that as per the instructions of the State Election Commission, the elections should be conducted in accordance with the Election Code of Conduct. In this meeting, RTOs Krishna Reddy, Shekhar Reddy, District Rural Development Officer Nagireddy, Municipal Commissioners, Others participated.

State Government Chief Secretary Ramakrishna Rao, State D.G.P. from Hyderabad on Tuesday. Along with Shivdhar Reddy and other high officials, State Election Commission Commissioner Rani Kumudini was reviewed through video conference with the Collectors, SPs and Municipal Commissioners of all the districts of the state through video conference. On this occasion, State Election Commission Commissioner Rani Kumudini said that 116 municipalities and 7 corporations in the state should be prepared for the conduct of elections, from the moment the notification of the election was issued. He said that the Model Code of Conduct will come into force, and also to conduct it effectively in a peaceful environment, to make all necessary arrangements in the polling booths, according to the rules and regulations of the elections. He said that no mistakes should be made in the adoption

# Adarsh Nagar Colony Welfare Association Unanimously Elects New Executive Committee



Reddy as Vice Presidents, and Yata Venkatesh and Paka Saraswathi as Joint Secretaries. Similarly, a new executive committee was also elected at Sri Sivasai Mandir. In this committee, Ronda Padma Reddy was elected as President, Lellapati Ram Reddy as General Secretary, Mettu Prabhakar Reddy as Treasurer, and Jairoji Srinivas, Kayiti Anuradha, Tellopati Sakhitha, Chhada Sudharani, and Motta Geetha as Joint Secretaries. The members expressed confidence that the newly elected committees would work actively towards the welfare and development of the colony.

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 27 (Indian Chronicle):“A meeting was held under the auspices of the Adarsh Nagar Colony Welfare Association with the participation of association members and colony residents to constitute a new executive committee. During the meeting, several issues related to the development of the colony were discussed, following which a new committee was unanimously elected in the presence of all members. The election process was supervised by Election Officer Poreddy Anji Reddy, under whose supervision the committee was unanimously selected. In the newly elected executive committee, Chadi Raja Reddy was elected as President, Palle Sarsing Rao as General Secretary, Akali Bal Reddy, Akati Bal Reddy, Chintala Anjaiah, and Pasunoori Tirupati

# Police-Hospital Coordination to Strengthen Security at Gandhi Hospital

“Indian Chronicle,“Secunderabad, January 27:“Secunderabad Zone DCP Rakshita Krishnamurthy paid a courtesy visit to Dr. Vani, Superintendent of Gandhi Hospital, on Tuesday. During the meeting, discussions were held on maintaining law and order on the hospital premises. The Deputy Commissioner of Police stressed that close coordination between the police and hospital authorities is essential to ensure safety and security. She assured that, in view of the large number of patients and visitors to Gandhi Hospital, enhanced and stricter security measures would be implemented. Chilakalaguda ACP Shashank Reddy, Head of the Department of General Surgery Dr. Rajaram, Resident Medical Officers Dr. Seshadri, Dr. Kalyan, and Dr. Naveen, along with other officials, were present at the meeting.



# 5 months foundation course free residential. Invitation of applications for training

(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle..January 27):- Replaced by State and Central Governments in SC Study Circles of Telangana State District SC Study Circle Director P. Naveen Kumar said. Interested candidates of Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri district can apply. Interested SC, ST, BC Minority candidates can apply through online http://tsstudycircle.co.in. Admissions in these study circles will be conducted on the basis of merit and selection will be done on the basis of merit. Last date to apply. 30.01.2026. Hal tickets of the exam can be downloaded from 5th February. The competitive exam will be held on Sunday, February 8, from 11.00 am to 1.00 pm at Nagarajuna Degree College, Nalgonda. Candidates who

have passed the degree examination of Y.C., Y.T., BC (BC-E and PWD) and have a family income of less than three lakhs per year are eligible to apply for this entrance examination. So all eligible and interested candidates are 1) Caste Certificate, 2) Income Certificate after April 1, 2025, 3) Degree Certificate, 4) 10th Class Certificate, 5) Aadhaar Card, 6) Passport Size Photograph Signature, 7) Disability Certificate He said that they can prepare and apply (only those who apply). As a part of this, those who have previously taken 5 months coaching in study circles or trained in Civil Services State Study Circle are not eligible. For other details 8465035932 9603167257 9010895239 E Cell Please contact the numbers

# MLA Beerla Ailayya discussed the development of Alair constituency with the ministers

“Mandava Srisailam...Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle...January 27):- Alair MLA Beerla Ailayya of the Telangana state government courteously met with Telangana State Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy and the Minister in charge of SC, ST, Minority, Disabled, and Elderly Welfare for the erstwhile Nalgonda district, Sri Adhuri Lakshman Kumar, in Hyderabad. On this occasion, they extensively discussed the development of the Alair constituency, the implementation of state government welfare schemes, the progress of the Gandhamalla project construction, and issues concerning the farmers of Gandhamalla, among other key matters. MLA Beerla Ailayya requested the ministers to take the necessary steps to permanently resolve the irrigation problems in the constituency. He stated that the ministers assured him that the government would provide full support for the development of the Alair constituency.



# Tandur municipal chairmen seat belongs to BJP: Chevella MP Konda Vishweshwar Reddy

## MP Kond Vishweshwar Reddy inaugurates CC road works in Tandur

“Indian Chronicle, Tandur (January, 27)“MP Kond Vishweshwar Reddy inaugurated CC road works worth Rs 10 lakhs funded by MP grants in Ward 12 of Tandur town. He also laid the foundation stone for various development works in Veerisetypalli village. Speaking on the occasion, Kond Vishweshwar Reddy said that development is happening only under the BJP government in the country. He expressed confidence that the BJP will win the Tandur municipal elections without any alliance and capture the municipal seat. The event was attended by BJP leaders Baileshwar Gupta, U Ramesh Kumar, Nagarama Mallesham, Induru Ramulu, and former councillor Rajini.



# Government Whip's PRO Adimoolam Suresh's birthday celebrations held grandly

“Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 27):- The birthday celebrations of Adimoolam Suresh, PRO of Telangana State Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailayah, were grandly held in Yadagirigutta town and

Turkally mandal headquarters of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district. In Yadagirigutta town, the staff of Beerla Ailayah's office, and in Turkally mandal headquarters, Congress party leaders, fans, and well-wishers grandly celebrated his birthday, felicitating him with a shawl, cutting a cake, and conveying their best wishes.



“Mandava Srisailam.. Hyderabad.. Indian Chronicle.. January 27):- A scene from January 26th, Republic Day celebrations, at "English Union High School" located on Road Number 3, Sneha Puri Colony, where Suraj Jeevan, who secured the first rank in the 10th grade last year with 558 marks, is being presented with the "Muvva Buchaiah Chowdary Memorial Gold Medal for Academic Excellence," along with a memento and a certificate of appreciation. The award was presented by the sponsor, S. Venkataswamy, Director Dr. J. Sandeep, and the school principal J. Venkateswara Rao, who are also seen felicitating him with a shawl. Also pictured are Jeevan's parents, Suraj Shekhar and Kalpana, being congratulated.

# MLA Sri Ganesh has ended the relay hunger strike undertaken to demand the merger of the Cantonment Board with the GHMC

“Secunderabad Cantonment. January 27 (Indian Chronicle):“The MLA stated that the central government has approved the board for the Cantonment, and by merging it with the GHMC, democracy has been protected and the nominated system has been abolished. The relay hunger strike undertaken by Cantonment MLA Sri Ganesh successfully completed its eighth day on Tuesday. He expressed his aspirations for the development of the constituency's people. He said that the MLA's fight for the development of the constituency's people is memorable, and that they would all support him in fulfilling his aspirations. The MLA ends the relay hunger strike... The MLA stated that the relay hunger strikes they had undertaken for the past 8 days have been successful. He clarified that the strikes were not for personal gain but to alleviate the hardships of the people of the Cantonment. He



said that the struggle for the merger of the Cantonment is continuing from many areas. He stated that India gained independence after hundreds of years of struggle, and similarly, the state of Telangana was achieved only after many years of collective struggle. He added that their fight will continue until the merger is achieved.

# Today the hundi of the TadBund Veeranjaneya Swamy Temple will be countedd.

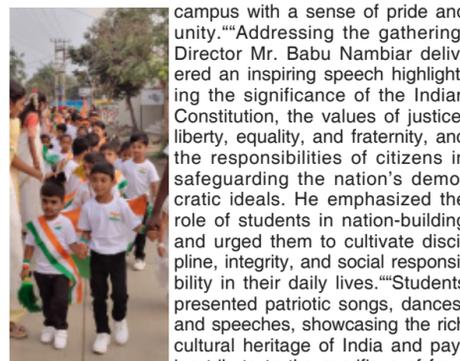
“Secunderabad Cantonment. January 27 (Indian Chronicle):“The temple executive officer, Narendra, announced on Tuesday that the hundi income of the Anjaneya Swamy Temple in TadBund, Secunderabad, will be counted today. He stated that the counting will be



conducted on Wednesday at 10 AM under the surveillance of CCTV cameras and police, in the presence of temple department officials, staff, and devotees. The temple EO advised devotees wishing to make donations to contact the temple office, hand over their donations, and ensure they receive a receipt.

# UDRANKI KERALA MODEL SCHOOL CELEBRATES 77TH REPUBLIC DAY WITH PATRIOTIC FERVOUR.

“P. S. ASHOKAN "KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. "Rudranki Kerala Model School celebrated the 77th Republic Day with great enthusiasm and patriotic spirit on Sunday. The programme commenced with the hoisting of the National Flag, followed by the singing of the National Anthem, which filled the campus with a sense of pride and unity. Addressing the gathering, Director Mr. Babu Nambiar delivered an inspiring speech highlighting the significance of the Indian Constitution, the values of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, and the responsibilities of citizens in safeguarding the nation's democratic ideals. He emphasized the role of students in nation-building and urged them to cultivate discipline, integrity, and social responsibility in their daily lives. Students presented patriotic songs, dances, and speeches, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of India and paying tribute to the sacrifices of freedom fighters. The vibrant performances received wide appreciation from the audience. The celebration concluded with a message of national unity and harmony, reaffirming the school's commitment to nurturing responsible and enlightened citizens of tomorrow.



## BJP MLA's nephew held for bootlegging, liquor worth Rs 3.87 lakh seized



GNS News Agency, SJan 27

The Tapi police on Friday arrested Yogesh Keshav Dodhiya, a nephew of Mohan Dodhiya, the BJP MLA from Surat district Mahuva Assembly seat, in connection with a bootlegging case and seized IMFL (Indian Made Foreign Liquor) bottles worth around Rs. 3.87 lakh. Two other persons managed to escape during a raid and a search is on for them, police said. The raid was conducted in a thickly

vegetated area on the outskirts of Khambla village in Valod taluka and three persons were transporting liquor bottles from two cars on motorcycles. The police apprehended Yogesh Dodhiya at the spot but two others managed to flee even as another team chased them. The two cars at the spot were seized. Police said Yogesh Dodhiya, 48, is a resident of Andhantri village in Valod taluka. Yogesh is the son of MLA Mohan Dodhiya's brother.

The police identified the other two suspects as Kartik Patel, a resident of Mahuva taluka in Surat, and Bharat Patel, of Dharampur in Valsad. Rajubhai Dodhiya, former sarpanch of Andhantri village, told The Indian Express, "Mohanbhai Dodhiya has four brothers, one of them being Keshavbhai - Yogesh's father. The other brothers are Dinubhai, Chandrabhai and Champakbhai. Their houses are near each other in our village." Valod police inspector M M Gilator said, "Yogesh Dodhiya is a known bootlegger of the area and has over ten cases against him. We have sent teams to nab the absconding persons." Despite repeated attempts to contact him, MLA Mohan Dodhiya was unavailable for comment.

## Thunderstorm, hail & lightning: IMD issued red alert in Punjab, Haryana



GNS News Agency, SJan 27

Last night's widespread rainfall has moved Punjab into the rain surplus category with Haryana and Chandigarh recording a remarkable jump in cumulative rainfall, thus significantly altering the seasonal rainfall outlook across the regions. The Meteorological Department has issued a red alert for thunderstorms, hail and lightning in several parts of Punjab, including Fatehgarh Sahib, Patiala, Rajpura and Bassi Pathana. The department has also issued an orange alert for Anandpur Sahib, Rupnagar and Samana. For Chandigarh and several parts of Haryana, the Met department has placed a red alert. While Kalka, Panchkula, Naraingarh, Barara, Shahbad, Nilokheri, Indri, Kaithal, Kamal and surrounding regions are placed under an orange alert for Friday.

Punjab turns rain surplus in past less than 24 hours. According to cumulative rainfall data, Punjab recorded 14.5 mm of rainfall including 13 mm in just the past less than 24 hours. The rainfall recorded is against a normal of 12.3 mm required in January month till date, registering a seasonal surplus of +18 per cent. This marks a dramatic turnaround from the previous day, when the state was facing a large rainfall deficiency. The impact was most pronounced in several districts where heavy rainfall was reported. Gurdaspur recorded 43.3 mm against a normal of 20.7 mm (+109 per cent), Pathankot received 33.3 mm, Jalandhar saw 32.6 mm (+83 per cent), Sangrur registered 21.5 mm (+168 per cent), Mansa received 14.5 mm against a normal of 5.1 mm (+184 per cent) and Barnala recorded 16.8 mm with a massive +150 per cent departure. Other districts such as Amritsar (19.8 mm), Ludhiana (16.2 mm) and Tarn Taran (15.8 mm) also reported substantial rainfall. However, a few districts including Moga (-100 per cent), Fazilka (-85 per cent), Ferozepur (-81 per cent) and Muktsar (-63 per cent) still remain highly deficient. Haryana:

Sharp improvement, though still deficient

In Haryana, the overnight rain caused a huge jump in cumulative rainfall, even though the state as a whole remains deficient. Cumulative rainfall now stands at 6.2 mm against a normal of 9.3 mm, translating to a -33 per cent departure, a significant improvement from the extremely deficient conditions prevailing earlier. Bhiwani received 18 mm against a normal of 5.2 mm (+246 per cent), Fatehabad recorded 12 mm (+71 per cent), Hisar saw 7.4 mm (+28 per cent), Kaithal recorded 10.1 mm — slightly above normal and Charkhi Dabri registered 9.9 mm (+33 per cent). At the same time, large parts of southern and eastern Haryana remain highly rainfall deficient. Palwal, Rewari, Nuh continue at -100 per cent, Faridabad at -94 per cent, Gurgaon at -88 per cent and Yamunanagar recorded at -90 per cent. The subdivision as a whole recorded 6.3 mm against a normal of 9.4 mm, narrowing the deficit to -33 per cent.

The Union Territory of Chandigarh also witnessed a sharp rise in seasonal rainfall due to the overnight showers. Cumulative rainfall has increased to 17.7 mm compared to a normal of 27.5 mm, reducing the deficit to -36 per cent from a much steeper shortfall earlier. The city recorded one of the highest single-day contributions, reflecting the intensity of the rain spell. Meteorologists note that the event underscores how a single day of widespread rain can dramatically reshape seasonal statistics, especially during otherwise dry periods. While Punjab has emerged into the surplus category, Haryana and Chandigarh have seen substantial recovery, though more rainfall will be needed to erase deficits in several districts. The rain has provided relief to agriculture, but officials said rainfall distribution remains uneven, with some areas still facing acute shortages. According to the advisory, moderate thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and hail, with wind speeds of 40-60 kmph, are very likely over parts of Patiala, Samana, Nabha, Rajpura, Dera Bassi, Fatehgarh Sahib, Amloh, Mohali, Khanna, Kharar, Khamanon and Chamkaur Sahib. Moderate thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds is expected over Sunam, Sangrur, Dhuri, Malerkotla, Payal, Ludhiana (East), Samrala, Rupnagar, Balachaur, Nawanshahr, Anandpur Sahib, Garhshankar, Nangal and Chandigarh. Additionally, light thunderstorms with lightning and winds of 30-40 kmph may occur over parts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Pathankot, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Batala, Ajnala, Mukerian and surrounding areas. The Met body has issued a thunderstorm warning valid till 6.25 pm on Friday, cautioning residents across several districts of Punjab and Chandigarh to stay updated, remain cautious and avoid open areas during lightning activity.

## Ahmedabad civic body to conduct stray dogs survey as Supreme Court takes up matter



GNS News Agency, SJan 27

THE Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has decided to conduct a comprehensive survey of stray dogs even as the data it maintains shows a drop in sterilisation, rise in takers of the rabies vaccine and more cases of dog bites being reported from outside the city limits. The development comes at a time when the Supreme Court is hearing a case concerning stray dogs. The last random census of stray dogs in Ahmedabad was done in 2019, when around 2.1 lakh stray dogs were recorded in the city limits. The AMC has started using Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chips in stray dogs since January 2025, for which an application has also been developed to record data. The AMC data reveals that RFID chips have been implanted in 6007 stray dogs. The new survey, 'free roaming street dog survey', will be conducted by an agency to be hired by the Cattle Nuisance Control Department (CNCD) of the AMC in all 48 wards within the municipal corporation area limits. "With the Supreme Court's guideline to relocate stray dogs from public spaces such as education institutes and hospitals to shelters after vaccination and sterilisation, we need to create an infrastructure. First we need to have estimates of the stray dog population in each ward, to set up the required infrastructure," Head of Department (HoD) of AMC's CNCD Naresh Rajput told The AMC has invited tenders for choosing an agency to conduct the survey for which the last date is February 13. "We have already contacted the major not-for-profit organisations working for animal welfare projects and also declared the terms — like no security deposit and payments in installments against a lump sum payment after completion of the project — that should be helpful for such organisations," an AMC official said. The data collected in 2019 was followed by a mass sterilisation programme under which around 1.94 lakh dogs have been neutered. "With the population being controlled with the sterilisation of 1.94 stray dogs, the number of the process has been reduced to 30-35 dogs per day against 150-170 dogs a day earlier. The focus now is on the vulnerable areas like villages along the Sardar Patel Ring Road (SPRR) which have been included in the AMC limits of late," Naresh Rajput stated. "The challenge for the survey agency is to identify those stray dogs that have been sterilised before 2025 and implanted with RFID chips," the official

added. MoHUA panel calls for 'urgent attention' The High-Level Committee (HLC) on Urban Planning, constituted by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), in one of its reports, has said that the stray dog issue demands urgent attention for the well-being of both people and animals. "The rise in dog bite cases from 21.8 lakh in 2022 to 27.5 lakh in 2023 highlights the severity of the problem, despite efforts to neuter dogs, the issue persists as neutered dogs still occupy the streets," the report said. Attributing the issue majorly to feeding of stray dogs, the report states, "A small percentage of street dogs are fed by NGOs while most rely on solid waste and face starvation. To address this, cities must improve solid waste management to eliminate food sources for stray dogs. Implementing a zero waste programme could significantly reduce the stray dog population. Additionally, incentivising, dog adoption and expanding veterinary infrastructure can help manage the situation in cases of severe illness or aggression. Removing such dogs from public spaces is necessary to ensure the safety of citizens," the report states. Calling walkers in cities "most vulnerable", especially in Delhi and Ahmedabad, the report states, "With 42 per cent of the population relying on walking, the presence of 6.2 crore stray dogs, many of which are unhealthy and aggressive, makes streets unsafe, particularly for the elderly women and children. India has the highest number of stray dogs and rabies deaths globally, with cities like Delhi and Ahmedabad housing hundreds of thousands of these dogs." Though the AMC is citing the Supreme Court guidelines for the stray dog survey, authorities are not ruling out the increase in dog bite cases in the city. "From around 5,000-5,500 vaccines given in a month for dog bite cases at the 35 AMC health facility centres in Ahmedabad three years ago, the number has increased to 7,000-7,500. This spike can be attributed to both increase in dog bites as well as awareness among people. Also, nearly 20-25 per cent of these dog bite cases have been reported from areas outside AMC limits," Naresh Rajput from CNCD told this paper. "The latest case of rabies death was reported in 2024, when a man in Ranip infected the virus from a wedding in Madhya Pradesh. He did not take the vaccine after the dog bite," he said. With the spike in dog bite cases, sources said that though there is no shortage in Rabies vaccine, there is shortage of Rabies immunoglobulin which is recommended to be taken for the category III-single or multiple transdermal bites or scratches, contamination of mucous membrane with saliva from licks and licks on broken skin. Ward wise and total number of 'Free Roaming Street Dogs' in Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation jurisdiction area (480.88 Sq.km) -Ward wise and total number of sterilized male, non-sterilized male, sterilized female, non-sterilized female, pregnant female, lactating female and sick etc of 'Free Roaming Dogs in AMC' areas -Ward wise and total number of 'Free Roaming Street Dogs' having low body condition scores, which are unfit for sterilization (skin infection, weak and debilitated, major injuries) in AMC areas -Ward wise and total percentage of above indicators of free roaming, dogs in AMC areas -Ward wise and total dog-human ratio and dog density details of stray dogs in AMC areas

## After 2 feet of snow in Kufri, authorities urge tourists to skip Shimla city roads, use bypass instead



GNS News Agency, SJan 27

Tourist inflow to Shimla and adjoining high-altitude destinations witnessed an unexpected surge a day after light to moderate snowfall was recorded across the state capital and higher reaches on Saturday. It is currently partially cloudy in Shimla. The fresh spell of snow, particularly in Kufri and nearby areas, triggered a rush of visitors, especially from Chandigarh, Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi, turning the weekend into a busy one for the tourism industry. Officials said Kufri received over 2 feet of snowfall, around 66 cm, making it a major attraction for tourists. Shimla received 27 cm of snowfall, Manali 45.8 cm. The highest snowfall was 105 cm at Kothi in Kinnaur district.

However, authorities cautioned motorists travelling from the Chandigarh side towards Kufri to avoid entering Shimla city due to traffic congestion and narrow internal roads. Instead, they were advised to use the Shimla by-

pass route via New-ISBT Tutikandi to reach Kufri directly. Anand Dhayia, Project Director, NHAI Kalka-Shimla section, said National Highway-5 remained operational and smooth despite the snowfall. "So far, no disturbance has been reported on NH-5. However, the Dhalli-Bhattakuffar old Shimla road was temporarily blocked by the state traffic police following heavy snowfall yesterday. Today, weather conditions over Shimla city are clear," he said.

Meanwhile, hoteliers expressed optimism over a sharp rise in occupancy levels. Stakeholders in the tourism sector said hotel occupancy in Shimla is expected to touch 70 to 80 per cent owing to the weekend rush following the snowfall. However, while welcoming the rise in tourist footfall, hoteliers raised concerns over inadequate civic preparedness, particularly power supply and internal road connectivity. Mohinder Seth, president of the Shimla Hotels and Tourism Stakeholders' Association, said overall hotel, guest house, and rest house occupancy in Shimla is expected to reach nearly 80 per cent. "Footfall has increased significantly, but amenities remain a serious concern. There was prolonged electricity disruption since yesterday morning. I had to spend nearly Rs 10,000 on diesel to operate generators to ensure an uninterrupted power supply for tourists staying in my hotel," Seth said. He added that such situations demand better planning by the administration, especially during peak winter tourism periods when snowfall is anticipated. Hoteliers stressed that uninterrupted electricity, timely snow clearance, and road connectivity are crucial to ensuring a positive experience for tourists and sustaining Shimla's reputation as a premier winter destination.

## From wearing a turban to speaking in Punjabi, why Nayab Singh Saini's visits to Punjab signal a calculated BJP outreach

GNS News Agency, SJan 27

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini's frequent visits to Punjab over the past several months have not gone unnoticed—by rival parties, and within the BJP too. From religious shrines and political conferences to bypoll campaigns and party inductions, Saini has emerged as a familiar face in Punjab's political landscape well ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections. The sustained engagement points to a clear organisational strategy: strengthening the BJP's base in a state where the party has traditionally struggled, while projecting the 'Haryana model' as a viable alternative to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led government in Punjab.

At the BJP's maiden Maghi Mela political conference at Sri Muktsar Sahib on January 14, Ranveer Singh Bittu, Union Minister of State for Railways and Food Processing, made a light-hearted remark. "Haryana people might get upset seeing the Haryana CM's frequent visits to Punjab, but Haryana understands Punjab needs healing. Moreover, Haryana is our younger brother, and younger brothers never get upset with the elder brother," Bittu said, drawing laughter and applause from the crowd. Other speakers like Tarun Chugh, national general secretary of the BJP, state president Sunil Jakhar, and others also acknowledged Saini's Punjab outreach in their poll speeches at the Maghi Mela conference. Saini's visits have combined symbolism with political messaging. Often seen wearing a turban during his Punjab engagements—a gesture appreciated by BJP leaders and sections of the public alike—the Haryana CM addresses gatherings in Punjabi, mixing it with Hindi and his characteristic Haryana accent. Of late, he has also added humour and satire to his speeches, especially while targeting Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal. Short video clips and reels of these remarks have been doing the rounds on social media, giving his outreach an added digital push.

On July 31, 2025, Saini visited Sunam to pay homage to Shaheed Udham Singh on his martyrdom day, interact-

ing with residents, descendants of Udham Singh's family and party workers. Given that Udham Singh belonged to the Kamboj community, which falls under the OBC category, the visit carried social and political significance—particularly as Saini himself comes from an OBC background.

Over the past six months, he has attended multiple programmes across Punjab and campaigned during key bypolls last year, including Ludhiana West in June and Tarn Taran in November. On December 26, 2025, he offered prayers at Gurdwara Sri Fatehgarh Sahib during the 'Shaheedi Sabha' to mark Veer Bal Diwas, paying tribute to the Sahibzadas of Guru Gobind Singh. In January this year, Saini addressed a gathering of Nihang Sikhs at Sant Kabir Kutir in Ludhiana district, urging the youth to draw inspiration from Sikh values and history. On January 11, he visited Gurdwara Charan Kanwal Sahib in Machhiwara and later paid obeisance at Shri Mukteshwar Shiv Temple (Muktidham) in Chahila, Ludhiana. The same day, he addressed a rally in Samrala to create awareness about the Viksit Bharat—Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission—Gramin (VB-G-RAM-G). His presence at the Maghi Mela political conference at Sri Muktsar Sahib on January 14, where he was the party's main speaker, further underlined his central role in the BJP's Punjab outreach. Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini along with Punjab BJP leadership at Maghi mela political conference of BJP at Sri Muktsar Sahib on January 14.

Throughout these visits, Saini has consistently targeted the AAP government. Using sharp remarks and satirical jibes, he has questioned governance, financial management, and law-and-order in Punjab, while projecting the BJP as a credible alternative. At a BJP induction programme at the party's Punjab headquarters in Chandigarh on January 16—where former MP Jagmeet Singh Brar, former MLA Ripjit Singh Brar, Akali dissident leader Charanjit Singh Brar, and Onkar Singh, a former aide of Mann, joined the party—Saini welcomed the new entrants and claimed rising public support for the BJP in Punjab. On January 23, he visited

Bhaini Sahib, a sect of Namdhari Sikhs in Sahnewal constituency of Ludhiana, to pay obeisance on the birth anniversary of founder Satguru Ram Singh, where he promised to set up a chair in his name at Kurukshetra University. Taking a swipe at the AAP leadership, he remarked that "the real finances are being controlled by AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, while Bhagwant Mann is left to make fake promises." His satirical tone, often delivered with humour, has become a recurring feature of his speeches.

Saini also frequently highlights the 'Haryana model' of governance. "We are giving MSP on 24 crops in Haryana. We have so far fulfilled 53 out of 217 promises made in the poll manifesto. By the end of the financial year, we will fulfil 163 out of 213 promises. Work on the rest is going on," he said during one of his addresses, presenting it as a template Punjab could adopt under a "double-engine" BJP government. Referring to inter-state ties, Saini has repeatedly described Punjab and Haryana as sharing a "blood relationship". At the Maghi Mela conference, he said, "Punjab is not just our neighbouring state, it shares a blood relationship with Haryana. Haryana loves Punjab and wants to see it flourish." Haryana had extended Rs 5 crore each to Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir when the states were reeling under floods last year. On Saturday, while interacting with the media in Haryana, Saini stated, "Punjab CM says that he had given compensation worth Rs 20,000 per acre to flood victims while Arvind Kejriwal, party's national convener, was citing a figure of Rs 50,000 an acre in Gujarat...don't know where the remaining Rs 30,000 has gone." Outreach draws sharp reactions. Last Saturday, AAP state general secretary Baltej Pannu accused Saini of spending more time in Punjab than managing Haryana's affairs, calling his flood-related claims a "pack of lies". Sources within AAP said that while the party had taken note of the Haryana CM's political activities, they did not perceive a threat from the BJP or Saini in Punjab. Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa had earlier alleged that the BJP was "sending" the Saini to Punjab to divide society and revive



## Last Saturday, AAP state general secretary Baltej Pannu accused Nayab Singh Saini of spending time in Punjab, instead of managing Haryana's affairs.

old fault lines linked to farmer protests at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders. The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), meanwhile, has adopted a measured tone. SAD spokesperson Daljeet Singh Cheema said, "If anyone is coming to Punjab to strengthen their party, it is their internal matter. SAD has no impact on his visits." He, however, turned the focus on AAP, alleging that Delhi leaders had "hijacked" Punjab government programmes. For now, Saini continues to project himself as a "karyakarta" reaching out to the masses. Yet, political observers agree that his sustained presence is a key cog in the BJP's long-term plan to rewrite its Punjab narrative as 2027 draws closer.

## Farakka BDO office vandalism: No FIR against TMC MLA 24 hours after EC deadline



GNS News Agency, SJan 27

The district administration in West Bengal's Murshidabad failed to comply with the Election Commission's order to file an FIR against Trinamool Congress MLA Manirul Islam in the vandalism incident at the office of the Farakka Block Development Officer (BDO) even 24 hours after the deadline to do so ended. On Thursday, the EC had directed the Murshidabad District Electoral Officer (DEO) to file an FIR against the ruling party MLA from Farakka and send a compliance report by 5 pm the same day. Though the case was not filed till 7 pm Friday, the DEO-cum-District Magistrate has asked the Farakka Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) to investigate the matter, sources said.

The ransacking purportedly carried out by TMC supporters on January 14, was allegedly led by Islam, according to media reports and videos of the incident which have surfaced since. Following the incident, the West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) had called Director General of Police Rajeev Kumar and asked to take strict action in the matter. Even as the police filed an FIR in this connection, the MLA was not named in it. This is not the first time the administration in the state has not complied with the EC's instructions. On January 21, the EC asked West Bengal Chief Secretary Nandini Chakraborty to apprise within 72 hours what action had been taken against the two Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and two Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs) accused of irregularities in the preparation of the voter list during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in the state. The EC has even asked

the Chief Secretary to report on the fact that the directive has not been implemented and send the report by 5 pm on Saturday.

The EC in its letter to the Chief Secretary stated, "A written explanation shall be called for from the competent authority/officer responsible for the aforesaid procedural lapse, clearly explaining the circumstances that led to non-compliance with the Commission's instructions. In continuation of the Commission's letter of even number dated 08.01.2026, you are requested to furnish the complete disciplinary case records, including the articles of charge, written statements of defence, inquiry reports, findings of the inquiry authority, orders of the disciplinary authority, file noting and all other relevant records forming the basis of the disciplinary action taken, in respect of all the four officials namely Shri Tathagata Mondal, Shri Debottam Dutta Choudhury, Shri Biplab Sarkar and Sh. Sudipta Das." The EC had on August 5 asked the state government to suspend and book four officials and a contractual employee for alleged fraudulent registration of 127 voters using forged documents in the Baruijpur Purba and Moyna Assembly constituencies. The four officials included two West Bengal Civil Service officers serving as EROs - Debottam Dutta Choudhury (Baruijpur Purba), and Biplab Sarkar (Moyna) - and two AEROs - Tathagata Mondal (Baruijpur), and Sudipta Das (Moyna). The Commission had also sought action against Surojit Halder, a contractual data entry operator. He was suspended by the state government earlier. Meanwhile, the West Bengal CEO directed all DEOs to take strict action if any violence occurs during the SIR hearing process. In a letter to all DEOs, it was stated, "It is directed that in case of any law & order situation at hearing venues or in any of the Government offices in connection with SIR, 2026 and in case of any destruction of public property or any kind of threat / attack to any official/ staff involved in the SIR related work, DEOs should take steps for immediate filing of complaints/ FIR with the local police station with a copy mailed to Superintendent of Police and Office of the CEO, West Bengal." The letter further read, "In case violence and destruction of public property persists the hearings in such cases should be adjourned sine die and would commence only with the approval of the CEO, West Bengal. Delay in filing of FIR's in such cases will be viewed very seriously and adverse inference shall be drawn against the concerned DEO."

## Rajoo Barot – A life in theatre, a conscience on stage



GNS News Agency, SJan 27

GUJARATI THEATRE has lost one of its most steadfast practitioners, thinkers and quiet revolutionaries with the passing of Rajoo Barot. For over four decades, his work shaped not only performances on stage but also the ethics, discipline, and seriousness with which theatre could engage society. His passing leaves behind an absence that is deeply felt — by audiences, collaborators, students, and by the very grammar of contemporary Gujarati theatre. Born in Vadodara and introduced to theatre at a young age, Barot's journey was marked by rigorous training and deep curiosity. After completing his early education and a drama diploma at M S University, Baroda, he went on to study at the National School of Drama (1977 batch), New Delhi, where he was a student of Ebrahim Alkazi. That formative period exposed him to diverse theatrical traditions — from Nautanki in north India to classical and folk performance forms — and grounded him in a discipline that he carried throughout his life.

When he returned to Ahmedabad in the late 1970s, Gujarati theatre was going through a moment of transition. Along with fellow practitioners, Barot became part of a generation that wanted to move beyond comfortable, formulaic theatre. His collaboration with Bharat Dave and later his pivotal role in shaping the Ahmedabad Theatre Group (ATG) reflected this aspiration: to build a theatre that was serious, technically strong, socially engaged, and yet accessible to audiences. ATG was not merely a theatre group; it became a training ground, a collective conscience, and a sustained experiment in professional theatre practice.

Rajoo Barot's directorial work stands out for its range and clarity of intent. From intense psychological and political dramas like Sanak and Marmabhad to socially grounded works such as Sava Amari Jaat Alag Chhe and Ha, Hu Tane Chahu Chhu Jindagi, his plays consistently addressed questions of violence, communal harmony, gender, justice, and individual responsibility. These were not didactic productions; they were carefully structured, emotionally precise, and rooted in strong ensemble performances. Audiences in Gujarat, Mumbai, Delhi, and international stages responded not just to the themes, but to the discipline and integrity of the craft. A distinctive feature of Barot's theatre was his belief in the collective. He resisted star-centric theatre and instead built ensembles where every actor mattered. This approach earned ATG a reputation for unusually consistent performances, where even minor roles were finely etched. His commitment to nurturing new writers — such as Abhijit Joshi, Saumya Joshi, Paresh Vyas and Iqbal Unnashi — helped shape a generation of Gujarati playwrights who dared to engage with contemporary realities. Equally significant was his engagement with music and folk traditions. Recognising the scarcity of trained singer-actors, Barot carved an alternative path by curating and presenting Gujarati rangbhoomi songs, (Zaverchand) Meghani's compositions, and water and folk songs through musical theatre and performance programmes. Initiatives like Taz-e Theatre were not nostalgic exercises but living archives — ways of keeping performance traditions alive, relevant, and performable for newer audiences. His engagement with classical and epic material further revealed his interpretative depth.

Productions such as Paritraan, Socrates, and Kaikeyi demonstrated his ability to read canonical texts with contemporary ethical urgency. In Kaikeyi, for instance, he resisted the simplistic villainisation of the character and instead presented her as a politically astute and morally complex figure — an approach that resonated strongly with mod-

ern audiences. Beyond directing, Rajoo Barot was a teacher in the truest sense. Through workshops, theatre camps across Gujarat, and international training initiatives, he believed in continuous learning — for himself and for others. His work with rural and urban actors, and later with National School of Drama - NSD students in reviving and reinterpreting Bhavai, reflected a lifelong commitment to process rather than spectacle. Theatre, for him, was not an event but a sustained practice. His contributions were recognised with several honours, including the Gujarat State Gaurav Puraskar and the prestigious B.V. Karanth Smriti Puraskar from the National School of Drama in 2016. Yet, those who worked with him know that awards were never his measure of success. What mattered more was whether the work remained honest — whether it asked difficult questions, whether it respected the audience, and whether it upheld the dignity of the performer.

In recent years, even as the pandemic brought theatre to a halt, Rajoo Barot continued to read, adapt, and experiment with readings and minimal forms. His engagement never ceased; it merely changed shape. That quiet perseverance perhaps best defines his legacy. Rajoo Barot leaves behind not just a body of work, but a way of thinking about theatre — as a moral, social, and collective act. His absence will be deeply felt, but his influence will continue to live on in the actors he trained, the writers he encouraged, the institutions he strengthened, and the audiences he trusted with difficult truths. Rajoo Barot's association with our family, and with the institutions closest to us, has been deeply meaningful and personal. His long and thoughtful engagement with my father, Hasmukh Baradi, was grounded in mutual respect, shared values and a rigorous commitment to theatre as an intellectual and ethical practice. Through his collaboration with Garage Studio Theatre and the Theatre Media Centre, Rajoo bhai became part of a larger journey of documentation, dialogue, and reflection on Gujarati theatre. His contributions to the Natak-BUDRETI Quarterly enriched its critical discourse, and his presence and performance at the All About Natak Fest 2023, 2024 and 2025 remains a cherished memory — marked by clarity of thought, humility, and quiet authority on stage. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Nafisa ben, his life partner and companion in this long artistic journey, and wish her strength in this moment of profound loss. We also stand in solidarity with the Ahmedabad Theatre Group — the collective that Rajoo bhai nurtured with patience, discipline, and conviction — and with all those whose lives and practice he shaped. Rajoo bhai's legacy will continue to live on in the institutions he strengthened, the artists he mentored, and the ethical seriousness he brought to Gujarati theatre.

## Several injured as AMTS bus rams into 3 vehicles, driver booked

GNS News Agency, SJan 27

A BUS of the Ahmedabad Municipal Transport Service (AMTS) rammed into at least three vehicles, including a van, on Friday, triggering panic in the city's Gota area.



Several injuries were reported due to the collision and the bus driver was booked for rash driving by the Traffic Police. On the basis of a complaint by Mahesh Ganesh Chhipa, whose autorickshaw overturned due to the impact of the collision, the 'A' Division traffic police booked the driver, Ramesh Mavji Makwana, under sections of the BNS and Motor Vehicles Act.

According to the police statement, the complainant was near a shop on Gota road around 12:30 pm on Friday when the bus driven by the accused in a "rash and negligent manner", crashed into a van, a goods carriage and the complainant's autorickshaw. The complainant suffered a head injury and there was damage caused to all three vehicles. Further investigation is underway, police said.

## Probe into khair wood smuggling racket: ED attaches 14 properties worth Rs 11.3 cr linked to suspects



GNS News Agency, SJan 27

THE DIRECTORATE of Enforcement (ED), Ahmedabad, on Wednesday attached 14 immovable properties worth Rs 11.3 crore linked to the suspects in an inter-state Khair wood smuggling racket that is also being investigated by the Surat forest department. Notably, it is for the first time that the ED has attached properties of alleged Khair wood smugglers Anfal Amjadali Khan (Madhya Pradesh) and others under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

The Surat forest department made one more arrest — that of Abbas Khan from Vapi — and seized records of "business transactions" worth Rs 4.13 crore from an Angadia

firm in Vapi on Thursday. According to a press release, the ED officers began investigations on the basis of a first offence report registered by the range forest officer, Mandvi South Range, Surat forest Division, in the matter of illegal smuggling of the Khair wood in contravention of multiple provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Mustaq Alam Tasiya, Mohammed Tahir Ahmed Hussain, both from Godhra district in Gujarat and others were allegedly involved in illegal felling of Khair trees from the wildlife sanctuaries in the south Gujarat region — Tapi, Surat, Valsad, Navsari, and Narmada districts — without permission of the forest department authorities and were transporting the wood to different destinations using fake invoices to Alirajpur in Madhya Pradesh and other destinations. On Thursday, the Surat Forest Department arrested Abbas Khan Hafiz Khan from Vapi in Valsad district. Abbas Khan, who hails from Uttar Pradesh, is involved in a smuggling syndicate spread across Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. After his name cropped up during the investigation, he fled, apparently to Uttar Pradesh. Khan returned to Vapi a few days ago and was arrested by forest department officials. Following the statements of Khan, forest officials reached the premises of the Angadia firm in Vapi and seized records of transactions allegedly made by Khan. Khan was produced in a Surat court and remanded in the custody of the Surat forest department for three days.

## Reading indispensable in a world fractured by polarity, anxiety: Booker Prize winner Banu Mushtaq

GNS News Agency, SJan 27

Highlighting the importance of reading, writer and International Booker Prize winner Banu Mushtaq said in a world fractured by polarities and anxiety, books inculcate a habit of listening deeply, and added that a society that listens deeply is capable of bringing about a change. Speaking at the 14th edition of the Exide Kolkata Literary Meet at the Alipore Museum, Mushtaq said, "We are being asked to rediscover reading. It is the best way to discover new words, and Kolkata understands this truth better than most cities. This is a city where words are never ornamental, but instrumental. Words questioned empires, shaped moments, reimagined society, and offered shelter to the wounded imagination. When we read, we do not enter a new world; we expand our own."

"In a world increasingly governed by speed and spectacle, reading teaches us slowness. In an age of instant opinion, reading teaches us patience. Reading resists simplification; it does not allow the comfort of easy answers. A reader learns the complexity of the world, which is why literature remains indispensable in times marked by polarities and anxiety. A reader is someone who listens deeply, and a society that listens deeply is capable of change. It is where silence has meaning, and the voice in all its fragility and courage is preserved," Mushtaq said. Speaking on "Heart Lamp", the collection of short stories on the lives of Muslim women, which won her the International Booker Prize, she said, "Male writers writing about women set the standards for them, how to drape herself, how submissive she should be, and a woman is expected to conform to those standards. But women have certain rights too. Don't expect absolute obedience from women. I don't hate men, neither does my women hate men. They are our own blood relations. I have seen men of several types during movements. I have seen abusive men and men who have also been good. What I want to say is that there is a patriarchy that must be fought. My characters pose questions to society and seek answers." Mushtaq said that due to her writings, she has been humiliated, attacked, and trolled, but still, she is not bitter.

"After the publication of my book, I was humiliated, attacked, trolled, abused, and thrown out of my commu-



nity. I am a Muslim woman writer, and that tag haunts me. But I am also a human being. I was mentally shattered when that happened." Asked about the BJP championing a law banning triple talaq, thereby looking to empower women, Mushtaq said, "It's an acquired practice by the Muslim community which should have been prohibited by the Muslim scholars long back. By not doing so, they left the space open for the BJP to take the opportunity. I don't blame the BJP; they, too, made some political gains." Meanwhile, Pulitzer Prize-winning American novelist Barbara Kingsolver said, "The times when we come together are remarkable as they make the process real. I grew up in a little town in the US, and we had a library, and books acted as my window to transgress into others' lives. These are difficult times we are living in, but times have always been hard, the struggle for freedom, loss of life... In my country, it feels like we have slipped backward; I cannot even comprehend. I believe the antidote to meanness and division is empathy."

British-American author Jhumpa Lahiri spoke on how she shifted from writing in English to Italian. "I was already exploring how to write in a new language. During 'The Lowland', I had been trying to write through all of the other books. There are some who think that thought may be independent of language. I don't believe in language. Thought seems to take shape in some sort of emotion and intuition. I love the fact that we have made so many languages and each is unique. Wherever we are, we are all outsiders. Alienation is probably the thriving theme of literature."

## 95 pc waste at Dadumajra dumping ground removed: Mayor Babla

GNS News Agency, SJan 27

Incumbent Mayor of Chandigarh Harpreet Kaur Babla Friday said that 95 per cent of the waste at the Dadumajra dumping ground has been removed during her one-year tenure. Addressing a press conference, she announced that the long-pending memorandum of understanding (MoU) for door-to-door garbage collection, stalled for the past six years, has finally been finalised. She also said payments running into Rs 3 crore for sanitation workers material, pending for the last 32 months, have been cleared. The mayor said sanitation was among the most critical challenges facing the Municipal Corporation when she assumed office, with legacy waste, delayed contracts and unpaid dues affecting daily civic services. The large-scale clearance of waste at Dadumajra, she said, marked a significant step towards improving public health and environmental conditions. Work on the remaining waste would be completed in a phased and scientific manner. She said the finalisation of the door-to-door garbage collection MoU would strengthen solid waste management across the city by ensuring uniform service delivery, better monitoring and accountability. The agreement, pending for several years, is expected to improve segregation and reduce pressure on dumping grounds.

Highlighting steps taken for sanitation workers' welfare, the mayor said clearing long-pending payments was necessary to ensure uninterrupted services and safer working conditions. Timely payments and availability of essential material, she added, were crucial for sustaining cleanliness efforts. Apart from sanitation reforms, the mayor outlined institutional measures taken to improve governance and transparency in the Municipal Corporation. The Finance and Contract Committee (F&CC) was constituted unanimously, while three statutory committees — roads, water supply and sewerage, and house tax — were reconstituted. In addition, nine sub-committees focusing on sanitation, enforcement, environment, women empowerment, electricity, fire and emergency services, and village and slum development were formed. On revenue generation, she said the Municipal Corporation organised the 53rd Rose Festival at zero expenditure while generating income, and implemented new advertisement and parking policies to strengthen civic finances. Relief was also extended to traders by allowing pending licence fees to be paid in instalments.

The mayor said financial assistance from the union government helped stabilise essential services and supported infrastructure works, including replacement of old



water supply and sewerage pipelines and road repairs.

She added that awareness campaigns on cleanliness, public health and a drug-free Chandigarh were conducted to encourage public participation in civic governance. AAP alleges scams, failed projects in Mayor Babla's one-year tenure. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Friday launched a sharp attack on the BJP-led Municipal Corporation, alleging that Mayor Harpreet Kaur Babla's one-year tenure has been marked by scams, failed projects and policies that burdened the public. AAP Chandigarh state president Vijaypal Singh said the civic body had failed to learn from past mistakes, citing repeated waterlogging incidents that submerged vehicles for the second consecutive year. Rejecting the BJP's claims of financial revival, Singh said that despite the mayor earlier describing the corporation's finances as "pathetic," its debt has now risen to Rs 2,500 crore, while salaries and pensions remain pending. He alleged that claims of clearing Rs 3 crore in sanitation worker dues were misleading and that water, electricity and property taxes had been increased, placing a heavy burden on residents.

The AAP also questioned revenue claims related to the Rose Festival, advertisement policy and licence fee instalments, alleging that projected earnings failed to materialise. Singh said the Rs 125 crore received from the Centre was being misrepresented, calling it the corporation's rightful share from electricity revenues, not a grant.

The party alleged failures in water supply projects, road works, sanitation, community centres, housing, slum rehabilitation and welfare schemes, accusing the BJP of governance lapses and corruption. Singh said the AAP would continue to raise civic issues and promised affordable services and accountable governance, asserting that voters would reject the BJP in the next elections.

## Why 'illegal immigration' was not cited as reason for SIR, Supreme Court asks EC



GNS News Agency, SJan 27

The Supreme Court on Thursday (January 22, 2026) questioned whether the Election Commission of India had "clearly and eloquently" cited illegal, cross-border immigration as a reason for holding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and verifying citizenship of registered voters. The query from the Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi came even as nearly 6.5 crore names were removed from draft electoral rolls published by the poll body in nine States and three Union Territories. Around 3.26 crore voters in Uttar Pradesh, one of the nine States where the second phase of the SIR was done, received notices asking them to attend hearings and show citizenship credentials.

Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, for the Commission, argued that the poll body was authorised to verify citizenship under Article 324 of the Constitution. Article 326 made citizenship mandatory for a person to vote. He referred to the amendments made in the Citizenship Act in 2003, which made conditions for citizenship more stringent, requiring both parents of electors to be Indian citizens. The concept of 'illegal immigrant' was introduced in the 2003 amendment. But Justice Bagchi said the poll body had listed only "frequent migration" as one of the reasons for holding the SIR. "Was the requirement of examination of citizenship in light of 2003 amendments to the Citizenship Act a trigger to hold the SIR in 2025? If so, that trigger does not have an eloquent expression in the SIR notification," Justice Bagchi observed. Mr. Dwivedi agreed that the reason of "illegal migration" could have been expressed "more clearly, more happily".

Justice Bagchi said by 'migration' in the SIR notifica-

tion, the poll body seemed to have been referring more to inter-State migration and not cross-border illegal movement. Verification of citizenship was not exactly needed if an elector had only moved from one State to another within the country. Mr. Dwivedi responded that the term 'migration' would subsume both inter-State and trans-border movement. "We could have said 'inter-State migration', 'intra-State migration', 'cross-border migration' or use the one expression 'migration' to mean it all," he said. The judge, however, said there was a clear distinction between migration and illegal immigration. "Migration, when it is inter-State, is always lawful. The word 'migration' means 'lawful migration'. When you talk of inter-country migrations, it may amount to illegal immigration. In India, citizens are entitled to move to any part of the country. It is a fundamental freedom. The aspect of illegality comes only in the case of immigration. Your SIR order does not eloquently state that your SIR is also about illegal immigration... When it is migration simpliciter, we will interpret it as inter-State migration," Justice Bagchi observed.

The Bench asked "what was really in the mind" of the poll panel when it started the SIR exercise. "What was in your mind then, you say 'rapid urbanisation', 'frequent migration' without clearly saying 'illegal immigration'. Is it that now you are second-guessing the SIR," the judge asked the poll body. The Bench said over 20 years have passed since the last SIR. There has been an enormous movement of population. Urbanisation has spread. It was admitted that wrongful entries have occurred in the electoral roll. The court asked whether the poll panel wanted to focus on these reasons and give itself some "elbow space" or press on with the 'illegal immigration' angle. "Are you defending that a special revision can go into the aspect of illegal immigration? If so, that is not clear," Justice Bagchi asked. Mr. Dwivedi said the other reasons given in the SIR notification was more than sufficient to hold an SIR. He clarified that the SIR, being legislative in character, must also take into consideration the 2003 amendments made in the citizenship law. "This amendment came after the previous SIR. The amendment had never been applied in the intervening years, until now. Revision of electoral rolls had been done earlier on the basis of self-declaration of citizenship. This [SIR 2025] we found was an opportune time to take note of this statutory amendment of 2003 and examine citizenship for the purpose of preparing the electoral roll," Mr. Dwivedi argued.

## Ukraine, Russia hold first direct talks on latest U.S. peace plan

GNS News Agency, SJan 27

Negotiators from Russia, Ukraine and the United States met in Abu Dhabi for the first direct negotiations on a plan being pushed by U.S. President Donald Trump to end the almost four-year-long war. The U.S. initially drafted a plan to end the conflict that was heavily criticised in Kyiv and western Europe for being too close to Russia's line, while later proposals were criticised by Moscow for floating the idea of European peacekeepers.

Ahead of Friday's (January 23) talks, which are set to continue on Saturday (January 24), Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said territory remained the key issue — with Moscow having said it is not dropping its demand that Kyiv pull out of its eastern Donbas region. After the first day of talks, Ukraine's chief negotiator Rustem Umerov posted on social media that the meeting had focused "on the parameters for ending Russia's war and the further logic of the negotiation process", adding that meetings were scheduled for Saturday (January 24). The UAE Foreign Ministry said in an earlier statement the talks were scheduled to last two days and were "part of ongoing efforts to promote dialogue and identify political solutions to the crisis". Mr. Trump met Mr. Zelenskyy at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Thursday (January 22) and U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff later held talks with Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin.

The Emirates meeting took place as thousands of people in Kyiv were without heating in sub-zero temperatures due to Russian strikes. The European Union, which has sent hundreds of generators, accused Moscow of "deliberately depriving civilians of heat". Kyiv said Russian strikes had killed three people on Friday in the Kharkiv region and four people — including a father and his five-year-old son — overnight in the east.

While diplomacy to end Europe's worst conflict since World War II has gained pace, Moscow and Kyiv appear deadlocked over the issue of territory. Hours after Mr. Putin met Mr. Witkoff — and Mr. Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner — in Moscow, the Kremlin said its maximalist demand that Kyiv withdraw from the eastern Donbas region still stood. "Russia's position is well known on the fact that Ukraine, Ukrainian armed forces, have to leave the ter-



ritory of the Donbas," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Both sides say the fate of territory in Ukraine's east is one of the main outstanding issues in the search for a settlement to a war that has killed tens of thousands, displaced millions and decimated eastern Ukraine. "The Donbas is a key issue," Mr. Zelenskyy — who said he and Mr. Trump had agreed on post-war security guarantees in Davos — told reporters on Friday (January 23), ahead of the talks. Later in a post online, he added: "It is necessary that not only Ukraine has the desire to end the war and achieve full security, but that a similar desire somehow emerges in Russia as well." Russian and Ukrainian negotiators are last known to have met face-to-face in Istanbul last summer, in talks that ended only in deals to exchange captured soldiers. The Abu Dhabi meeting is the first time they have faced each other to talk about the Trump administration's plan. Mr. Putin has repeatedly said Moscow intends to get full control of eastern Ukraine by force if talks fail. After the Russia-U.S. talks in the Kremlin, Putin aide Yuri Ushakov insisted Moscow was "genuinely interested in resolving" the war diplomatically. But he added: "Until that happens, Russia will continue to achieve its objectives... on the battlefield." Mr. Trump has in the past pressured Ukraine to agree to terms that Kyiv sees as capitulation. Mr. Trump repeated on Wednesday (January 21) his belief that Mr. Putin and Mr. Zelenskyy were close to a deal. "I believe they're at a point now where they can come together and get a deal done. And if they don't, they're stupid — that goes for both of them," he said.

## U.S., Ukrainian and Russian negotiators to meet in UAE for security talks

GNS News Agency, SJan 27

Ukrainian, U.S. and Russian officials will hold security talks in the United Arab Emirates, the Kremlin said, following a meeting of top U.S. negotiators with President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on a U.S.-drafted plan to end the Ukraine war. Diplomatic efforts to end Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II have gained pace in recent months, though Moscow and Kyiv remain at odds over the key issue of territory in a post-war settlement.

U.S. negotiators, led by envoy Steve Witkoff, talked with the Russian leader in Moscow into the early hours of Friday (January 23, 2026), according to a Kremlin statement. Kremlin diplomatic adviser Yuri Ushakov told reporters their discussions had been "useful in every respect". Mr. Witkoff and the U.S. team are next flying to Abu Dhabi, where talks are expected to continue. A Russian delegation, headed by General Igor Kostyukov, director of Russia's GRU military intelligence agency, will also head there "in the coming hours", according to Mr. Ushakov. "It was agreed that the first meeting of a trilateral working group on security issues will take place today in Abu Dhabi," Mr. Ushakov added. "We are genuinely interested in resolving (the conflict) through political and diplomatic means," he said but added, "Until that happens, Russia will continue to achieve its objectives... on the battlefield."

Mr. Witkoff previously said he believed the two sides were "down to one issue", without elaborating. Video published by the Kremlin showed a smiling Mr. Putin shaking

hands with Witkoff, U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and White House advisor Josh Gruenbaum. The high-stakes meeting came just hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said a draft deal was "nearly, nearly ready" and that he and Trump had agreed on the issue of post-war security guarantees. He also said the U.K. and France had already committed to forces on the ground. Russia, which occupies around 20% of Ukraine, is pushing for full control of the country's eastern Donbas region as part of a deal. But Kyiv has warned that ceding ground will embolden Moscow and says it will not sign a peace deal that fails to deter Russia from launching a renewed assault.

Europe 'fragmented' The full details of the upcoming talks in the United Arab Emirates have not been released, and it is not clear whether the Russian and Ukrainian officials will meet face-to-face. Mr. Zelenskyy said these talks would last two days. Mr. Trump repeated on Wednesday (January 21, 2026) his oft-stated belief that Mr. Putin and Mr. Zelenskyy were close to a deal. "I believe they're at a point now where they can come together and get a deal done. And if they don't, they're stupid — that goes for both of them. And if they don't, they're stupid — that goes for both of them," he said after delivering a speech at Davos. Mr. Zelenskyy, at his address in Davos, blasted the EU's lack of "political will" in countering Mr. Putin in a fiery address. "Instead of becoming a truly global power, Europe remains a beautiful but fragmented kaleidoscope of small and middle powers," he said. Mr. Trump's dramatic foreign policy pivots,

## Kerala man's death: Trial by social media



A day after a woman posted a video on social media alleging sexual harassment by a man on a bus, he died by suicide. The episode sparked outrage across Kerala and led to heated discussions on the use of social media, the possible consequences of public shaming, and mental health. Mini Muringatheri reports on an episode that has divided society

It was U. Deepak's birthday on January 17. The 42-year-old sales executive, who worked at a garment company, lived with his parents in a two-storey house in Govindapuram, a couple of kilometres from Kozhikode city in Kerala. He had promised his father, Choyi Ullattuthodi, and mother, K. Kanyaka, that he would take them to Guruvayur temple, an ancient Hindu site dedicated to Lord Krishna and popular among pilgrims. For the closely knit family of three, whose lives were rooted in routine, such pilgrimages were not rare, Kanyaka says.

Deepak had instructed his parents to be ready by the afternoon for the journey that would take about 2 hours. He said they would leave once he returned from work. But when he came home, his parents realised that he was not himself. "He was very upset," Kanyaka recalls. "He didn't eat. Without any explanation, he said, 'Ammma, we will go to Guruvayur later'." Kanyaka kept asking him what had happened, but Deepak did not respond. He shut himself inside his room. That night, citing incidents of theft in the area, Deepak asked his parents to close their bedroom door. They did as they were told. The next morning, they found Deepak dead in his room. For Ullattuthodi and Kanyaka, the discovery was shocking especially since they saw no warning and no visible signs of despair. "We couldn't understand why he took his own life," says Kanyaka, her voice cracking. A day earlier, unbeknownst to his parents, Deepak had struggled to process a video in the public domain that featured him. The circumstances surrounding his death have sent shockwaves across Kerala, sparking widespread discussion and outrage. His death highlights the complex intersection of social media, public shaming, sexual abuse, and mental health.

Deepak's parents, Choyi Ullattuthodi and K. Kanyaka, discovered his body in his room the morning after his birthday. The previous day, 35-year-old Shimijitha Musthafa from Vadakara, who describes herself on Instagram as a "trained psychologist", posted a video. She alleged that Deepak sexually harassed her on a bus in Payyannur, Kannur district. She claimed that Deepak, who had been travelling in the private bus from Payyannur railway station to the bus stand, deliberately elbowed her breast.

The video struck a nerve. Sexual harassment in crowded public transport is a lived reality for countless women across India. The clip went viral, reaching more than 2 million people within a few hours. When some people in the comments section questioned her intent and the framing of the video, Musthafa deleted the clip. Later, she posted a follow-up video. She said that her aim was not to target an individual, but to highlight a "serious social and mental health issue." It was Asgar Ali, a friend of Deepak, who informed him about the video. "Deepak was introverted," Ali says. "He was recovering from the trauma of a divorce. When I spoke to him on the night of his birthday, he was very distressed. He feared public humiliation. He told me he would take legal measures against the woman."

For Kanyaka, the memory of that night is unbearable. "Though he was 42, he was like a child," she says. "He was very delicate. He would not do anything without asking me. To take such a step, he must have been broken inside. How much my son must have cried all night..." Deepak's cousin, U. Jayaprakash, and his wife Sini are in a state of disbelief. "Nobody who knew Deepak would ever believe that he could sexually harass someone," says Jayaprakash. "He was very attached to his mother. He must have worried about how such an allegation would affect her." The family accused Musthafa of using the video to gain fame and followers. Public anger swelled rapidly. Soon, Deepak's death was no longer a private tragedy; it became a public flashpoint. While several women's rights activists urged people to stay calm and not lose sight of the complexity of the issue, many men were angry. A series of videos showed men travelling in buses with cardboard boxes covering their bodies. One of the most widely shared clips featured a bus conductor wearing a cardboard box over his upper body, bearing a message demanding the formation of a men's commission.

Complaints and inquiries On January 19, Kanyaka filed a complaint against Musthafa with the Kozhikode City Police Commissioner. The Kozhikode Medical College police registered a case and invoked Section 109 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. This is a non-bailable offence relating to abetment to suicide. The police arrested Musthafa from her relative's house in Vadakara and remanded her to judicial custody for 14 days. The State Human Rights Commission directed the police to submit a report within a week. In its remand report before the Judicial First Class Magistrate Court, Kunnammangalam, the police stated that Deepak had died by suicide due to the humiliation caused by the videos filmed and shared by Musthafa.

The investigation, the police said, included a review of CCTV footage from the bus in which Musthafa and Deepak had travelled. "There was nothing abnormal or objectionable [in it]," they wrote in the remand report. "The footage does not show any inappropriate or unusual behaviour." Statements from the bus staff and fellow passengers also reportedly confirmed that no incident of harassment or misconduct took place during the journey, the remand report said. The police also said that Musthafa recorded multiple videos of the alleged sexual harassment in the bus and deleted some of them. Her phone has been sent for forensic analysis. "We have sought police custody of the accused for further questioning," says a police source. The police added in the report that Musthafa, who holds a post-graduate degree and is former ward member of the Areacode Grama Panchayat, was aware of the legal requirement to approach the police if she had experienced

harassment. Meanwhile, from Manjeri jail, Musthafa filed a complaint through her brother with the Payyannur police, reiterating that she was sexually harassed on the bus on January 16. The Payyannur police have initiated a preliminary inquiry. A battleground

As legal processes unfolded, public discourse exploded. Almost overnight, the public perception of Musthafa shifted. Initially seen as a victim of sexual harassment, she came to be seen as an abettor of suicide. Social media turned into a battleground. Many people questioned the authenticity of the video, arguing that the contact between Deepak and her could have been accidental as the bus was crowded. Some influencers and YouTubers branded the video "fake." Deepak's death altered the narrative entirely. What was once a conversation about women's safety in public transport turned into a bitter debate on false allegations, public shaming, and the destructive power of social media. The case raised uncomfortable questions about accountability, justice, and empathy in the digital age. Feminists themselves appeared divided. "When a woman says she was sexually harassed and shows video evidence of it, how does that automatically become abetment to suicide," someone wondered. Some women argued that suicide cannot invalidate an allegation, especially when the woman continues to stand by her claim even after the man's death. Others asked whether the video should have been made public before an investigation. Should social media influencers assume the role of arbiters of justice? Should public opinion be allowed to determine guilt? Cyber crime investigator Pattathil Dhanya Menon points to legal grey zones. "Technically speaking, in a public space, you cannot shoot another person without consent," she says. "If it was recorded as evidence against violence, it should have been submitted to the police. It should not have been edited or tampered with." She stresses the urgent need for awareness about the use of social media.

As the debate raged on, Musthafa became the target of vicious online abuse. She received rape and murder threats. Ajay Unni, from the Bharatiya Janata Party, who contested the recent Thodupuzha Municipality elections, said women who create such videos should be raped first. Seeing the firestorm, many women came out in support of Musthafa. They said that there are barely any women who have not experienced harassment in crowded buses or public spaces in India. Detailing their own experiences, women also spoke of how they are routinely shamed and isolated when they speak up. Data from the National Crime Records Bureau show that India's crime rate against women increased in 2022 by 4% points compared to 2021. The national average stood at 66.4 cases per lakh women, driven by high rates in Delhi (144.4), Haryana (118.7), and Telangana (117.6). States such as Kerala (82) and Madhya Pradesh (78.8) were closer to the national average. "School and college students are the most frequent victims," says Radhika P., a 53-year-old sales staff member in Kozhikode. "My daughter often complains to me. Even at my age, I'm not spared. Women always travel with fear. We have to remain alert in crowded buses." Musthafa's supporters also pointed to the apathy of the police and the judicial system in handling harassment complaints. This, they argued, pushes women to post videos online as a form of self-defence, a way of reclaiming agency and deterring potential perpetrators. They cited the 2023 case of Savad Sha, who was arrested for masturbating inside a Kerala State transport bus while sitting next to a woman. She uploaded a video of the act online. The woman, an actor and model, faced severe attacks online from men's groups. Some of them even received the accused after he obtained bail. In 2025, Savad Sha was booked again for molesting another woman in another bus, validating the earlier complaint.

"If the promptness shown in arresting Musthafa had been shown in acting on complaints of harassment in buses, things would be different," says screenwriter and feminist activist Didi Damodharan. "There is hardly a woman who has not had a bad experience in public transport. That is what Musthafa tried to say through her video. Whether this specific case is true or not should be decided by the police and courts." She adds, "Mobile phones can be effective tools of self-defence. The very awareness that one might be under watch can make public spaces safer for women." At the same time, she cautions against the oversimplification of Deepak's suicide. "There may be many reasons behind this death. The video could be one factor, but it may not be the sole reason." Damodharan is blunt about how the narrative has been weaponised. "The tears of the mother are being used to attack the women's liberation movement. Instead of emphasising that suicide is never a solution, all anger has been directed at the woman and the video. There appears to be a deliberate effort to crush even the smallest possibility of women's empowerment," she says. She also points to deeper anxieties at play. "The accessibility of social media and phones for women disrupts power equations in a patriarchal society. That is why the issue is framed as a problem of women using social media," she says.

Drawing lines As Musthafa was brought to the Medical College police station, people blocked traffic and shouted abuses. Similar scenes were reported outside Manjeri jail. People posted videos on social media, attacking women and feminist activists. Political parties and their cyber warriors jumped in, each pushing their own agenda. In the 2017 case involving the abduction and sexual assault of a Malayalam actor, the court took the ages of the accused into account while determining the sentence. In another instance of sexual misconduct, the court showed consideration to the accused, filmmaker P.T. Kunju Muhammed, because of his age. "What, then, is the 'right' age for a man to be punished adequately in a case of harassment," asks Damodharan. Women activists also point out that the gravity of the allegation against Musthafa is far less severe than crimes such as rape and gang rape. They question the disproportionate response and the intensity of the punitive action in her case. On the other hand, men's rights activists claim that Deepak's death is not an isolated incident. They argue that men are increasingly victims of public humiliation and reputational damage without evidence. Activist Rahul Easwar announced a 24x7 helpline for men facing mental harassment and declared January 17 as 'Men's Rights Day'. He gave Deepak's parents "initial aid" of ₹3.17 lakh.

Psychiatrist Dr. Shaju George, who is from Thrissur and works in Dubai, says, "Ending one's life is almost normalised as a response to mental trauma. What is tragic is that neither he nor his friends or family sought professional psychological or legal help." Deepak's death has left behind grieving parents, a woman in jail, and a society deeply divided. It is the story not just of one man and one video, but of a social contract stretched thin by technology, patriarchy, fear, and grief. It forces Kerala, a State that has just declared itself 100% digitally literate, to confront an uncomfortable truth: in the age of social media, justice is seen as everyone's business, delivered in quick, reckless shorts. And the cost is often paid in lives.

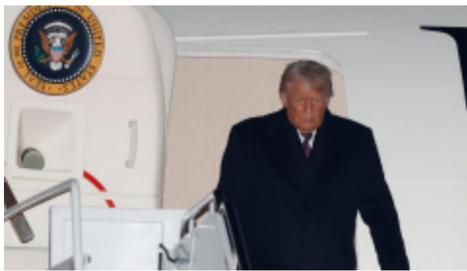
## China will eat them up: Donald Trump slams Canada for opposing Greenland 'Golden Dome'

GNS News Agency, SJan 27

U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday (January 24, 2026) slammed Canada for rejecting his proposed "Golden Dome" missile defence project over Greenland, warning that Beijing could "eat them up" within a year as the northern neighbour chooses closer ties with China over U.S.-backed security. On Truth Social, Mr. Trump wrote, "Canada is against The Golden Dome being built over Greenland, even though The Golden Dome would protect Canada. Instead, they voted in favour of doing business with China, who will 'eat them up' within the first year!"

Mr. Trump's outburst comes amid escalating tensions between the U.S. and its northern neighbour, following recent remarks by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos. On Wednesday (January 21, 2026), during his address at the 56th Annual Summit of the WEF, Mr. Trump criticised Mr. Carney, asserting that Canada should be more "grateful" to the U.S. for the "freebies" it receives, including security protections.

"Canada gets a lot of freebies from us, by the way. They should also be grateful, but they're not. I saw your Prime Minister yesterday; he wasn't so grateful. They should be grateful to us," Mr. Trump said, adding that his plan to build a "Golden Dome" missile defence system will also provide protection to Canada. "Canada lives because of the United States. Remember that, Mark, the next time you make your statements," Mr. Trump said, underscoring the strategic and security role of the US in protecting its northern neighbour. Mr. Trump's remarks were aimed at Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who, in his WEF address, highlighted "an era of great power rivalry, where the rules-based order is fading," and also opposed tariff coercion, in a veiled reference to Washington's use of the financial tool to acquire Greenland. On January 17, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney announced a new trade agreement with China. Mr. Carney said that the deal would open markets



for Canadian businesses and workers. In a post on X, Mr. Carney said, "We've secured a new trade agreement with China — unlocking more than \$7 billion in export markets for Canadian workers and businesses." In a statement by the Canadian Prime Minister's Office said, "In a more divided and uncertain world, Canada is building a stronger, more independent, and more resilient economy. To that end, Canada's new government is working with urgency and determination to diversify trade partnerships and catalyse massive new levels of investment. As the world's second-largest economy, China presents enormous opportunities for Canada in this mission." Canada has agreed to cut its 100% tariff on Chinese electric cars in return for lower tariffs on Canadian farm products, CBS News reported. Mr. Carney said there would be an initial annual cap of 49,000 vehicles on Chinese EV exports to Canada, growing to about 70,000 over five years. China will reduce its total tariff on canola seeds, a major Canadian export, from 84 per cent to about 15 per cent, as per CBS News. Mr. Carney said China has become a more predictable partner to deal with than the US. "Our relationship has progressed in recent months with China. It is more predictable and you see results coming from that," Carney said, as quoted by CBS News.

## To Lam wins second term to rule Vietnam for the next five years

GNS News Agency, SJan 27

Vietnam's top leader To Lam was re-appointed on Friday (January 23, 2026) as head of the ruling Communist Party for the next five years after a unanimous vote by its central committee, as he pledged to turbocharge growth in the export-reliant nation. In the one-party state, Mr. Lam was re-elected to Vietnam's most powerful job by all 180 party officials from a newly formed committee at the end of a congress held every five years to set key targets and make leadership decisions, the party said. Viewed as a bold reformist, before the vote Mr. Lam promised two-digit growth. Immediately after re-election, he told the congress he wanted a system based on "integrity, talent, courage, and competence," where performance is assessed against tangible results.

Sweeping reforms During his brief prior stint as party chief since mid-2024, Mr. Lam presided over fast growth underpinned by sweeping reforms that won him strong support but also criticism, as tens of thousands of civil servants lost their jobs while he promoted faster decision-making and less red tape. Aware of the discontent stirred by those reforms, Mr. Lam moved early to secure support from rival factions within the party, including the powerful military, according to officials familiar with the process. As concerns mounted about his plans to bolster private conglomerates at the expense of state-owned firms, Mr. Lam issued a directive ahead of the party congress underscoring the "leading role" of state enterprises, which include army-controlled telecom and defence giant Viettel. "He normally meticulously prepares for his moves," said Le Hong Hiep, senior fellow at the ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, noting that Lam, as state security minister, had manoeuvred deftly to reach the apex of Vietnam's political system in 2024 when his late predecessor Nguyen Phu Trong was facing prolonged health issues. In an address to the congress after his re-election, Mr. Lam, 68, said he would maintain party unity. He is also seeking to become Vietnam's president, with a decision expected to be announced later.

Mr. Lam's re-election as party chief sends a reassuring message to foreign investors who value political stability, Hiep said. Mr. Hiep added, however, that Mr. Lam's bid



to combine the two top roles — a system resembling the model under Xi Jinping in neighbouring China — "could pose risks to Vietnam's political system," which has traditionally depended on collective leadership and internal checks.

Lam targets 10% annual economic growth Earlier this week, addressing congress delegates sitting in red-upholstered seats in a red-carpeted conference hall under a towering statue of party founder Ho Chi Minh, Mr. Lam promised annual growth above 10% through the decade — an ambitious target which differs from World Bank forecasts of an average 6.5% yearly expansion this year and next. Mr. Lam wants to achieve that by changing Vietnam's growth model, which has hinged for decades on cheap labour and exports, turning the Southeast Asian nation into a high-middle-income economy by 2030 thanks to a boost in innovation and efficiency. In his first months as party chief, he launched the most comprehensive overhaul of the country's public administration and government in decades, and has promised to continue with his reform drive, despite concerns over financial risks, controversial infrastructure and favouritism. Will maintain party unity, flags huge tasks ahead: Lam Mr. Lam pledged to maintain the unity of the ruling Communist Party and said there were huge tasks ahead, after the unanimous re-appointment to lead the party for the next five years. Mr. Lam, speaking at the end of the five-yearly party congress, committed to work hard to meet the expectations of Vietnam's people.

ability for the dire events of the past weeks, and justice must be done for all those who were killed, injured or detained only for exercising their human rights and for voicing legitimate demands," the European Union representative Michele Cervone d'Urso told the gathering. Iranian ambassador Ali Bahreini however slammed Friday's (January 23) meeting as "posturing" and "a pressure tool against Iran". His colleague Somayeh Karimdoost described the resolution as "a thoroughly unbalanced biased and politically motivated text". A number of countries also came to Iran's defence, accusing the council of being "politicised" and showing "double standards".

Cuban ambassador Rodolfo Benitez slammed the session as an "act of supreme cynicism", while China's ambassador Jia Guide said Beijing "opposed interference in other countries' internal affairs on the pretext of human rights". Chilling Mr. Turk's office and NGOs tracking the toll from the crackdown on the biggest protests in Iran in years have said their task has been impeded by a now two-week internet shutdown. Giving their first official toll from the protests, Iranian authorities on Wednesday (January 21) said 3,117 people had been killed since the massive demonstrations erupted late December. But the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency on Friday (January 23) put the number of deaths at more than 5,000, warning the confirmed figures were likely to be far lower than the actual toll. Another NGO, Norway-based Iran Human Rights, has warned the final toll risks reaching the scale of 25,000. The protests have now largely halted, but while "the killing in the streets of Iran may have subsided... the brutality continues", Mr. Turk warned. He decried the "chilling development" in which Iran's judiciary chief this week said there would be no leniency for the thousands detained. "I am deeply concerned by contradictory statements from the Iranian authorities about whether those detained in connection with the protests may be executed," Mr. Turk said. He pointed out that Iran "remains among the top executioner states in the world", with at least 1,500 people reportedly executed there last year.

## China says two people dead, four missing after boat capsizes near disputed shoal

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Two people were dead and four others missing after a Singapore-flagged cargo ship with 21 Filipinos on board capsized in the South China Sea, Chinese authorities said Friday.

The Chinese Coast Guard and navy operations from the People's Liberation Army's Southern Theatre Command have rescued 15 people in the ongoing operation. Among them, 14 were in stable condition, according to the PLA's Southern Theatre Command. The boat capsized about 100 kilometers northwest of Scarborough Shoal, said the Chinese Coast Guard in a statement. Scarborough is one of the most disputed shoals in the South China Sea.

Contact was lost Thursday (January 22, 2026) night with the cargo ship that was on its way to Guangdong province in China's south. The Philippines Coast Guard said in a statement Friday (January 23, 2026) that they sent two vessels and aircraft to assist in rescue operations with the crew of the cargo ship it identified as the Devon Bay. The



area is the site of frequent showdowns between Chinese and Philippine ships. Both countries make claims to the territory and patrol the waters near the shoal, which also is claimed by Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. A Chinese navy ship accidentally collided with a Chinese Coast Guard ship in August while trying to block a Philippine Coast Guard vessel near Scarborough Shoal.

## Indian national among four dead in shooting linked to family dispute in U.S.



GNS News Agency, SJan 27

An Indian national was among the victims of a shooting incident linked to an alleged family dispute in the U.S. State of Georgia, according to the Indian mission in Atlanta. The shooting left four people dead early Friday (January 23, 2026) morning while three children were inside the home during the incident in Lawrenceville city, local media reported.

The Consulate General of India in Atlanta, expressing grief over the shooting, said the alleged shooter has been arrested and all possible assistance was being extended to the bereaved family. "We are deeply grieved by a tragic

shooting incident linked to an alleged family dispute, in which an Indian national was among the victims. The alleged shooter has been arrested, and all possible assistance is being extended to the bereaved family," it said on X. The suspect was identified as Vijay Kumar, 51, of Atlanta, Fox5 Atlanta reported. The victims have been identified as Kumar's wife Meemu Dogra (43), Gourav Kumar (33), Nidhi Chander (37), and Harish Chander (38), according to Gwinnett County police. The suspect was charged with four counts of aggravated assault, four counts of felony murder, four counts of malice murder, one count of cruelty to children in the 1st degree, and two counts of cruelty to children in the 3rd degree, the report said. The police responded to a call at about 2.30 am (local time) on Friday (January 23, 2026) in the 1000 block of Brook Ivy Court. Upon arrival, officers discovered the bodies of four adults inside the residence, all of whom had sustained fatal gunshot wounds, the report said.

Police officials said that three children were present when the shooting began. To protect themselves, the children hid in a closet. One of the children managed to call 911, providing critical information that allowed officers to reach the scene within minutes, investigators said. The children were unharmed and have since been picked up by a family member.

## India 'disregarded' friendly advice on controlling Hasina's government: Former Awami ally G.M. Quader

GNS News Agency, SJan 27

India "disregarded" friendly advice from Bangladesh and extended "unrestrained" support to former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, which was partly responsible for the misgovernance the country was subjected to during her tenure, said Ghulam Mohammad Quader, chief of Jatiyo Party and a former ally of Ms. Hasina, which is contesting in the upcoming election of Bangladesh. Speaking to The Hindu over the telephone from Dhaka, Mr. Quader said his party is not receiving support from the current administration because of its past association with the Awami League and accused the country's interim government of lacking sincerity in delivering an inclusive election.

"I advised India on multiple occasions to not give unrestrained support to Sheikh Hasina's government, but they did not listen to my suggestions. Ultimately, she was thrown out, but there is no certainty ahead of us because the uprising has not led to any concrete political outcome," Mr. Quader said. Criticising the interim government being led by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus, Mr. Quader described its top officials as "inexperienced" and accused them of failing to control a surge of uncontrolled mob violence, which also gutted his ancestral house in northern Bangladesh. "The mob culture of Bangladesh was controlled in Hasina-era, but it has now surged and the police do nothing when the mob attacks political persons," said Mr. Quader, the younger brother of the late military ruler Hossein Mohammed Ershad.

"We at least knew where to complain where violent incidents took place during the Hasina-era. Now, we do not know where to seek justice in case something happens to me or my loved ones," Mr. Quader said, painting a dismal picture of the law and order situation in the country. Mr. Quader said while the interim government has banned the Awami League, it has not banned Jatiyo Party. However, he alleged his party continues to face considerable obstruction on the ground due to its former alliance with Awami League, preventing the party from campaigning normally.

"We were allies of Awami League at one point and that



is why the dominant players now are trying to attack us, though they have not banned us. They also try to obstruct our election campaign whenever we try to hold public meetings," he said. Mr. Quader also accused the interim government of mixing election with a referendum for changing the constitution through the incorporation of July Charter into the constitution of Bangladesh. He said that the idea of the referendum on February 12 was not clear to many at the beginning but with time, it is becoming clear that the "referendum on July Charter and the national election are contradictory to each other". The election aims to continue the parliamentary system with the Prime Minister on top but the referendum is aimed at changing that system, Mr. Quader said. The interim government of Prof. Mohammed Yunus has been campaigning for "Yes vote" in the referendum. Criticising the conduct of the referendum campaign, Mr. Quader said, "The way the referendum is being steered by the administrative machinery to ensure a 'Yes vote' makes us feel it is being fraudulently imposed on the population. The voters are being led to vote in favour of changing the constitution without being provided complete information."

## China's Xi urges Brazil's Lula to jointly protect Global South interests

GNS News Agency, SJan 27 China and Brazil should safeguard the shared interests of the Global South and jointly maintain the United Nations' core role, Chinese President Xi Jinping told his Brazilian counterpart on Friday (January 23, 2026), State news agency Xinhua said.

In a telephone call with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Mr. Xi stressed that both countries are constructive forces in safeguarding world peace and improving global governance, the agency added. China is willing to remain a good friend and partner to Latin American and Caribbean countries, Mr. Xi told Lula, reiterating a long-time stance on regional ties. "It looked to advance the building of a China-Latin America community with a shared future," he added.

"A 2024 strategic partnership to align China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with Brazil's plans to boost farming, infrastructure, and the energy transition exemplifies solidarity and cooperation among Global South countries," Mr. Xi said. At a Group of 20 meeting that year, Mr. Xi unveiled measures related to the BRI as well as science and tech-



nology, aimed at supporting the Global South. Friday's (January 23, 2026) talks came weeks after the Trump administration seized Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro to be prosecuted in the United States on narcotics charges.

That threw Caracas into political uncertainty and set its Latin American and Caribbean neighbours worrying about similar interventions by force on their turf.

# Can India's national accounts make the grade?



On November 28, the Union Statistics and Programme Implementation Ministry reported that India's real GDP grew 3.2% and the nominal GDP 8.7% in the second quarter of the financial year 2025-26 — the strongest print in six quarters. Just two days earlier, the IMF, in its data adequacy assessment, had given India's national accounts a "C" grade — the second lowest in its four-tier system — noting "shortcomings that somewhat hamper surveillance", even as the overall macro data set earned a "B". The timing underscores a troubling irony.

India once set standards in official statistics. Under P.C. Mahalanobis, the National Sample Survey and a robust system of national accounts turned a poor postcolonial state into a model for the developing world. Today, that legacy is fraying. The uninterrupted decennial Census series (since 1881), which underpins most sampling frames, has been broken. The official consumption expenditure survey, the backbone of poverty and inequality statistics and consumer price index (CPI) reweighting, was last released in 2011-12. The 2017-18 round was scrapped after leaked results suggested a fall in real consumption, with the government citing "data quality" problems. In that sense, the IMF's "C" grade distils several long-running concerns. First, the current GDP series still uses 2011-12 as its base year — a benchmark that will be 14 years out of date by the time a new series with 2022-23 as base is rolled out in February 2026. Real growth, obtained by deflating nominal aggregates, uses price indices derived from consumption and production patterns that no longer accurately reflect the economy's structure. Both the consumer and wholesale price baskets, which should be refreshed roughly every five years, are long overdue for revision.

Moreover, the narrow gap between nominal and real GDP in the latest quarter, barely half a percentage point, is also telling. When deflators are based on outdated expenditure weights, they are prone to understating effective inflation and overstating real growth. Point estimates of 8%-plus growth should, therefore, be treated as only indicative. Second, the current price architecture is particularly ill-suited to a services-led economy. Services now account for about 55% of the gross value added (GVA). Yet India still relies heavily on the wholesale price index (WPI), which omits most services, for deflating output. The IMF has been explicit that the absence of a comprehensive producer price index (PPI) and "excessive use of single deflation" are central reasons for the "C" grade.

Third, the treatment of the informal economy in national statistics is a serious weakness. The informal sector contributes roughly 45% of the GDP, but is not measured annually from the ground up. Instead, statisticians fix the formal-informal relationship in the base year and then ex-

trapolate informal activity from formal-sector indicators such as corporate filings or GST data. That shortcut might work in a stable environment, but it breaks down when shocks, such as demonetisation, GST, and the pandemic, hit small, cash-dependent firms much harder than listed companies. Proxying kirana stores, small workshops, and petty services with large firms makes aggregate GDP look healthier precisely when vulnerability is greatest. Fourth, the quarterly GDP numbers are difficult to interpret in their current form. In an economy with pronounced monsoon and festival cycles, raw quarter-on-quarter changes say little about the underlying trajectory. Most advanced statistical systems publish seasonally adjusted series to strip out predictable intra-year patterns and identify genuine turning points. India does not, leaving investors and policymakers to read the cycle off unadjusted GDP, where a festival quarter and a genuine upswing are virtually indistinguishable.

Reform agenda To be fair, India is moving on the reform agenda. A new GDP series with 2022-23 as the base, an updated CPI with 2024 weights, and a revised IIP are all slated for release in early 2026, with greater use of GST returns, corporate filings, digital payments, and recent consumption and enterprise survey data. If these revisions are implemented rigorously and then institutionalised as a regular cycle, India's statistical methods will come much closer to international best practice. Three reforms are essential. First, statistics must be treated as economic infrastructure, not an administrative by-product. The National Statistical Commission (NSC) should be given a firm statutory basis, its own budget, security of tenure for members, and a clear mandate to publish data without political clearance, with protections for its Chair analogous to those of the RBI Governor. India was an early supporter of the UN's Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It now needs to write those principles into domestic law rather than merely endorsing them in international forums.

Second, a binding data calendar is overdue. The Census, consumption, labour-force and enterprise surveys should have legislated periodicity and statutory deadlines for release, with deviations explained to Parliament. Anonymised microdata should be routinely available to researchers with reasonable lags to enable independent "shadow" estimates that provide external validation, as investors and multilaterals often demand. Third, as digital sources multiply, the risk grows that selective high-frequency indicators (GST collections, toll data, UPI volumes) will substitute for, rather than complement, a coherent system. The integration of digital data into national accounts must be transparent and replicable; otherwise, dashboards will multiply, but doubts will persist. For global investors, weak and unreliable data mean mispriced risk; for policymakers, they mean misjudged slack, misplaced priorities and a macro stance looser than what fundamentals warrant. If trend growth is overstated and poverty undercounted, job creation looks less urgent than it is, and the case for safety nets and basic public goods appears weaker than it should. India's economic rise is real, but its statistical institutions have not kept pace. If the coming overhaul succeeds in building an independent, modern and transparent system, what will finally matter is not IMF's grade card, but whether an 8.2% print commands confidence, not scepticism. Sankalpa Bhattacharjee and Amarendu Nandy are faculty members in the economics and public policy area at the Indian Institute of Management, Ranchi; views expressed are personal.

# Diabetes Atlas projections indicate 900 million people will have diabetes in 2050



In its projections for 2050, the 11th edition of the International Diabetes Federation Diabetes Atlas has calculated that from around 500 million people living with diabetes in 2024, the number will grow to nearly 900 million people, between the ages of 20-79 years. Publishing the key results as an article in the peer reviewed journal *Lancet Diabetes Endocrinology* 2025, the authors, who are scientists collaborating across the world, pointed out that in 2024, that figure was 11.11% of the population and just over 580 million adults. As per their projections, diabetes will affect 12.96% of the population, over 850 million people, in 2050. In the paper, Irini Genitsaridi et al, stress: As the diabetes epidemic has continued unchecked since the turn of the millenium, stronger efforts are needed to slow down progression, with strategies tailored appropriately across countries and population groups. A total of 210 countries and five

territories were included in the 11th edition of the IDF Diabetes Atlas.

Urban-rural estimates play a very important division in the epidemiological study of non-communicable diseases, as they also have a strong correlation with risk-inducing behaviours in different settings. In 2024, more people with diabetes were living in urban areas (400 million) than in rural areas (189 million). The authors state that this trend would continue with the projection for 2050, for urban centres (655 million) but in rural areas, it is likely to remain almost the same (198 million) in 2050. Further disaggregating data on the basis of income levels, in 2024, middle income countries had the highest age-standardised prevalence of diabetes, followed by high income countries. The lowest prevalence was in low income countries. However, it is estimated that over 95% of the increase in number of people with diabetes will occur in low and middle income countries in 2050. The explosion of population growth in the low and middle income countries, population aging and urbanisation are factors that explain the sheer rise in numbers. A. Ramachandran, one of the authors of the paper, from the India Diabetes Research Foundation, says "one of the unique features of this year's Atlas, is the table listing the top 10 countries of the world with diabetes load. China is right at the top of the table with about 148 million people with diabetes, and India comes up second on the table, with nearly 90 million. The United States comes third, and Pakistan, fourth. In 2050, while China and India will maintain their top positions on the table, it is projected that Pakistan will climb to the third slot.

# Visibility and inclusion- advancing the case of children with disabilities

An invisibility cloak is a prop that is sure to excite children; what better than a touch of magic, to vanish, disappear for others, even when you are right there. But for children with disabilities, being invisible is a terrible fact of life — being counted, is a challenge. The cascade of other inadequacies in society that inhibits children with disabilities from achieving their full potential continues to be a call for action — on the part of communities and governments. With World Disabilities Day observed in early December, it is time to evaluate what more needs to be done, acknowledging that the barriers are physical, but also much more. A recent UNICEF report reveals stark disparities in access to rights and services for the nearly 108 million children with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific. Birth registration, in particular, is a fundamental human right. Yet for many persons with disabilities, especially children, the process is riddled with barriers. Tanja B. Sejersen, and Manal Hassan of the ESCAP's (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) Statistics Division, say that a number of children in the region do not even have a birth certificate — thus impeding their access to basic rights, services such as health education and social protection. They argue, in an article, that "Civil registration, the official re-

cording of life events such as births, deaths, marriages and divorces, is more than paperwork. It's a gateway to belonging." "In terms of birth certification, in India, there's no explicit discrimination on the basis of disability," says Pratik Aggarwal, executive director, ASTHA, a non-governmental organisation working to include children with disabilities. But he hastens to add: "When it's a larger ecosystem — how do you count children with disabilities? Apart from the Census and other surveys, we really don't have disaggregated data on the health conditions of children with disabilities. The National Family Health Survey should actually cover children with disabilities, but it doesn't. So, we don't have data on how many children with disabilities have been immunised, or how many children with disabilities are enrolled in anganwadis, how many of them have malnutrition. This is also undercounting of disability." When a parent has a disability, or if both parents have some form of disability, it can be a nightmare trying to access hospitals and government systems in order to access treatments and services meant to assist them, including trying to figure out interventions for their child, school admissions, and immunisation, says Mr. Aggarwal. Then the efforts to ensure the child gets a gainful education and is trained to be independent can be excruciatingly painful.

# Why intimate partner violence is an under-recognised public health crisis in India



When Meera (name changed on request) first sought medical help, she was 34, a mother of two, and visibly exhausted. She went to a doctor at a private clinic, complaining of tightness in her chest, an uncomfortable awareness of her rapidly-beating heart, and episodes of intense panic that left her gasping for air. "The doctor ran some tests. Everything came back normal," Meera recalled. "She just gave me multivitamin tablets and told me it would get better."

Meera next consulted another private doctor, who referred her to a government hospital for specialist care. Over the next three years, Meera shuttled between multiple departments at the same government hospital in Assam — general medicine, cardiology, psychiatry — searching for an explanation for her symptoms. During this period, she developed severe insomnia. Long after her husband and children had fallen asleep, Meera would pace the darkened corridors of her home. The lack of rest left her exhausted and irritable during the day. She began falling behind on household work and sometimes found herself breaking down in tears without knowing why. Doctors continued to investigate. Her ECGs were normal. Blood tests showed mild anaemia. She was prescribed iron supplements, antiacids for gastric discomfort, and eventually sleeping pills to manage what was described as stress. It was only after a particularly severe episode, when Meera collapsed following an intense panic attack and was brought to the emergency department, that someone noticed what was really happening. A junior doctor noticed her flinch when her husband answered questions on her behalf and asked to speak to her alone. What emerged was a long history of physical violence, marital rape, economic control, and threats that she was enduring in her marriage. Meera was not suffering from an inexplicable collection of symptoms. She was living with untreated post-traumatic stress disorder, and it had taken years for the health system to recognise it. Meera's trajectory through India's health system mirrors what a recent *Lancet* analysis now describes as a global, yet under-recognised, public health failure. Drawing on data from the *Global Burden of Disease Study 2023*, the paper identifies intimate partner violence as a significant and measurable contributor to a wide range of health outcomes, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, suicide, chronic pain, cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal disorders, substance use, sexually transmitted infections, and adverse reproductive outcomes.

In health, this burden is measured using disability-adjusted life years, or DALYs — a metric that captures not only deaths, but the years of healthy life lost to illness and disability. Globally, the paper estimates that intimate partner violence costs women 1.85 crore DALYs in 2023 — years of life lost to premature death and years lived with disability due to conditions such as depression, PTSD, chronic pain, and reproductive ill-health. According to the paper, the prevalence of this is highest in the South Asian region. For women of reproductive age in South Asia, the analysis finds that intimate partner violence is a greater risk factor for poor health than high fasting plasma glucose, obesity, smoking, or alcohol use — placing violence among the leading drivers of disability and chronic illness. This evidence enables a crucial paradigm shift. Domestic violence is no longer a social issue but is a risk factor that impacts health.

Intimate partner violence is an insidious exposure that accumulates over years, shaping mental illness, non-communicable disease, and long-term disability rather than presenting as a single, identifiable event. This reframing also helps explain why violence so often remains invisible within the health system — even to the women living through it. When asked why she never reported the violence earlier, Meera put it simply: "How would I know this was what was causing all these symptoms? It's not like he beat me and I came to the hospital with an injury."

A.K. Jayashree, head, department of community medicine at the Government Medical College in Kannur, Kerala has worked at the intersection of gender and health for several decades now. Dr. Jayashree began her career in the 1980s, volunteering with an autonomous women's organisation working on gender issues and moved on to working with vulnerable populations such as transgender women and sex workers in the 90s. During this time, she worked with a large number of women who had been subjected to intimate partner violence. But when she entered formal medical education as a teacher in 2009, she was struck by how little of this knowledge had translated into training. What was being taught to medical students neither reflected the realities she had seen on the ground, nor did it take into account evidence generated by decades of research. Studies show that women come to outpatient departments repeatedly with non-specific complaints that do not resolve — such as chronic pain, tiredness, inability to sleep etc. — but medical students are not taught to look for everyday violence. As a result, as doctors, they are often unprepared for what they encounter in real-world settings: women may arrive at emergency departments after being beaten, accompanied by husbands or in-laws who answer questions on their behalf. Junior doctors may sense something is wrong but lack the training to ask safely, document accurately, or refer appropriately.

What little information does reach medical students is fragmented. "Most of it is confined to forensic medicine, as a legal and evidentiary exercise" Dr. Jayashree says. "It is not taught in clinical subjects that actually shape how doctors practise." For Dr. Jayashree, the *Lancet* analysis underscores an urgent need: to integrate gender and intimate partner violence into the training of all health workers, alongside practical guidance on how to respond when violence is disclosed. Some efforts are underway. In Kerala, Bhoomika clinics — district-level centres housed within government hospitals — offer counselling, referrals to shelters, legal support, and skill development under the National Health Mission. Yet large numbers of women remain underserved. "Most women do not want to leave their partners or file police complaints," Dr. Jayashree says. "They want the violence to stop without their families breaking apart. Our systems are not designed to support that reality."

Nancy Angeline Gnanaselvam, assistant professor of community medicine at St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru, says the women most visible to the system are not representative of those living with intimate partner violence. "What we see in crisis centres or one-stop facilities are usually women in extreme distress, often brought by

the police after calling helplines or when neighbours report the violence," she says. "They are just the tip of the iceberg." Research by groups such as CEHAT, which is working on gender and health in India, also reveals that most women who receive help through the health system do so after a major crisis event, such as violence that necessitates a visit to the emergency department or a suicide attempt because of the violence. The much larger, invisible group, she explains, are women who continue to live with their partners and do not want to file complaints or leave their homes. "They come to outpatient departments of hospitals or clinics instead," she says. "They come with diabetes, hypertension, anxiety, and chronic pain. And we don't recognise what we are seeing." Dr. Nancy argues that intimate partner violence remains poorly understood within medicine because it sits at the uneasy intersection of healthcare, social services, and law enforcement. "Physicians and police often don't understand why a woman would want to go back to a violent man," she says. "They are not trained to understand gender, power, and dependence within intimate relationships." In her practice, Dr. Nancy has seen women with diabetes and hypertension, disorders that remain uncontrolled despite being given the maximum possible medications, who eventually tell her that they are being subjected to violence at home. "One patient who had heart failure and was on a pacemaker told me, 'From the day I was married, I have lived hearing my husband scream and shout, I am sure that that has something to do with me getting heart disease'" she recalls.

Referrals to psychiatry or other mental health services are often resisted by families or blocked altogether. The physicians, who are the only people the women have safe access to, receive little training in even basic mental healthcare, let alone trauma-informed care. "So the woman remains in medicine clinics, cardiology clinics, diabetes clinics — treated symptom by symptom, while the cause remains untouched," says Dr. Nancy. These women have enormous visible and invisible scars," she says. "And no one is trained how to even offer them empathy." For Dr. Nancy, this is why reframing intimate partner violence as a public health and chronic disease issue matters. It shifts the focus away from isolated incidents and moral judgment, and toward cumulative exposure, with it being seen for the long-term disability and preventable illnesses it causes. Without that shift, she argues, the health system will continue to manage diabetes, heart disease, anxiety, and depression — while remaining blind to the violence that fuels them. At this point the official core competency dealing with issues faced by women in the National Medical Council curriculum is only a one-hour lecture, says Dr. Nancy. Curriculum changes needed.

"There are many entry points into the conversation about gender, for example, when discussing the PCPNDT ((Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques) Act and sex selective abortion, there is potential for conversation as to why sex selective abortions happen in India. When studying nutrition, there is potential to discuss why anaemia is so common in Indian women. But medical education continues to miss these opportunities to have these conversations," says Dr. Nancy. According to her, gender must be an ongoing conversation brought up again and again in various health contexts, not just in a single lecture. "This needs to make it into the curriculum of nurses, psychologists and other healthcare workers as well," adds Dr. Jayashree. Last month, in a modest auditorium at the Sree Uthradom Thirunal (SUT) Academy of Medical Sciences in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, an unfamiliar conversation took place. For the first time, a panel discussion brought doctors together to talk about intimate partner violence, not through case sheets or diagnostic codes, but through questions the health system has long avoided. What should a doctor notice? What should they ask? And what responsibility does medicine carry when violence shapes a patient's life? The discussion did not yet frame violence in the language of chronic disease or disability. But its significance lay elsewhere: in the acknowledgement that domestic violence is not external to healthcare. Several speakers spoke about discomfort, uncertainty, and the absence of training — about not knowing how to ask questions when family members sit beside the patient, or what to do after a disclosure. Others reflected on how often women return with the same complaints and symptoms, without anyone naming the underlying cause. The conversation was a nod toward to shift that is now happening: moving intimate partner violence out of the margins of emergency care and social work, and into the core of how medicine understands illness, risk, and long-term health. For women like Meera, this recognition came years too late. But the Thiruvananthapuram panel suggests that something is perhaps beginning to change, not in protocols or textbooks as yet, but in the questions doctors and healthcare workers are starting to ask themselves. If intimate partner violence is to be addressed as a public health issue, those questions — asked in clinics, classrooms, and conferences — may be where the work begins.

# Russia warns U.S. not to make 'fatal mistake' in Venezuela

Russia on Thursday (December 18, 2025) called on U.S. President Donald Trump's administration not to make a "fatal mistake" in the Venezuela crisis, calling for restraint and saying it was in "constant contact" with its ally Caracas. Mr. Trump ordered a blockade of sanctioned oil tankers in Venezuela this week, marking a new escalation between Washington and the South American country led by leftist authoritarian Nicolas Maduro. Venezuela has insisted its crude oil exports were not impacted by the announcement, showing defiance. Mr. Maduro is a friend of the Kremlin's and has been a regular guest in Moscow for years. Moscow's Foreign Ministry said it hoped the White House would "not allow a fatal mistake and will refrain from further sliding into a situation that threatens unpredictable consequences for the entire Western hemisphere." It called for a "de-escalation" and expressed support for Maduro's government. The Kremlin said it was in "constant contact" with its "ally and partner" Venezuela. "We, of course, call on all countries of the region to show restraint in order to avoid any unpredictable development in the situation," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. It is unclear how the blockade will play out, with U.S. warships in the Caribbean. In his announcement earlier this week, Mr. Trump also said, "Venezuela is completely surrounded by the largest Armada ever assembled in the History of South America" — raising fears of a potential U.S. intervention. The Kremlin has, in the past, helped prop up Venezuela's struggling economy. Russian leader Vladimir Putin reaffirmed his support to Maduro in a phone call earlier this month.

## Transmission lags behind RE power curtailment: MNRE Secy



"Some of the transmission lines which were getting ready from Rajasthan were slightly delayed. The Khetri-Narela line which was delayed and eventually got operational in December. So, when that line is not ready to evacuate power, it will lead to curtailment," he explained. He added that large-scale integration of RE will require a proportional expansion of transmission infrastructure. "So, if you want to integrate more and more RE, you will also have to be ready with more transmission lines to evacuate power from RE zones to the non-renewable energy load centers," he said. Sarangi said Power Grid Corp. of India is addressing the issue through its advanced tenders. "Because once we declare a certain area as a renewable energy potential area, then irrespective of the number of applications received, Power Grid is going ahead," he said. "There is a national committee on transmission headed by CEA. So, they take a decision to go ahead on a particular project irrespective of whether sufficient applications have come up," he added. Transmission connectivity has emerged as a key bottleneck for the RE sector. In November, the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) noted that around 31.8 GW of RE capacity had already been granted connectivity but was yet to secure power purchase agreements (PPAs), resulting in underutilisation of transmission infrastructure. The lack of PPA signing has become a major hurdle for the sector, with at least 42 GW of RE capacity still without PPAs. In November, rating agency ICRA flagged concerns over declining project awards and delays in PPA signings, stating that these trends "reflect concerns on execution related to available transmission connectivity for the RE sector." Meanwhile, India's RE capacity is expanding rapidly. The country added 44.51 GW of renewable capacity during the year till November, nearly double the 24.72 GW added during the same period last year. As a result, total installed RE capacity reached 253.96 GW in November 2025 — an increase of over 23% from 205.52 GW in November 2024. At the same time, India's national power transmission network crossed a major milestone on January 14, surpassing 5 lakh circuit kilometres (ckm) of transmission lines (220 kV and above). This included the commissioning of a 628 ckm of 765 kV transmission line from Bhadla II to Sikar II substation for evacuating renewable power from Rajasthan. "With the commissioning of this transmission line, an additional 1,100 MW of power can be evacuated from the RE zones of Bhadla, Ramgarh and Fatehgarh Solar Power Complex," the government said.

The curtailment of renewable energy (RE) power in Rajasthan is expected to ease significantly with the commissioning of the transmission line in Fatehgarh. Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Secretary at the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. Sarangi said RE curtailment is largely driven by a mismatch between the pace at which renewable projects are commissioned and the time required to build transmission infrastructure. Around 4 gigawatt (GW) of RE capacity was earlier lying without connectivity. However, with the commissioning of the Khetri-Narela transmission line in December, part of this capacity has now been evacuated.

"The remaining 2 GW will also be evacuated once the transmission line in Rajasthan's Fatehgarh gets commissioned. Within a month, that line will be ready. After that, we do not foresee any curtailment in Rajasthan," he said. Renewable energy developers in Rajasthan have increasingly flagged curtailment during peak solar hours. According to Sarangi, this is a structural challenge linked to the faster execution timelines of renewable projects. "Evacuation of RE power is a major challenge because renewable power plants can become operational much faster than conventional thermal power plants," he said. "A coal-based power plant typically takes five to six years to become operational. So, the transmission system used to get ready by that time. But now, a solar power plant is coming up within anything between one to two years. A wind turbine is getting ready within a one-year period, whereas the transmission system is still taking three to four to five years," he added. Sarangi explained that delays in some key transmission projects in Rajasthan aggravated the curtailment problem.

## 'If firms can't sell, invest in US, then there's UK; India biggest priority for Britain'

India is the biggest priority for the UK in South Asia, UK Trade Commissioner for South Asia, deputy High Commissioner for Western India, and former Chief Negotiator of the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), Harjinder Kang said in an interview with The Indian Express. On sanctioning Russian oil importers, Kang said the UK's position on the Russia-Ukraine War is "very, very clear" and that curbs are designed to stop it. Edited excerpts:

How is the UK looking at this region of South Asia?

By far, India is the biggest priority for us. There is no other country this size, growing this fast. Probably because the demographics will continue irrespective of what happens around the world, like China was 20 years ago.

What do you think about US tariffs on India and the UK? What does it mean for India-UK trade? What happens when the US doesn't play by the rules?

That is for the US to decide. There is nothing for the UK to comment on US tariff policy. The UK-India relationship is fine. We have decided on a tariff relationship and it's about to be ratified (by the UK Parliament) and come into force. So our bridge is very strong and continues to be so. The bridges between US-India and US-UK are separate and it doesn't affect that. It would basically be for Indian companies to decide what to do. If they can't sell or invest in the US, then there is the UK. That is the impact which is a positive one for the UK and we are more than happy to accommodate increased Indian activity into the UK, that's my job. But we don't promote it that way, that's a ridiculous thing to do. And it's not for me to comment on US policy.

Do you anticipate any hiccups in the ratification of CETA by the Parliament?

It is going very smoothly. Our ratification process is much more complicated and thorough. It goes through both houses, there are trade committees in the House of Commons and the House of Lords that look at international deals. It is not the first time they've looked at it. Pretty much the things we expected have been raised. There's nothing that makes me think there's going to be trouble. So, my guess is that it could be done sometime in this half of the year.

How is the trade deal going to impact both countries?

The deal is expected to deliver £25.5 billion (\$34.25 billion) worth of extra trade between the two sides in the middle to long term. Even before being ratified our trade has already gone up. It was about £43 billion in FY24 and I think it's going to £47 billion already, just based on the confidence that the trade deal has instilled in both sides. And when you talk to the firms on both sides, the appetite is huge to ease bilateral trade.

Could you talk about British companies' investment interest in India?

It's been both ways. There are 700 UK companies already here. And there are 900 Indian companies over there so it's already happening in large volume. It will help by having this sort of treaty by making people more confident in the mid to long term. Because companies don't operate on a one-year cycle. If you're going to put up investment and capacity down, you're thinking in 5-10 year horizons and these deals instill confidence that there will be stability and that's what firms really look for — stability, to put a factory down or put some investment in another country.

What is the balance of trade between the manufacturing and services sector in terms of investments?

The UK is a predominantly service sector country at about 80%... and India is also 50%, if not more. In the WTO, there are a lot of schedules in terms of who can deliver what service in what country. A lot of those have now been formalised in our FTA. That's again a symbol of stability and you have long term visibility that both sides would be able to continue doing this for the perceivable future.

What is Gujarat's share in India's trade with the UK?

We had a report commissioned which shows the trade inflow into India and investment outflow into the UK and Gujarat is right up there. It is known for many things that the FTA will help with — textiles is a big one. It will benefit substantially from lower tariffs. We have a preferential developing nations trading scheme for Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, where the tariffs are lower and agreed upon across the sys-



tem. But India is a mid-sized economy. There was a kind of differential in tariff (for textiles) which made it uncompetitive to produce in India and export to the UK. The other big sector is gems and jewellery which will be a big beneficiary of the lower tariffs regime.

While the FTA was being signed, the UK sanctioned Gujarat refinery of Nayara Energy for buying Russian crude. Does it impact the business sentiment?

Those are the geopolitical things with global ramifications for trade. Effectively, you know what's happening in Ukraine and our position is very, very clear as a country. To finance that war, the oil trade is absolutely key and the sanctions are designed to stop that and reduce the war that is underway.

The Vibrant Gujarat Regional Summits are currently underway in Gujarat. Do you anticipate any major signings by UK companies?

Every state is doing that (investment outreaches) now and are in competition with each other. Most of the (Indian) states are as big as countries. What I say to all the chief ministers that I meet is 'give me a reason why I would say to a company that they should come to their state'. In marketing terminology what is the unique selling proposition (USP). And that's for this state to work out and prepare a marketing pitch for companies to come to the states.

What's your ask from the Gujarat government? What would make Gujarat attractive to British companies?

I haven't had that conversation yet. There are a lot of opportunities here and when you look at Gujarat, there are the sectors I mentioned earlier and then there are others like energy. Gujarat has a vibrant coastline which has enough of the wind requirements to have offshore wind energy as a real possibility. Some of the projections for viability are in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. If the Gujarat government was open to it, we are experts in this field. The UK has one of the world's best offshore wind capabilities in the world and we will be absolutely delighted to partner with this state to help develop it.

How do you see the Indian diaspora in the UK helping out in trade and becoming a bridge between the countries?

There are almost 2 million people of Indian heritage and you are looking at one. There are two things that happen. One is that the sentiment and relationship and understanding of the country is deeper than it would have been with some other country. The diaspora helps with connectivity. Also the cultural side is very strong, whether it's the music or the food. What's the national dish of the UK? Curry. It's the number one dish eaten in the country and that sort of thing does transcend. Then, there are business links. The diaspora are very business savvy people and they've done really well, whether it's the Gujarati or Punjabi communities, and their links here are key. In fact, a lot of the UK interest (in India) is by SMEs. And those are diasporal. There is also the medical and nursing community. The link between academics is also key. Professors and universities are coming to India. I've had 30 visits by vice-chancellors in the last 12 months. There is a huge appetite, and Indian and Chinese students make up the biggest groups of foreign students in the UK. Universities are seeing the size of the (Indian) population and its emerging middle — about 250 million in the next 5-10 years. That middle class wants UK-type education, but not in the UK. So can you get it here? How do you do it? Do you create a campus here, a joint degree with an institution here or a distance learning option,

## Across the table: What love taught me about identity, adjustment, and the emotional side of eating together



I am a non-vegetarian. To give you a clearer picture, every time I am asked if I eat meat, I don't hesitate to specify that I am a hardcore non-vegetarian. The kind who is happiest when there is something on the plate that was alive the day before. Or that morning. Duh. What I am not, though, is the kind who judges those who don't eat meat, rolls their eyes at vegetarians, forces people to "at least try the curry", or treats non-vegetarianism like some superior life experience everyone else is tragically missing out on. I grew up in Kannur, a beautiful coastal town in Kerala (a solid 10/10, if tourism boards ever need a reference), where over 90 per cent of the population is non-vegetarian and fish appears on the table with the reliability of sunlight. Food there is rhythm, it is geography, inheritance. So when I moved to Delhi for my post-graduation and started dating a Jain woman, raised in a household where even the idea of non-vegetarian food bordered on blasphemy, it felt like crossing into a different emotional and cultural universe. Even in my early twenties, I believed romantic partners should share a mutual love for food. But love has a way of dismantling your certainties. We began cautiously: only vegetarian food when we ate out together. Over time, the relationship evolved to a point where we would order our separate "curries" with tandoori bread, relishing two completely different worlds, sitting across the same table. It was progress, of a sort. It was also brutal on our pockets.

I would be lying if I said this difference in culinary choices did not create unnecessary ripples in our relationship. Once, a restaurant in Greater Kailash 1 served us a chicken dish instead of the vegetarian one she had ordered and the kind of hungama that ensued. Not saying she was not right in losing her cool after having a piece of chicken by mistake, and I did stand by her, but that encounter showed me a clearer picture of where food really stands in our lives. Certainly not a great way to look at a relationship that needs nurturing, but when things go south, such basic issues become world wars in seconds. That day taught me something uncomfortable: food is never just food. It is belief and boundary, it is identity. And when identities clash, even a plate can become a battlefield. Years later, I dated someone who was more committed to being a non-vegetarian than I had ever been. Cooking, eating, experimenting, indulging — food became our shared language of intimacy. That relationship also left me 25 kilos heavier. Balance, as it turns out, was never one of my strongest virtues. Somewhere between these two extremes, I began to understand something that had nothing to do with being a "foodie" couple. Food was never about taste alone. It was

about adjustment, power, tenderness, identity, and how much of yourself you were willing to bend without feeling erased. Instagram celebrates couples who eat together, but it never shows couples who negotiate eating together.

Having said that, it was not until I met my fiancée, a fellow Malayali, that I truly understood how a shared cultural context around food can steady a relationship. For the first time, food did not feel like a negotiation. It felt like home. There was no need to explain why coconut oil mattered, why butter chicken tasted better with Kerala porotta, or why certain meals were tied to certain moods, seasons, and silences. We spoke the same culinary language without translating ourselves. We still disagree, of course. But the disagreements happen inside a shared grammar. There is no need to defend where we come from. Psychologically, this ease is not trivial. When two people share similar food cultures, they are sharing memory systems. Food is one of the earliest ways humans learn safety, comfort, and belonging. When your partner eats what you grew up eating, your nervous system relaxes. There is less vigilance, less performance, less need to justify your instincts. The relationship gains a certain degree of efficiency, if I may put it that way. Couples with similar food preferences often clash less over logistics and more over life. What to cook, where to eat, what to order, whose craving matters today—these become non-issues. That saved emotional energy gets redirected into deeper conversations, ambition, intimacy, and play. Shared food culture reduces friction, and reduced friction increases emotional availability. With differing food choices, relationships operate in a different psychological terrain. Every meal becomes a site of negotiation. Who adjusts today? Who compromises more often? Whose food becomes "normal" and whose becomes "special"? Over time, if these adjustments are not conscious and reciprocal, resentment builds. One partner may feel unseen. The other may feel burdened. Food stops being nourishment and starts becoming emotional bookkeeping.

There is also an invisible hierarchy that can creep in. One cuisine gets labelled "lighter," "cleaner," "healthier," or "more evolved," while the other becomes "heavy," "smelly," or "indulgent." When one person's food is constantly explained, hidden, or apologised for, it ceases being just culinary judgments, and begins to erode their sense of cultural legitimacy inside the relationship. Having said that, when the people are right, couples with different food cultures often develop stronger communication muscles. They learn negotiation, patience, and empathy in practical ways. They are forced to confront "differences" early, not in abstract values, but in daily rituals. When done well, this builds emotional maturity. When done poorly, it creates fatigue. What my relationship with my fiancée taught me is that similarity brings rest. Difference brings growth. Both can sustain love. But they demand different kinds of emotional labour — similarity asks for gratitude, difference asks for constant emotional intelligence. Sharing a food culture is like sharing a mother tongue. You may both speak other languages fluently, but there is a softness that only your first language carries. A shorthand. A trust. A comfort that does not need explanation. And in long relationships, comfort is stabilising, not boring. It is what allows passion to survive without becoming exhausting. In India, you don't just marry a person. You marry their kitchen, their childhood, and their hunger.

## 'I felt quite hopeless at times': Abhay Deol reveals how stem cell therapy helped him after years of battling sciatica



Abhay Deol rarely speaks about his health or personal issues on a public platform, but the Dev D actor broke the norm by sharing a major health update. Taking to social media, he revealed that after years of battling knee pain and sciatica, he finally found relief due to South Korean medical intervention. "For a long time, I've had pain in my knees and sciatica in my left leg due to a slip disc. I felt quite hopeless at times, because I didn't want surgery of any kind, especially for my lower back. I'd been reading about stem cell therapy, and thought it to be safe enough to give it a shot," he wrote on Instagram, mentioning that he recently received stem cell therapy at Lydian Clinic via Jabez medical guide. He added, "I have to say, it's amazing how natural and safe the procedure felt — no synthetic materials, just my own cells helping my body heal itself. What a great time to be alive, I'm truly impressed by how advanced Korea's regenerative medicine has become!"

What is stem cell therapy?

Stem cell therapy is a medical treatment that uses special cells called stem cells, said Dr Vaishnavi Joshi, Consultant — Medical Oncology & Haemato — Oncology, Aster CMI Hospital, Bangalore, adding that stem cells are unique because they can repair damaged tissues and support healing in the body. These cells are usually taken from a person's own body, commonly from bone marrow or body fat. After collection, the stem cells are processed and injected into the affected area.

Dr Vinaya Bhandari, Consultant Neurology & Neuro-muscular Disease Specialist, Jaslok Hospital & Research Centre, added that, unlike conventional medicines that mainly reduce pain or inflammation, stem cells are intended to support the body's natural healing processes. "They do this primarily by releasing growth factors and signalling molecules that promote nerve survival, reduce harmful inflammation, encourage blood-vessel formation, and support repair of damaged tissue," she explained, adding that their benefit appears to come more from these biological support effects than from directly replacing damaged nerves.

Explaining that sciatica is a condition where the sciatic nerve gets irritated or compressed, Dr Joshi said this usually happens because of a slipped disc, disc degeneration, or inflammation in the lower spine. Sciatica causes

pain that starts in the lower back and travels down the leg. Sometimes, medicines and physiotherapy only give temporary relief.

Can it cure sciatica?

According to Dr Joshi, stem cell therapy may help sciatica by reducing inflammation around the nerve. It may also help repair damaged discs and tissues near the spine. "When inflammation reduces, pressure on the sciatic nerve may decrease. This can lead to reduced pain, better movement, and improved comfort over time. The treatment focuses on healing rather than only blocking pain signals, she said. Dr Bhandari, however, added that it is important to understand that sciatica is a symptom, not a single disease. It can arise from different mechanisms, and the role of stem-cell therapy differs accordingly. "Some early clinical studies have explored stem-cell injections around spinal discs or nerve roots and have reported short-term improvement in pain and function in selected patients. However, results have been inconsistent, sample sizes small, and long-term benefit uncertain," she said. At present, such treatments remain experimental. However, both experts pointed out that stem cell therapy is not a guaranteed cure for everyone and results can vary from person to person depending on age, health, and severity of the condition. Some people feel improvement, while others may feel little or no change. The treatment may take weeks or months to show results.

## AI engineer fastest-growing job role: LinkedIn Jobs on the Rise 2026

Hyderabad: Professionals in India are entering 2026 with strong ambitions for career change, according to new research from LinkedIn, which shows that 72% of Indian professionals are actively looking for a new role this year. At the same time, over one-third feel unprepared for the pace at which technology is reshaping job skills, with 38% citing rapid technological change and 37% unsure how to stand out amid growing competition.

To help professionals navigate this uncertainty, LinkedIn has released its Jobs on the Rise 2026 list. In Hyderabad, AI Engineer has emerged as the fastest-growing job role, underlining the city's growing prominence as a technology and innovation hub. Other high-growth roles in Hyderabad include Marketing Strategist (#2), Solutions Analyst (#3), Vice President — Business Strategy (#4), and Human Resources Representative (#5). The list highlights strong demand across marketing, business strategy, people functions and specialised professional roles, reflecting the city's increasingly diverse employment landscape.

## 'It could be Ishan Kishan who will play in Thiruvananthapuram': Sanju Samson under pressure to keep spot, says former opener



GNS News Agency, SJan 27

Sanju Samson's return to the top of the batting order has not panned out well as yet in the New Zealand T20I series, and the pressure has begun to mount on the Kerala wicket-keeper after Ishan Kishan's swashbuckling knock in Raipur on Friday. While both Samson and Kishan failed to convert starts during India's emphatic win in Nagpur in the series opener, the latter made amends and steered the Men in Blue to an emphatic 209-run chase against the Kiwis in the second outing. Kishan produced one of his best T20I knocks in only his second game back in the side after two years. After Samson fluffed another chance, holing out to a miscued slog at the edge of the circle, India lost in-form opener Abhishek Sharma for a golden duck. However, Kishan launched an exceptional counter-attack, soaring to

76 off only 32 balls with 11 fours and four sixes. Captain Suryakumar Yadav then put the finishing touches to the chase as he roared back to form with an unbeaten 82 off 37 deliveries. However, with Samson scoring only 16 runs in the two knocks, former India opener Aakash Chopra reckons he will be feeling the heat with only three games left in the series. There is also a chance that the injured Tilak Varma will return for the last two T20Is, and Samson could miss his first game in his hometown, Thiruvananthapuram, in the last match of the series.

"Comebacks are tougher than debuts. And after getting dismissed for not too much in the first game, very few people will go out with the same kind of bravado and confidence like Ishan did in the second game. So he has done his chances no harm. Pressure on Sanju now. If he scores the runs, he stays afloat. Otherwise, it's Ishan Kishan who will be playing in Visakhapatnam and Thiruvananthapuram," said Chopra on ESPNcricinfo. Chopra hailed Kishan's form and said that a special intervention of destiny had played out in his return. Snubbed from the international set-up for close to two years, Kishan led Jharkhand to their first-ever Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy with a spell-binding season. "So, you score runs. Team India pivots. They drop their vice-captain. They get a keeper to open. But again, Ishan is a backup keeper. And then a top-order left-handed batter gets injured for the first three games. And therein, Sanju also fails. This is not the script that you write yourself. There is somebody else who's taking care of that script," remarked Chopra.

## Hockey India League: Red-hot Alexander Hendrickx strikes twice as Kalinga Lancers reach final; Toofans beat HIL GC in Eliminator

GNS News Agency, SJan 27

It was always going to be that man. Alexander Hendrickx might not be top of the goalscoring charts, thanks to Kane Russell's early flurry of hat-tricks, but the incredibly consistent Belgian superstar has now scored in all but one of Kalinga Lancers' matches this season. He struck twice more against Ranchi Royals on Friday in Qualifier 1 to power his side into the title clash where either Hyderabad Toofans or Ranchi Royals await, based on the result of Qualifier 2. Hendrickx brace was the difference in a high-quality match against Royals as Lancers prevailed 2-1 at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium on Friday. Mandeep Singh pulled one back for the after Hendrickx's double strike gave table-topping Lancers a 2-0 lead but the Royals couldn't find the equaliser.

Earlier in the day, Hyderabad Toofans defeated HIL GC 2-0 in the Eliminator clash to book their spot in Qualifier 2, eyeing a place in the final for a second straight year. Shilanand Lakra (16', 39') stole the show as he scored a brilliant brace to help his side progress ahead in the tournament. In the marquee qualifier, Harendra Singh's Royals began the game on the front foot, keeping possession and moving the ball around neatly to make inroads. Having sustained the early pressure by staying steady at the back, Lancers grew into the game and eventually broke the deadlock after Hendrickx (12') converted his drag flick from a penalty corner, giving his side a 1-0 lead in the first quarter. The Royals pushed forward in search of an equaliser, creating 6 circle entries and earning 4 penalty corners in the second quarter. However, the Lancers continued to show



why they're the most reliable defence in the league, having conceded only 8 goals thus far, keeping their opponents at bay to hold onto their one-goal advantage at halftime. It was a far cry from the leaky defence they had last edition. It was an ideal start to the second half for the Lancers with Hendrickx (32') doubling their lead. The Belgian converted another penalty corner, rifling it into the back of the net to give his side a two-goal cushion. Looking for a way back into the game, Royals managed to pull one back after a cleverly executed variation from a penalty corner that saw Mandeep (40') finish off the move to reduce the deficit with the score at 2-1 at the end of the third quarter. It was an end-to-end contest in the final quarter. With eight minutes to go in the contest, the Lancers nearly put the game to bed when Rosan Kujur's deflected effort came off the crossbar. Royals remained relentless in pursuit of the leveller with 7 circle entries and a penalty corner. However, the equaliser eluded them.

## Save the umpires: ICC needs to protect them from hard-hitters like Sanju Samson, Hardik Pandya

GNS News Agency, SJan 27

The ICC need to worry about the sitting ducks at the non-striker's end – the unshielded umpires in line of fire, at the mercy of batsmen with a chunky piece of wood in their hand, ready to launch missiles towards them. In India's last two white-ball series – against South Africa and New Zealand – there has been a hit and a near miss. On both occasions, the umpire on target was local man Rohan Pandit. Last month during the India-SA game, Sanju Samson's straight drive smashed into Pandit's knee, and the physios of both teams ran in to attend to the umpire, on ground wincing in pain. This week, Hardik Pandya's more ferocious hit flew past Pandit's temple. That was a close shave. Had Hardik hit the ball an inch to the right, or if Pandit had been a blink slower, something grossly unimaginable would have unfolded. As was the case when Sanju hit him, and when jokes about the umpire getting out 'leg after the wicket' were made on air, this time too the commentator marveled at Hardik's power, letting out a 'punched past the bowler' scream. To be fair to the commentators, as is the case within the entire cricketing world, umpires have an invisible presence. They are the actors who come into play only when they make a mistake.

In the frenzy to follow the trajectory of the ball travelling in the stands, the oldest person on the ground level – also the least agile and easily the most vulnerable – would get ignored. In cricket's decision-makers needed a wake-up call, the sound of the ball screeching dangerously close to the umpire has been loud enough. This sure wasn't the first time this siren had gone off. But the ICC seem to have put their clocks on snooze mode. Last year, in a Champions Trophy game, Rohit Sharma's booming straight drive went straight for umpire Chris Gaffaney, sending him tumbling down. Still in a state of shock, he stood up sheepishly. A helpless Rohit looked on with sympathy. Gaffaney put his palm to his heart, possibly to check his racing pulse. Rohit hung out his tongue to convey an apology. In a few days' time, another ICC event will kick-off, the World T20, and more ruthless buccaneers will take the field. Once again, the umpires will be at risk. Like always, they will be on their own, figuring out ways to stay safe.

Delhi's international umpire Anil Chaudhary, who officiated more than 100 international games in a decade-long career, never got hit. The Internet is full of his pictures showing him ducking, swaying and jumping high, the most famous of him forming a giant X shape while in air, hands and legs split wide. Chaudhary speaks about the precautions his colleagues take to avoid getting hit by the ball and also shares his own survival skills, finishing his international



career without a scar. He reminds how the Aussie umpire Bruce Oxenford uses a hand-held guard. Called Ox-black, it is a transparent polycarbonate shield that is strapped to the arm. "But even he got injured once when umpiring from square-leg," says Chaudhary. "Umpire Virender Sharma wears an abdomen guard. Many others also do that." Chaudhary says back in 2016, when India hosted the World T20 championship, the umpires were given helmets. "It wasn't mandatory. None of the umpires wore it. I didn't take it to it since the helmet's visor would disturb my view," he says. Probably in the days to come, feedback from umpires, customised helmets are things that ICC can look at. The widely-travelled umpire says that being fit is the only way to deal with the ball heading to the head. "It is like fielding less than 20-yards away from the batsman. One needs to be very focused, fit and have great agility," he says. Chaudhary emphasises that umpires need to be more athletic. "Gym fitness wouldn't work. Dole banana (building muscles) wouldn't help. It makes your body stiff. One needs to be flexible, and one needs to do more running. The ICC should judge umpires based on their agility, flexibility and reflexes," says the man who loves walking, a habit he owes to his rural upbringing.

Chaudhary says that whenever there was a hard-hitter on the field – MS Dhoni or Andre Russell – he would change his position. "I would step back four to six steps, so I have enough time to take evasive action," he says. But with Chris Gayle even that didn't guarantee safety. Virat Kohli, on a TV show, spoke about the scary experience of batting with Gayle. Once during a RCB game, they were at the crease and the Jamaican hit the ball, as Ravi Shastri would have said, like a tracer bullet. Kohli barely had time to move his head sideways. That's when the umpire, former Lankan spinner Kumar Dharmasena, shouted at him. "Don't move sideways, go down. If the ball hits your helmet and comes towards me, I will be dead," Kohli would say. Forget what the fanatics say, cricket is just a sport, not a matter of life and death. Umpires are men who have signed up to ensure that the game is played by rules. They aren't there to grasp what a soldier feels when dodging bullets in the trenches.

## 'Feel very sorry for him... absolutely horrible feeling': Gukesh loses to old foe Nodirbek Abdusattorov at Tata Steel Chess



GNS News Agency, SJan 27

For almost five minutes, Gukesh Dommaraju could not bear to look either at the board or his opponent, Nodirbek Abdusattorov. He changed his posture over 15 times in that duration, each position displaying a different degree of torment with his hand covering his face. In the previous five rounds of the Tata Steel Chess tournament, Gukesh has been keen to chat with his opponents, usually being the one to initiate a conversation with the opponent to try and analyze the game and pick their mind. Today, no words came out of his mouth when Abdusattorov tried more than once to talk to him and analyse the game.

It was that sort of a morale-bruising result that stings for a long time. The world champion suffered his first defeat of the year at the Tata Steel tournament at the hands of Abdusattorov, thanks to a one-move blunder in the sixth round clash. Gukesh was shell-shocked at himself for making the move and appeared to realise that he had made a fatal error a second after making it. He immediately resigned after Abdusattorov's response. Gukesh vs Nodirbek Abdusattorov TATA Steel Chess was shellshocked at himself for making the move and appeared to realise that he had made a fatal error a second after making it. He immediately

resigned after Abdusattorov's response. (Chessbase India live stream Screenshot)

Meanwhile, Friday saw the other three Indians in the masters section—R Praggnanandhaa, Arjun Erigaisi and Aravindh Chitambaram—play out draws. Gukesh's fatal error was pushing his rook ahead by a square from g6 to g5, which in an online game would have felt like a mouse slip. After all, it left his pawn on f6 undefended from the prowling white queen on f5. Even Abdusattorov looked puzzled by the move when it happened, but quickly capitalised on the opponent's error to claim the pawn and in the process fork Gukesh's king and rook. "I feel very sorry for him. It's a terrible feeling. I've done it myself many times. So it's an absolutely horrible feeling," a sympathetic Abdusattorov said in the interview after his win.

"This game was pretty much normal. At some point I think he was getting excited and he was obviously trying to push but I sort of controlled the margin. I thought I had a good margin to draw and at the end he was getting low on time and he felt nervous and he blundered horribly." "Honestly, it's very hard to recover from a game like this. Really hard," said IM Soumya Swaminathan on the Chessbase India live stream. "This was just a lapse of concentration." Gukesh sat rooted at his seat long after the defeat, unable to process how he had blundered away an equal-ish position. What was harder to swallow was that the defeat came against Abdusattorov, who he had also lost to at the 2022 Chennai Olympiad, which had cost the young Indian team a much-deserved gold medal. This was Gukesh's first defeat at Wijk aan Zee, in what is the world champion's first classical tournament of 2026, a year where he will defend his world championship crown in November-December. Gukesh had played out four draws in a row at the start of the tournament before winning his first game against Czech Republic's Thai Dai Van Nguyen. That win had come just before Thursday's rest day.

## Anish Giri names Hikaru Nakamura, Fabiano Caruana as favorites at Candidates tournament

GNS News Agency, SJan 27

At the upcoming Candidates tournament in March-April, the two Americans in action, Hikaru Nakamura and Fabiano Caruana, will be favourites, according to Anish Giri, who will also be competing in the Candidates. In an interview with Greg Mustreder for the Chess with Mustreder podcast, when Giri was asked who he would put as the favorites, the Dutch grandmaster replied: "I can't quite do that, I guess, as I'm a participant (at the Candidates). It's very sensible to place Hikaru (Nakamura) and Fabi (Caruana) in the top two."

Talking about Nakamura's credentials, Giri said: "Hikaru is the highest rated and, somewhat surprisingly to me, he has the best score against the field. Largely because he's doing well against Fabiano recently and he's been doing fine against me. I didn't really pay attention much to our score because we haven't played classical for like an insane amount of years. But at some point, he's achieved a fine score against me too. Whenever you include rapid and blitz, his score will always be good too, right? Because he's better at rapid and blitz than classical usually. Even better. So his score only gets more amplified if you include rapid and blitz too." "He has this very high rating, right? So it's tempting to just put him there. And he even finished not so badly in the previous Candidates. Last time he was fighting for the first, and actually the one before that, the time he fought for the second—in hindsight, it would have given him a match if he had won. So he was actually fighting for the championship match twice with one round to go, which is a tremendous achievement. It's a tremendous achievement. So just looking at these facts, you have to place him high in the list," Giri explained.

Then, he explained why Caruana was high on his list.

"Fabi, of course, obviously such a stable player. I mean, for so many years he's been winning so many events.



And he got to the match with Magnus and he almost, he took him all the way down to the wire and almost won that match as well. I wouldn't say almost won, but okay—almost not lost them, whatever that means. So it's very normal to take these two players." Giri then spoke about the rest of the players, including India's R Praggnanandhaa. "There are a bunch of others they have barely played in the Candidates. I think Wei Yi never played the Candidates. Pragg played, but he didn't come as close as others. In his outing last time, he gave a good show. Probably that's why (Carlsen) mentioned Pragg (as third favourite to win the Candidates)," said Giri. "(Andrey) Esipenko and (Javokhir) Sindarov—they're very young, they haven't yet participated so you can't tell much. They also haven't even played that many top tournaments. They've played of course a few. Esipenko beat Carlsen in Wijk aan Zee many years ago, but he didn't play regularly so he can't also say he didn't win many top tournaments—but he played in like three or two top tournaments in his life, I don't know how many. Sindarov as well, he's just like rising like a comet recently and he hasn't yet had the time and the chance to win a lot."

## 'I was angry he wasn't giving me strike': Suryakumar Yadav reacts to Ishan Kishan's 76 off 32 balls after India's 7-wicket win over New Zealand in 2nd T20I



GNS News Agency, SJan 27

Ishan Kishan produced arguably the finest innings of his T20I career, making 76 off 32 balls to rescue India from 6/2 in their chase of 209 runs and play a pivotal role in their seven-wicket win over New Zealand in the second T20I in Raipur on Friday. The left-hander struck 11 fours and four sixes and put on 122 runs in 48 balls with his captain, Suryakumar Yadav, to drive India's innings forward and put New Zealand on the backfoot with the ball. The 35-year-old, who ended as India's highest run-scorer with 82 off 37 balls, revealed he was unhappy about not getting the strike during the powerplay overs. He also reiterated that he was batting well in the nets and that showed on the field on Friday.

"I was angry he wasn't giving me strike in the powerplay but I was able to get a hold of the conditions. I've been batting well in the nets, had a good break, and had a good practice session before the game too," he said at the post-match presentation. He, however, admitted that he had not seen anyone bat the way Kishan did, to take India from 6/2 to 75 runs after the powerplay.

"I don't know what Ishan had in the afternoon for lunch, but I have never seen someone batting that way at 6 for 2 and ending the powerplay on 60-odd [75]. But that's what

we want for our batters to be able to express themselves," Surya said. The right-hander also praised the bowlers for the way they restricted New Zealand to 208 runs in excellent batting conditions and with a wet ball in hand. "Incredible effort with the ball. When they were 110 for 2, I thought it would be a 230-odd total but all the bowlers chipped in and took responsibility. I am really enjoying what's happening right now. The mood is happy in the camp and I want to keep them in that space," he said.

## India name squad for Perth Test against Australia Women

Hyderabad: The Women's Selection Committee has picked India's squad for the Perth Test against Australia Women to be played after the white-ball series. The Test will take place at the WACA from 6th to 9th March, 2026.

India's Women's Test squad: Harmanpreet Kaur [C], Smriti Mandhana [VC], Shafali Varma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Amanjot Kaur, Richa Ghosh [WK], Uma Chetry [WK], Pratika Rawal, Harleen Deol, Deepti Sharma, Renuka Thakur, Sneha Rana, Kranti Gaud, Vaishnavi Sharma, Sayali Satghare. Meanwhile, wicket-keeper G Kamalini is ruled out of India's Australia tour and the selectors have named Uma Chetry as her replacement in India's T20Is and ODI squads.

The selection committee has also picked the India 'A' squad for the Rising Star Women's Asia Cup to be played in a T20 format in Thailand. India A squad for ACC Rising Star Asia Cup Team: Humaira Kaazi, Vrinda Dinesh, Anushka Sharma, Deeya Yadav\*, Tejal Hasabnis, Nandani Kashyap [WK], Mamta M [WK]\*, Radha Yadav [C], Sonia Mendhiya, Minnu Mani, Tanuja Kanwer, Prema Rawat, Saima Thakor, Jintamani Kalita, Nandani Sharma

## AI actor Tilly Norwood's creator says stars should 'future-proof' themselves, believes AI is more 'ethical' than traditional acting



Artificial intelligence is dominating the technological world at the moment, but with AI becoming as big as it is said to be, concerns about its ethics have been a topic of conversation in many industries. Even in the film industry, directors, actors and writers all over the world are trying to take a stand so that AI doesn't take their place or use their likeness or work without consent. In between all this, AI-generated actor Tilly Norwood has sparked further controversy, with many rallying against the idea. Now, the creator of Tilly, Eline van der Velden, has spoken up about her creation.

Velden, who is the CEO of AI company Particle6, shared with Variety why she thinks that Tilly is important for the future of Hollywood. For those calling Tilly nothing more than a piece of code, Velden said, "When people talk about Tilly Norwood, they often forget one crucial detail: there's a real person and a creative human vision behind her. Actors have always brought characters to life, and that's exactly what I did with Tilly. She didn't simply appear be-

cause AI wanted her to, I wanted her to!"

She called the use of AI actors more ethical than traditional acting, arguing that this will help actors take up difficult and challenging roles without going through the physical and mental burden. She said, "Dangerous stunts, intimate scenes, extreme physical transformations and endless hours of hair, makeup and retouching are all part of the deal, not to mention the constant scrutiny if a performer's face dares to age in the 'wrong' way. And yet, some find it more acceptable for a person to change their appearance through surgery rather than digitally."

Velden continued to call it a more "ethical alternative" with which an actor can avoid "dangerous stunts, extreme beauty standards or invasive procedures." Comparing AI actors to puppets, Velden said, "We've seen this before: A puppet is not alive, yet no one doubts the artistry of the puppeteer. The same is true for animated characters, masks, costumes and motion-captured creatures. An AI actor is simply a more responsive puppet — one that can learn, adapt to its creator and perform across mediums." This statement comes right after 700 members of the Hollywood community, including actors like Scarlett Johansson, Cate Blanchett, and Joseph Gordon-Levitt, joined an anti-AI campaign. The group released a statement where they demanded "better copyright laws" and argued that "stealing is not innovation." The statement also read, "It's not progress. It's theft — plain and simple. A better way exists — through licensing deals and partnerships, some AI companies have taken the responsible, ethical route to obtaining the content and materials they wish to use."

## Diljit Dosanjh says he didn't have money to watch original Border in theatres, didn't expect to star in the sequel 19 years later.

Border 2 finally hit theatres this Friday, and as expected, the film has set the box office on fire on its opening day. The film, starring Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, and Ahan Shetty, raked in an impressive Rs 32 crore on day one, surpassing the opening day numbers of recent blockbuster actioners like Dhurandhar. This marks a strong start not only for the film, but also for Hindi cinema in 2026. Sunny Deol, Diljit Dosanjh, Varun Dhawan, Ahan Shetty star in the film.

In fact, in a recent interaction with his fans on social media, Diljit shared a memory about the original film. He made a video explaining how he had wanted to watch the original Border in theatres back in 1997 but couldn't afford it at the time. The clip, shared on X, features Diljit saying: "I remember when the first Border came, so many people around me went to watch it but I couldn't because I didn't have the money for it. My family also didn't give me any money for it but even they didn't have much so how could they spare it. I really wanted to watch the film then. Little did I know that I would get the chance to be in the film one day."

In the same video, he also spoke about the character he is portraying, based on the life of Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon. He said: "Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon ji's character, what a wonderful character! If you have never read about him, some people know about it, but you should definitely read and understand his life." Last year, Border 2, directed by Anurag Singh and produced by JP Dutta alongside Bhushan Kumar, was at the center of controversy. The issue arose after Diljit's Sardaar Ji 3, which also starred Pakistani actor Hania Aamir, released outside India, despite



Indian film bodies issuing a blanket ban on Pakistani artistes working in Indian films following the Pahalgam terror attack. At the time, speculation arose that Diljit might be removed from Border 2. Addressing the matter, producer and T-Series head Bhushan Kumar confirmed that Diljit was very much part of the film but promised Indian cine bodies that he would not work with the singer-actor again after this project.

## Seema Sajdeh recalls 'amicable' divorce from Sohail Khan, went through depression: 'Khit-pit se acha hai...'



Now, years after the separation, Seema has opened up about what led to the end of her over two-decade-long marriage and the life lessons that followed. Speaking to Usha Kakade Productions, Seema reflected on how youth and timing played a role in their divorce. "We were both very young when we got married. I was just 22. As we grew older, we grew in different directions. Our thoughts changed. Eventually, we realised we were better friends than husband and wife. It was better to separate than to fight every day. We didn't want to spoil the environment at home. Khit-pit se acha hai we separated. We separated amicably, but only as husband and wife. Till date, we are a family. He is the father of my children, and that can never change."

She also addressed the emotional toll the decision took on her. "No woman fantasises about or manifests divorce. I did go into depression. And my kids must have too. It took us several years to reach this conclusion. We were waiting for the right time, especially for our children."

Opening up about life after divorce, Seema spoke about the fears and adjustments she had to make. "I was scared of being lonely. I didn't know anything about mobile bills, banking or finances. Earlier, my father handled these things and after marriage, Sohail did. Suddenly, I had to learn about life insurance, medical insurance, everything. As a single woman, I now have to focus more on my business, pay my own bills and take care of my kids. Divorce taught me time management as we both get equal time with our kids." Recalling a pivotal incident, she added, "I fell in London and had to undergo surgery. That's when I realised people claim medical insurance in these situations. Every day is a learning experience for a single woman." When asked who chose to walk away first, Seema firmly dismissed the notion of blame. "That's very unfair. A relationship involves two people. Both are responsible for making it work, or not. We never took this decision lightly. We largely took it keeping our children in mind. We were kids when we got married, and it wasn't anyone's fault." Seema Sajdeh and Sohail Khan's marriage in 1998 had sent shockwaves through the industry. At the time, Seema had only recently met Sohail and was engaged to Vikram Ahuja. In Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives, she revealed that she eloped with Sohail just ten days after her engagement, an impulsive decision that shaped the course of her life for years to come. They are parents to sons Nirvan and Yohan.

Seema Sajdeh shared that after her divorce, she had to focus on her business more than ever, as she became solely responsible for managing her finances and paying her own bills.

Seema Sajdeh, who first appeared in Netflix's Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives while she was married to Sohail Khan, has carved out an identity of her own after their divorce. Over three seasons, Seema has spoken about her separation from Sohail, allowing audiences to witness her emotional evolution. The first season captured her during the early stages of the separation, when the reality of the split was still unfolding. The second season showed her grappling with the upheaval that followed, including her move away from Bandra. By the third season, viewers saw a calmer, more self-assured Seema, who had accepted her truth, returned to Bandra, and taken a step forward by announcing that she was dating her childhood sweetheart, Vikram Ahuja, whom she was briefly engaged to, before eloping with Sohail.

## Brooklyn Beckham's wedding DJ says Victoria's dance with son made everyone 'awkward', Nicola left the room 'crying her eyes out'



The family drama that has been taking place at the Beckham household has taken a fresh new turn, and Brooklyn Beckham seems to be coming out on top. Just a few days ago, Brooklyn posted a long message on social media claiming that his mother, Victoria Beckham, "hijacked" his wedding. He also claimed that his mother danced "inappropriately", and now, the DJ at the wedding has spoken about the incident. While talking to ITV's This Morning, DJ Tony Marnoch revealed crucial details from the wedding day, which corroborate a lot of what Brooklyn accused his mother of. Recalling the supposed first dance, Tony said that "the whole situation was really awkward for everyone in the room." He clarified by saying that there was no "sl\*\*dropping, there were no black cat PVC catsuits, and

there was no Spice Girl action." He said that singer Marc Anthony, who is a close friend of the family, got up on the stage to perform and that he called Brooklyn to join him. Anthony then invited the "most beautiful woman in the room" to dance with Brooklyn. "The next minute, everyone was expecting it to be Nicola to go up and do the first dance," said Tony. But Anthony called out Victoria's name, and according to Tony, this led to Nicola leaving the room in tears.

He added, "Victoria is by the stage; she goes onto the stage, and of course, at that point Brooklyn is suddenly, literally, devastated because he thought he was going to do his first dance with his wife. Then Nicola leaves the room crying her eyes out. Brooklyn is stuck there on stage. And then they do this dance, and Marc Anthony's going, 'Put your hands on your mother's hips.' It was a Latin thing. The whole situation was very awkward for everyone in the room."

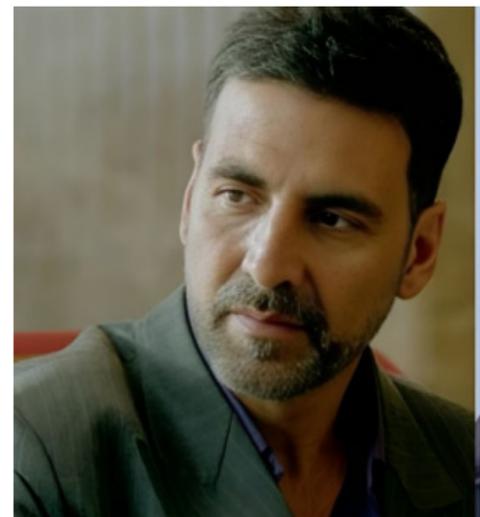
While this story does match with Brooklyn's recollection of events, it does differ from other reports that came from the wedding. As per British Vogue's report from the wedding, Nicola and Brooklyn had already had their first dance, and it was Brooklyn who invited his mother on the stage. Tony added that it is quite "sad" that people have only focused on this part of Brooklyn's entire statement and how he "just wanted to change the narrative". Before this, Brooklyn had sent his parents a legal notice asking them to only maintain contact through lawyers. Despite father David Beckham still trying to mend things, Brooklyn has made it clear that he has no wish to reconcile with his parents.

## Irrfan Khan recommended Akshay Kumar for Airlift, told director 'you won't get the money with me', he recalls

Akshay Kumar started appearing in films high on nationalistic sentiment a few years ago and while some have not been able to create a strong impression, Airlift managed to stand out. Raja Krishna Menon's film recently completed 10 years and the director recently revealed that Akshay was not the first choice for the film. In fact, the director initially approached Irrfan Khan. Recalling how it all unfolded, Menon told Bollywood Hungama, "The first actor I approached was Irrfan Khan. It happened through producer Nikkhil Advani. I met Nikkhil as I was told that he was looking for fresh ideas." He added, laughingly recounting his interaction with Irrfan who said, "Raja, it's a great script, but your vision is Hollywood. But with me, you'll not get money to make anything close to your vision." Menon said he initially thought Irrfan was simply declining the film politely.

But then Menon revealed that even producer Nikkhil Advani had a similar concern. "Nikhil also suggested that I should approach an A-lister. He and Vikram Malhotra (co-producer) met Akshay for some other project. During that narration, Akshay asked if they had any different and exciting scripts. That's when they told him about Airlift. He asked for a narration. Nikkhil told me, 'I know you are considering Irrfan, but please meet Akshay.' I was unsure, wondering why any big Bollywood star would work with me. I was a bit scared and uncomfortable." Despite his hesitation, Menon met Akshay, and everything fell into place. "Nevertheless, I met him. 40 minutes into the narration, he told me, 'Chalo, banate hai picture.' (Cool, let's do it). I couldn't believe my luck!"

Interestingly, Nikkhil Advani had recounted a similar instance years earlier, noting that it was Irrfan who had suggested Akshay, believing the project could secure a bigger budget with him. Speaking to Galatta Plus, Nikkhil said, "Airlift's director Raja Menon wanted Irrfan, which was fine for us because he was working on D-Day. I told them I would set up the meeting with Irrfan, and Irrfan overheard me. He told me, 'Boss, mere sath mat kar ye picture (Don't



do this film with me). It is a fantastic film but don't do it with me because you will not get the budget. Go to Akshay. You know Akshay." Nikkhil also recalled his first meeting with Akshay, "So, I went to Akshay with another film, and he called that rubbish. Then I narrated Airlift and told him that Irrfan didn't want to do it. He asked me, 'Why have you come to me then?' I told him, 'You can't do it because it is a very serious film and you will have to memorise all the lines, and the director Raja Menon wants to do workshops.' He told me that he wanted to do it. I told him Raja doesn't want you, but Akshay did the film. He sat for workshops after workshops."

## Amid Prabhas' Raja Saab debacle, MSVPG director Anil Ravipudi says 'pan-India stars should return to doing smaller films'

Touted as the biggest Telugu release of the year, The Raja Saab turned out to be its biggest box-office disappointment. Mounted at an estimated budget of Rs 450 crore and promoted as a pan-India spectacle, the film opened with over 5,000 shows across the country. However, by its 15th day in theatres, its domestic collection stood at just Rs 143 crore. In stark contrast, Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu emerged as the lone Sankranti success story. Made on a Rs 200 crore budget, with just Rs 28 crore spent on the production, and aimed squarely at the Telugu audience, the film went on to collect Rs 300 crore, proving that scale alone does not guarantee success.

Reflecting on this widening gap, Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu's director offered a pointed critique of stars blindly chasing pan-India status, arguing that the industry is in urgent need of a course correction — one that balances ambition with rooted storytelling.

"Pan-India stars need to return to making smaller films." Speaking to Great Andhra, Ravipudi observed, "Lately, the pan-India market has become extremely wide, with budgets going up to Rs 1,000-2,000 crore. Heroes now have global exposure, and that creates a dilemma when it comes to doing smaller films after appearing in a large pan-India project."

He added that inflated budgets and heightened visual standards further complicate decision-making. "With global films, the budgets are higher, the standards rise, and visuals become grander. With that mindset, people start questioning whether a hero who has worked at that scale will return to making smaller regional films. That uncertainty becomes a problem for everyone involved." Ravipudi believes the solution lies in balance. "If these stars take the risk of returning to smaller films and strike a balance by doing both pan-India and regional cinema, the bubble around pan-India status will burst. The question is, who will burst it first?"

He further argued that such balance could revive the industry's health. "Right now, all top stars release their films

in January, followed by a dry spell of nearly six months. This is forcing single-screen theatres to shut down. If stars start signing both kinds of films, one pan-India and one regional film every year, the ecosystem will stabilise. The regional market has immense stamina."

When asked whether he would be open to collaborating with pan-India stars, Ravipudi clarified that he holds no reservations. "I don't have anything against them. I would be happy to work with them at a regional level. If they approach me and give me a slot, I will adapt the story and execute it. Whoever takes the first step to balance pan-India and regional cinema will create a path for others." On whether he himself aspires to make a global film, Ravipudi was refreshingly candid. "I have no idea," he said. "I am very happy with my current success making films for Telugu audiences. I enjoy working within this boundary. If my content organically becomes global, that's different but I won't plan it. That approach rarely works." The Raja Saab was supposed to be a smaller film. Earlier, veteran filmmaker Thammareddy Bharadwaja echoed similar concerns while discussing The Raja Saab's debacle. Speaking to SumanTV Vijayawada, he revealed that the film was originally conceived as a small, rooted Telugu project. "From what I know, The Raja Saab was meant to be a simple, charming film that connected with Telugu audiences. Director Maruthi was brought in specifically for that purpose. I don't understand why they didn't stick to that original idea." He added that the film lost its identity once pan-India ambitions crept in. "As the project progressed, they started reworking it as a pan-India film. Nearly two years were spent on reshoots and changes, drifting away from the original story. Whenever 'pan-India' elements are forcefully added, a film deviates from its purpose. Budgets inflate, timelines stretch, and it rarely works in favour of the makers." Highlighting the financial miscalculation, Bharadwaja noted, "The film still managed to collect around Rs 100 crore. Had the budget been restricted to Rs 100 crore, it would have been profitable. Today, filmmakers are so focused on scale that they've forgotten how to make memorable cinema."