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Reserve Bank of India flags Telangana's fiscal stress

Hyderabad: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has flagged concerns over Telangana's fiscal trajectory, warning that the State's deficit and debt burdens are rising amid slowing revenue growth. While the economy remains relatively stable at present, the RBI cautioned that the fiscal situation could become vulnerable if corrective steps are not taken in time.

According to the RBI's latest State Finances – A Study of Budgets report, Telangana has become increasingly dependent on market borrowings. Open market loans rose from Rs.49,618 crore in 2023-24 to Rs.56,209 crore in 2024-25, highlighting growing reliance on debt to bridge resource gaps. By the end of December in the current fiscal (2025-26), the Congress government raised Rs.66,000 crore through State securities auction.

India and South Asia to need 3,300 new aircraft by 2044: Boeing

Hyderabad: India and South Asia's passenger air traffic is set to grow at an average of seven per cent annually over the next 20 years, driven by a rising middle class, economic expansion, and investments in airports and connectivity, Boeing said on Wednesday. According to Boeing's Commercial Market Outlook for South Asia, airlines in the region will require nearly 3,300 new aircraft by 2044 to meet the growing demand. Single-aisle aircraft will dominate deliveries, accounting for nearly 90 per cent of new planes, as carriers expand capacity on fast-growing short and medium-haul routes. The regional fleet is projected to expand from 795 aircraft at present to 2,925 over two decades, nearly quadrupling in size.

MAHA DY CM AJIT PAWAR DIES IN AIR CRASH

Mumbai, Jan 28

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar died on Wednesday morning after the aircraft carrying him crashed and caught fire while landing at Baramati in Pune district, officials said.

The 66-year-old Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader was travelling from Mumbai to his hometown for election meetings when the Learjet 45 went down near the runway, killing all five people on board.

Pawar had left Mumbai early in the morning to campaign in Baramati, where he was scheduled to address four public meetings ahead of the February 5 zila parishad elections. The aircraft took off from Mumbai at 8.10 am. According to flight radar data, it disappeared from tracking around 8.45 am.

Officials of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said there were five people on board, including two crew members — pilot in command and co-pilot. All occupants

suffered fatal injuries.

Eyewitnesses living near the airfield described scenes of panic and devastation. A woman said the aircraft appeared unstable as it descended. "The plane tilted before coming down. We saw an explosion and it was frightening," she said, adding that several parts of the aircraft were hurled into the air and landed close to her house.

Another eyewitness said the aircraft seemed to be losing control moments before the crash. "The way the plane was coming down, we felt it was going to crash. It was around 100 ft above the runway," he said. As locals rushed towards the site, flames engulfed the aircraft. "There were four to five consecutive blasts. We could not go anywhere near it. Later, we learnt Ajit Pawar was on the aircraft. It was shocking," he said.

Baramati is an uncontrolled airfield, where traffic information is provided by instructors and pilots from flying training organisations rather than a dedicated air traffic control

tower. According to the sequence of events recorded by the person handling air traffic communication, the aircraft first came in contact with Baramati at 8.18 am.

The aircraft later reported being 30 nautical miles inbound and was released by Pune Approach. "The crew were advised to descend under visual meteorological conditions at their discretion. The pilots asked about wind and visibility and were informed that winds were calm and visibility was around 3,000 metres," said the officials.

During the first approach to runway 11, the crew reported that the runway was not in sight and initiated a go-around. After the go-around, the aircraft was again asked to report its position and soon reported being on final approach. The crew were asked to confirm when the runway was in sight. They initially said it was not visible and would call back. Seconds later, they reported that the runway was in sight.

The aircraft was

cleared to land on runway 11 at 8.43 am. However, officials said there was no readback of the landing clearance. At 8.44 am, flames were seen near the threshold of the runway. Emergency services rushed to the site, but the aircraft had already crashed and caught fire. The wreckage was found on the left side of the runway near the threshold.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation confirmed that the aircraft, registered as VT-SSK, was a Learjet 45 manufactured in 2010 and operated by VSR Ventures Pvt Ltd, a non-scheduled operator. The company holds a valid permit and has a fleet of 17 aircraft, including seven Learjet 45s. A regulatory audit carried out by the DGCA in February 2025 had reported no level-I findings.

The pilot in command held an airline transport pilot licence and had logged more than 15,000 flying hours. The co-pilot held a commercial pilot licence with around 1,500 flying hours. Both crew members had valid medical exami-



nations and recent instrument rating and proficiency checks.

"The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) has taken over the investigation, and its Direc-

tor General has reached the crash site. A probe has been initiated to determine the cause of the accident," the officials said.

The investigation will include the recovery and

analysis of the flight recorder, enhanced ground proximity warning system and digital engine electronic systems. Investigators will also examine air-

craft logbooks and crew records, and analyse radar data, air traffic communication recordings, CCTV footage and eyewitness statements to piece together the final moments of the flight.

Budget Session commences: Prez calls for unity on national issues, Opposition slams her on G RAM G

New Delhi, Jan 28

President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday described India as a bridge in a conflict-ridden world and said even warring nations valued its word on key matters, while calling for unity on national issues.

Marking the commencement of the Budget session of Parliament with her address to the joint session of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha today, Murmu hailed India's "balanced, impartial, nation-first" foreign policy while flagging Operation Sindoor as a "responsible and wise response to terror".

In a speech interrupted by Congress MPs, including leaders of opposition Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi when she mentioned the Viksit Bharat-G RAM G law, the President urged all to bury differences for national interest. "Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru ji, Babasaheb, Sardar Patel, JP ji, Lohia ji, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, Atal ji, all shared the belief that differences of opinion on issues are natural in democracy, but there are certain subjects which are beyond all differences," Murmu said.

She urged political unity on the goals of Viksit Bharat, national security, self-reliance, swadeshi and cleanliness. "On matters concerning the nation, parliamentarians must stand united. This is the spirit of our Constitution," she said to applause from treasury benches led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Earlier, when she en-

tered the Lok Sabha chamber and later when she lauded the new rural livelihood law, Congress MPs raised "Take back SIR"; "Take back VB-G RAM G

nations engaged in conflict express their trust in India on important issues."

Ahead of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's record ninth



Act" slogans. Murmu had to pause for some seconds—a moment ministers Kiren Rijiju (parliamentary affairs) and JP Nadda (leader of house in Rajya Sabha) called "unfortunate and condemnable".

"This new law will ensure 125 days of guaranteed employment in villages, stop corruption and leakages, provide new momentum to rural development and create new facilities for the farmers, livestock farmers and fishermen," said Murmu

The President, in her remarks, noted the successful conclusion of the India-EU FTA negotiations and said, "Amid complex global circumstances, India is playing the role of a bridge in the world. Even

budget this Sunday, Murmu said despite global crisis, India was the fastest growing major global economy and had kept inflation under control.

This, she said, directly benefitted the poor and middle-classes, raising incomes and purchasing power. The President mentioned India's growing indigenous defence capabilities and exports and successes against Naxal terror to say that the day was not far when the country would witness complete eradication of Maoist terror.

She quoted the ninth Sikh Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur's "fear none" message to frame India's response to Pahalgam terror attack—Operation Sindoor. "Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji has taught us

'Bhay kahu ko det nay, nay bhay manat aan' (we should neither instil fear in others nor live in fear of others)."

"India has proved that power can be wielded with responsibility and prudence. The world witnessed the valour of the Indian defence forces during Operation Sindoor. Using its own resources, the country destroyed base camps of terrorists," the President said, adding that the Indus Water Treaty was part of India's fight against terror.

Besides flagging the Modi-led NDA rule as a "strong cornerstone for India's rapid journey towards becoming Viksit Bharat by 2047", the President called for fighting "Macaulay conspiracies and taking pride in Indian culture".

"Through Macaulay's conspiracies, inferiority was instilled among Indians during the colonial period. For the first time since Independence, my government has shown the courage to strike a blow on this," Murmu said, mentioning government efforts at preserving cultural heritage, including the retrieval of Lord Buddha relics for the first time in 125 years.

The President also hailed the farmers for India's record production of over 350 million tonnes of food grains last year and spoke of women-led development as the cornerstone of the NDA's governance.

Telangana assembly speaker to hear petition on MLA Danam Nagender

Hyderabad, Jan 28

The disqualification petition against MLA Danam Nagender will be heard on the 30th of this month, according to the schedule issued by Speaker Prasad Kumar. Notices have been served to Nagender, instructing him to attend the hearing, along with notices to MLA Kaushik Reddy and the lawyers involved.

The hearing will also cover the petition filed by BJP floor leader Maheshwar Reddy. During the proceedings, the Speaker will record the testimonies of the petitioners.



KCR condoles demise of Ajit Pawar in Plane Crash

Hyderabad, Jan 28

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and NCP leader Ajit Pawar died early on Wednesday morning in a tragic plane crash near Baramati. The incident has shocked the nation, with Prime Minister Modi, Union Ministers, and prominent political figures expressing their condolences.

BRS Chief and former Telangana Chief Minister KCR paid tribute to Pawar, saying his death was an irreparable loss to Maharashtra politics. KCR highlighted Pawar's rise from a farmer's movement leader to a senior politician and conveyed his deepest sympathies to the bereaved family.

Minister Seethakka also expressed her shock, calling Pawar's death a significant loss for Maharashtra's political and public life. She praised his contributions and offered heartfelt condolences to his family, followers, and supporters, praying for his soul to rest in peace and for strength for those mourning his loss.



Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Chinese military purge signals Xi Jinping's firm grip on power

Inscrutable are the ways of the communist dictatorships. The actions of such regimes appear particularly intriguing if they are driven by territorial ambitions and a desire to reshape the global order. A series of shocking military purges in China makes one wonder if there is anything more to it than meets the eye. While the outside world has no means to get a full picture of what is happening inside the tightly controlled regime, the information that has been trickling in speaks of a swift operation of summary dismissals of some top-ranking military officials on charges of corruption, political activity, and insubordination to President Xi Jinping. A brief official announcement recently said that two top army generals were being investigated for suspected serious violations of discipline and law, without giving details. The sudden ouster of Zhang Youxia, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and widely seen as a close lieutenant of the all-powerful president, has raised many eyebrows in diplomatic circles. Facing the axe along with him was Liu Zhenli, the head of the joint operations of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Following the latest purge, the CMC is now effectively down to two members - Xi himself, who is the chairman, and Zhang Shengmin, PLA's anti-corruption head. The latest military shake-up is the biggest in recent history, reminiscent of the infamous clean-ups of the Mao Zedong era. These purges are apparently designed to reform the military and ensure loyalty to Xi. They are part of a broader anti-corruption drive that has resulted in punishment for more than two lakh officials since the Chinese leader came to power in 2012. At least 17 Generals from the PLA have been removed so far. The latest purge can have repercussions on Taiwan, which China considers its own territory and has threatened to take control of the island by force. China also has increased military pressure and, last month, launched large-scale military drills around Taiwan for two days after the United States announced major arms sales to Taiwan. General Zhang, a celebrated war veteran, was made the vice-chairman of the CMC, an institution seen as Xi's eyes and ears in running the PLA's forces day to day. It is possible that Zhang's assessment of the PLA's operational readiness for a Taiwan invasion may not have aligned with Xi's deadline. Xi had doubled down on his Taiwan pledge, reiterating that China's 'reunification' is 'unstoppable'. Differences between Zhang and Xi over how to achieve this objective may have sealed the former's fate. His unceremonious removal means that no one is safe within the Chinese system. Zhang may now face a secret trial in the military justice system and is likely to be imprisoned. His downfall will ultimately have a big effect on the power elite in Beijing because it removes one of their safety boundaries.

Ramanthapur Division Congress President Mohammed Rafiq Inspects Electricity Pole Installation Works

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 28 (Indian Chronicle):”Residents of Rajendranagar in Ramanthapur have been facing difficulties for the past 20 years due to old iron electricity poles. Despite repeatedly appealing to the authorities, their grievances went



unattended, the locals lamented. “Ten days ago, during the Basti Bata programme, the residents brought their long-standing problems to the notice of Ramanthapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafiq. Responding immediately, Mohammed Rafiq, with the



support of Uppal Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, ensured the installation of eight new electricity poles in Rajendranagar on Wednesday, personally supervising the work on site. “Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed Rafiq stated that with the cooperation of Uppal In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, all development works in Ramanthapur Division would be completed in a phased manner. “Those present at the programme included Rajendranagar elders Rudrala Narasimha, Bokka Suresh, Mohammed Nayeem, Kashamalla Shankar, Ramanthapur Division Women's President Sandhya Rani, Mogili Lingam, Gangaputra Bhaskar, Adinarayana Goud, Namala Sheenu, Mahender, Madhu, Swamy, Sudhakar, MD Abdul, MD Jangir, and others.

District SP Inspects Police Security At Municipal Election Nomination And Distribution Centers

“Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad. District Reporte, Jade Srinivas. January, 28. “Kagaznagar, District SP Nitika Pant Visited the Nomination centers, distribution centers, and counting centers set up under the Kagaznagar Municipal Corporation in the wake of the nominations that began on Wednesday as part of the municipal election process. The SP inspected the nomination center set up at the Kagaznagar Municipal Office and the distribution center and counting center set up at the DAV Public School. He said that strong police security has been deployed at the nomination centers. He said that prohibitory orders will be in force within a 100- meter radius around the nomination center and that no one should gather without permission. The SP advised the concerned police officers to take precautionary measures to prevent any untoward incidents and to perform their duties vigilantly to ensure that the election process proceeds peacefully. Later, the SP inspected the Batpally X Road and Agriculture (near Vinay Garden) check posts set up in Kagaznagar limits in the backdrop of the municipal elections. He spoke to the police personnel on duty at the



check posts and ordered strict action to be taken against those who violate the election code of conduct. The SP was accompanied by Special Branch Inspector Satish, Kagaznagar Town Inspector Prem Kumar, Kagaznagar Rural Inspector Kumaraswamy and other police officers.” participated in the program along with the SP.

NSS Program Begins In Bambara Village



“Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad District Reporte, Jade Srinivas. January, 28. “Wankidi Mandal, Bambara Village:”The NSS (National Service Scheme) program, organized by Government Degree College,

Asifabad, has begun in Bambara village of Wankidi mandal. The program was presided over by Government Degree College Asifabad NSS Convener and Principal Kanakaiah, while Program Officer Devender participated. Bambara Village Sarpanch Bendare Krishnaji, Upasarpanch Jade Santosh, and Village Secretary Dharmiah were present as the chief guests. A large number of college faculty members and NSS volunteers participated in the event. NSS service programs will be organized in Bambara village for a week starting today. On this occasion, NSS aims to serve the village through programs like village development, cleanliness, and social awareness. “The speakers stated.

CC Road Construction Works Taken Up at a Cost of Rs 42 Lakhs in Raj Nagar Colony:

Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy We are taking all necessary steps for the comprehensive development of Raj Nagar Colony” – Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 28 (Indian Chronicle):”Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy stated that all required measures are being undertaken to ensure the overall development of Raj Nagar Colony in Uppal Division. “The Corporator, along with Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, Congress Party In-charge of Uppal Constituency, inspected the CC road construction works being carried out at a cost of 742 lakhs in Raj Nagar Colony. During the inspection, local residents brought several issues to the attention of the Corporator. They highlighted that the



drainage problem in the colony has become severe, and that roads get flooded during rainfall, causing inconvenience to residents. Responding to the concerns, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy assured that drainage and rainwater-related issues would be addressed promptly by initiating necessary works within a stipulated time frame. The program was attended by DE Vennil Goud, AE Raj Kumar, HMWSSB official Satyanarayana, Dubba Narsimha Reddy, Kalluri Venu, Ayodhya, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Jeevan Reddy, David, Kishore, Keshava Rao, Pawan, Balu, Nagaraju, Raj Kumar, Chandram Prashanth, Chari, Sri Balaji, and several others.

Our Aspiration Is to See Kancharla Prateeka Play for Team India Women's Cricket Team: MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, State Leader Bannala Praveen

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 28 (Indian Chronicle):”Uppal Constituency MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy and BRS Party State Leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj congratulated Kancharla Prateeka, daughter of Kancharla Somireddy from Habsiguda in the Uppal constituency, for her remarkable achievement in cricket. They praised Prateeka for being selected to the Senior Women's One Day Trophy (Ranji Trophy) and for scoring an impressive century (100 runs) in a cricket match held in Hyderabad. Calling her achievement highly commendable, the leaders honored her with a shawl and extended their best wishes. On this occasion, they expressed their hope that Prateeka would soon be selected for the Indian Women's Cricket Team and represent the country, bringing pride and recognition to the Uppal constituency. The people and leaders of Uppal also conveyed their aspirations and encouragement for her future success. “Later, BRS Party movement leaders congratulated Prateeka's father, Kancharla Somireddy, stat-



ing that his hard work and support had borne fruit. They honored him with a shawl and conveyed their heartfelt wishes. Several BRS Party senior leaders, including Eddula Kondal Reddy, Kokandla Jagan Shyam, Balu, and others, participated in the program.

Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah Lays Foundation Stone for Power Substation Construction Works



gram.

“ (Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 28):- Telangana State Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah laid the foundation stone for the construction of a power substation in Sitarampuram village of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, undertaken to permanently resolve power supply problems. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said that power infrastructure is crucial for the development of rural areas and that the establishment of the substation will provide quality power to farmers and the public. He stated that the government is working with the goal of providing basic amenities to every village. “Local public representatives, officials, Congress party leaders, and villagers participated in this pro-

Tadbund Veera Anjaneya Swamy Temple Hundi income 29 lakhs above.

“Secunderabad Cantonment. January 28 (Indian Chronicle):”The counting of the Hundi at the Tadbund Veera Anjaneya Swamy Temple in Secunderabad was completed on Wednesday. The temple's Executive Of-



ficer A. Narendra, Endowments Department Inspector Andral, and Bowenpally police supervised the counting of the temple's Hundi. On this occasion, the temple EO Narendra stated that the Hundi contained Rs. 27,18,928.00 in currency notes and Rs. 2,22,900.00 in coins, totaling Rs. 29,40,828.00. He also mentioned that donations were received in the form of foreign currency, including 3 US dollars and 10 Singapore dollars. Temple priests, staff, devotees, and donors participated in the program.

People Take To The Streets In Balaji Nagar Over Drainage Issue

“Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad District Reporte, Jade Srinivas. January, 28. “Due to improper cleaning of the drainage system in Balaji Nagar Gollavada, Kagaz Nagar, dirty water has reached the roads. Due to this, there is a strong stench and an increase in the mosquito problem, and people, especially children, elderly people and women, are suffering. To solve this problem, young leader Bair Shetty Ravi along with the people sat on the road and protested. The agitation was called off after the police intervened and promised to take the matter to the attention of the municipal authorities and find a solution.

Leaders Visit Affected Family in Nacharam “BRS leader Hamali Srinu extends support to affected family

“Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, January 28: “Following the open-heart surgery of Burugu Pochayya, husband of senior BRS leader and Telangana movement activist Sushila from Mallapur Division, BRS leaders visited the family to express solidarity and support. “On this occasion, Mallapur Division Corporator Panala Devender Reddy, along with Hamali Srinu, State President of the Civil Supplies Hamali Workers Union and senior BRS leader, visited the affected family. They enquired about



Mr. Pochayya's health condition and wished him a speedy recovery. “As a gesture of support, the leaders extended financial assistance of ₹10,000 to the family. Speaking on the occasion, the leaders assured that the BRS party always stands firmly by its workers and leaders during difficult times. “Senior leaders Tigulla Srinivas Goud, Raju Yadav, Mallapur Division Women's President Koteswari, Nirmala, Rapolu Srinivas, and other party members were present during the visit.

MLA Beerla Ailaiah pays tribute to the mortal remains of Yamagani Bakkaiah Goud

“ (Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 28):- Telangana State Government Whip and Alair MLA, Sri Beerla Ailaiah, paid his respects to the mortal remains of senior Congress party leader Yamagani Bakkaiah Goud in Suddala village of Gundala mandal by placing a garland of flowers. Telangana State Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah stated that the death of Yamagani Bakkaiah Goud due to accidentally falling from a palm tree was extremely saddening. On this occasion, he paid rich tributes to the deceased Yamagani Bakkaiah Goud by placing a garland of flowers on his body. He consoled the family members and offered them courage. Similarly, with the support of the Beerla Foundation, he pro-



vided financial assistance of Rs. 10,000/- to the deceased's family. “The MLA assured that he would provide complete support to ensure that all government welfare schemes are extended to the deceased's family in the future.

The seventh minor irrigation scheme census being conducted in the district must be completed quickly within the stipulated time:

- Additional Collector for Local Bodies, Bhaskara Rao

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 28):- Additional Collector for Local Bodies, Bhaskara Rao, instructed the concerned officials to complete the seventh minor irrigation scheme census being conducted in the district quickly within the stipulated time. On Wednesday, the Additional Collector reviewed the seventh minor irrigation census



with AEOs and other concerned officials at the Collectorate meeting hall. Speaking on the occasion, the Additional Collector stated that action would be taken against those responsible if there is any delay in completing the seventh minor irrigation scheme census within the stipulated time. He mentioned that this census is being conducted by AEOs, GPOs, and DRDA staff, and that it will be completed by the 31st of this month. CPO Venkataramana and District Agriculture Officer Venkataramana Reddy participated in this program.

Grand Felicitation to Gold Medal Winners under Telangana Roller Handball Association

“(Kishore Vaddepalli, Hyderabad, January 28 (Indian Chronicle):”“Players representing India under the banner of the Telangana Roller Handball Association created history by winning four gold medals at the 1st International Roller Handball Skating Championship 2025-2026, held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on January 23 and 24, 2026.”“The championship featured competitions in Under-9, Under-12, Under-14, and Under-17 categories. Indian children delivered an outstanding performance, proudly securing four gold medals for the country



at the international level.”“In recognition of this remarkable achievement, the winning players were felicitated with shawls, bouquets, garlands, and sweets in a grand ceremony. The coaches who played a key role in this success—Syed Mukhtar, Azhar Ali, and Ayub Ali—were also honoured for their dedication and guidance.”“The championship was conducted at the Darchook Recreational Center, Kathmandu, with participation from athletes of several countries. Under the leadership of Telangana coaches Syed Mukhtar, Azhar Ali, Nayab Ali, and Abdul Rakeeb, the young skaters displayed exceptional skill and teamwork, helping India clinch the first-ever international Roller Handball Skating Championship title.”“Parents of the medal-winning children expressed immense pride and congratulated the players for their international success. The event was organized under the RHSFI (Roller Handball Skating Federation of India). Prominent officials present included RHSFI Official & Coach India Syed Mukhtar Pasha, Azhar Ali, Nayab Ali, Team Manager Durga Madam, Team India organizers, Telangana Coach Syed Mukhtar, Secretary General Arpan Singh, President Santosh Kathalkar, Treasurer Rutuja Patil, and Secretary T.K. Thombre Patil, along with other dignitaries.

Ramanthapur Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkatrao Inaugurates Generic Medical Shop

“(Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, January 28 (Indian Chronicle):”“A newly established S.K. Generic Medical Shop in the Ramanthapur Division was inaugurated by the local Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkatrao.”“Speaking on the occasion, the Corporator emphasized the importance of making quality medicines available to the general public at affordable prices. She stated that generic medical shops significantly reduce medical expenses for middle-class and economically weaker sections of society.”“She urged people to avoid dependence on branded medicines and instead use generic medicines to gain financial benefits. Highlighting the social responsibility behind such initiatives, she said that service-oriented medical shops play a vital role in the welfare of society.”“The Corporator congratulated medical shop owner Mahendarkar Satish Kumar for establishing the shop with a service motive. Shop staff, local residents, and others were present at the event.



Long-Standing Demand Fulfilled – Police Station to Be Established in Ramanthapur

A long-cherished demand of the people of Ramanthapur has finally been fulfilled
Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy credited for the initiative

– Public expresses gratitude

“(Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, January 28 (Indian Chronicle):”“With the establishment of a new police station in Ramanthapur, residents of the area will soon benefit from enhanced security and quicker access to justice. The proposed police station will oversee law and order in areas including Habsiguda, Ramanthapur, Venkat Reddy Nagar, and surrounding localities.”“It may be recalled that Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy had recently submitted a formal request to the State Director General of Police (DGP), seeking the establishment of a police station in Ramanthapur. Responding positively to this request, the government has now taken a key decision to set up the new police station. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy stated that the commencement of the Ramanthapur Police Station would significantly strengthen law and order and ensure immediate resolution of public grievances. He described the government’s decision—taken by recognizing the needs of the people—as commendable.”“The MLA further said that he remains committed to regional development and public safety, and assured that more developmental initiatives would be undertaken in the future.”“Residents of Habsiguda, Ramanthapur, Venkat Reddy Nagar, and



nearby areas expressed their happiness over the decision and conveyed their special thanks to the Uppal MLA. At present, the Habsiguda area falls under the Osmania University (OU) Police Station limits; however, with the establishment of the Ramanthapur Police Station, this jurisdiction will also be brought under the new police station.

Comprehensive development of villages is the government's objective

– Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 28):- Telangana State Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah undertook an extensive tour in Atmakur mandal of Alair constituency in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district. He laid foundation stones and inaugurated several development works. On this occasion, he inaugurated the newly installed streetlights in Surveyapalli village, illuminating the entire village. He also inaugurated a water plant set up to provide clean drinking water to the villagers. Later, he laid the foundation stone for the construction of a women's



self-help group building to empower women. On this occasion, he stated that the government is implementing several welfare programs to enable women to achieve self-reliance and development. Subsequently, the MLA participated in the annual celebrations of the Sri Anjaneya Swamy temple in the village and performed special prayers.”“Beerla Ailaiah stated that the government is providing full support not only for village development but also for spiritual activities. He laid the foundation stone for the construction of a power substation and inaugurated the Goud community building in Koratikal village. He also performed the groundbreaking ceremony and laid the foundation stone for the construction of a women's self-help group building in Pothireddypalli village. In Uppal Pahad village, he performed the groundbreaking ceremony and laid the foundation stones for the construction of a BC community hall and an Anganwadi building. In T. Repaka village, the foundation stone was laid for the construction of a women's self-help group building, and also for the construction of CC roads. On this occasion, MLA Beerla Ailaiah stated that the comprehensive development of villages is the government's objective, and that the government is giving special priority to providing basic infrastructure. Local public representatives, officials, party leaders, and a large number of villagers participated in the programs.

In the context of the municipal elections, the nomination process must be conducted meticulously in compliance with the Election Commission rules

: - District Election Officer Hanumantha Rao



the district. He clarified that the nomination process will continue from today until the 30th of this month. He instructed the officials to strictly follow the rules issued by the Election Commission while receiving nominations. He made it clear that nominations should be accepted only when all the documents are complete. He directed the officials to create awareness among the candidates to contact the help desk if they have any doubts regarding filing nominations and to provide the necessary instructions in advance. He instructed that steps should be taken to prevent crowds from forming around the nomination centers and to ensure that the nomination process is completed in a peaceful atmosphere without giving rise to any violation of the election code of conduct. He also directed that the dates for scrutiny and withdrawal of nominations should be clearly communicated to the candidates, and that the entire election process should be conducted transparently and impartially. Municipal commissioners and other concerned election officials participated in this program.

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 28):- District Collector and District Election Officer Hanumantha Rao instructed that the nomination process for the municipal elections should be conducted meticulously in compliance with the Election Commission rules, and that officials should act with vigilance regarding election duties. On Wednesday, the Collector visited the nomination reception centers set up at the municipal offices in Bhuvanagiri, Aleru, Yadagirigutta, and Mothkur towns and inspected the arrangements there. He inquired with the officials about the nomination counters, help desks, security arrangements, and basic facilities. On this occasion, the Collector stated that all necessary facilities have been provided for receiving nominations for the municipalities of Bhuvanagiri, Aleru, Yadagirigutta, Pochampally, Mothkur, and Choutuppal in



'Another Library Movement' Posters Unveiled at Uppal Government Degree College

“(Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, January 28 (Indian Chronicle):”“Posters of the 'Another Library Movement' were unveiled at Government Degree College, Uppal, under the auspices of the Telugu Department. Addressing the gathering, movement activist and writer Kasturi Prabhakar stated that the Another Library Movement was launched with the objective of promoting reading habits among children and students by establishing libraries in schools and villages, along with mobile libraries. College Principal Dr. K. Vijay Kumar



emphasized that “book reading should become a habit and a passion among students.”“Telugu Assistant Professor Jalda Vishwanath Kumar informed that the Telugu Department has been consistently organizing activities such as visits to the State Central Library, participation in the Hyderabad Book Fair, book review competitions, and library book collection drives. Posters designed by Kanti Foundation were donated by Kandukuri Ramu to the libraries of Government Degree College, Uppal, and Zilla Parishad High School, Uppal. He also appealed to the teaching staff of Uppal Mandal primary schools to actively participate in the Another Library Movement. The 'Another Library Movement Bus Yatra' posters were formally unveiled by College Principal Dr. K. Vijay Kumar, Vice Principal Dr. C.H. Satyanarayana, P. Vijay Kumar, Headmasters K. Sirisha and P. Ashok, along with BA and B.Com students, NSS volunteers, and others, participated in the program.

Five Nominations Received on Opening Day of Kagaznagar Poll Process

“(Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, January 27 (Indian Chronicle):”“On the first day of nomination filing at Kagaznagar Municipality on Wednesday, a total of five nominations were received, Municipal Commissioner B. Tirupati said.”“He stated that nominations were filed from Ward No. 8 by Gajjala Lavanya (BJP), Ward No. 11 by



Debbati Srinivas (BJP), Ward No. 24 by Deshmukh Srinivas Rao (BJP), Ward No. 25 by Jada Shashikala (Congress), and Ward No. 30 by Saritha Daravath (Congress).”“The Commissioner confirmed that all nomination papers were formally accepted.

Tight Security in Place as District SP Inspects Nomination Centre

“(Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, January 27 (Indian Chronicle):”“As part of the municipal election process, District Superintendent of Police Nitika Pant on Wednesday inspected the election nomination centre set up at the Kagaznagar Municipal Office, where the nomination process commenced.”“The District SP stated that tight police security has been deployed at the nomination centre to ensure smooth conduct of the process. She directed the concerned police officials to maintain continuous surveillance and take all necessary measures to prevent any untoward incidents during the nomination period.”“Later, as part of the election arrangements, the SP inspected the check posts established at Batpalli X Road and near Vinay Garden within the Kagaznagar limits. Interacting with the police personnel on duty, she instructed them to remain alert, perform their duties with utmost vigilance, and strictly prevent violations of the election code of conduct.”“Special Branch Inspector Satish, Kagaznagar Town Inspector Prem Kumar, Kagaznagar Rural Inspector Kumaraswamy, and other police officials accompanied the District SP during the inspection.



Imam Bukhari's Steadfastness a Guiding Light for Society and Elections:

Speakers at Kaghaznagar Bukhari Completion Congregation

“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 27 (Indian Chronicle)“The Majlis-e-Khatm-e-Bukhari held at Madrasa Mahboobiya, Kaghaznagar, was described as an event of profound scholarly, spiritual, and historical significance. Speakers said that the propagation of Hadith is a clear expression of love for the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him).“Addressing the gathering, Maulana Mohammed Musaddiq Qasmi, President of Jamiat Ulema Greater Hyderabad, said that Imam Bukhari began Sahih Bukhari with the Hadith “Actions are judged by intentions” and concluded it with the Hadith describing two phrases beloved to Allah: “Subhanallah wa bihamdih, Subhanallahil Azeem.” He explained that these phrases are light on the tongue and easy to recite, yet immensely heavy on the scale of deeds on the Day of Judgment, carrying great reward and significance in the sight of Allah.“He noted that Imam Bukhari faced many trials in his life but remained steadfast, adding that society must adopt the same perseverance, including in public and electoral life. He cautioned that excessive aggression or internal disunity weakens collective efforts and enables opposing forces to succeed easily. He further warned that forces hostile to the nation seek to disrupt peace and divide communities, stressing the urgent need for understanding, unity, and thoughtful solutions.“Maulana Qasmi reminded the audience that every human action is recorded by angels and will be accounted for on the Day of Judgment. Just as modern devices record activities, divine recording is constant and precise, he said, urging people to live with accountability and consciousness of the Hereafter.“Maulana Mohammed Ijazuddin Siddiqui, Administrator of Madrasa Ruqaiya Lil Banat, praised the students of Jamia Mahboobiya for their commendable performance, highlighting that 20 students successfully completed Nazira Qur’an. He said this reflected the dedication of teachers and administrators toward education. Emphasizing the importance of religious education, he urged parents to ensure their children receive Islamic learning, noting that it benefits both worldly life and the Hereafter.“Speaking

on the occasion, Maulana Mubeen Qasmi, Rector of Madrasa Mahboobiya, said that Imam Bukhari was not



only a great Muhaddith but also a Mufassir, having written commentary on Surah At-Talaq. He observed that contemporary society faces increasing issues related to divorce and separation, making such guidance highly relevant. He also referred to Imam Bukhari’s emphasis on archery and physical fitness, encouraging participation in suitable sports, including shooting. He added that leaving sufficient means for one’s heirs is preferable to leaving them destitute, calling for greater attention toward lawful trade and economic responsibility.“He further appealed to mosque committees to actively engage youth and nurture them as future assets of the community. He advised philanthropists that, alongside charity such as food and clothing, facilitating essential documents like birth certificates and voter IDs is a crucial social responsibility today.“The programme was conducted by Qazi Maulana Arifuddin Ashrafi. Several religious leaders, mosque committee members, social activists, and community representatives attended the congregation in large numbers.“The event concluded with a special supplication led by Maulana Mohammed Mohsin Ali Mazahiri, marking the successful completion of the spiritually significant gathering.

THURUPATI RAJIAH REMEMBERED AS A BEACON OF GUIDANCE FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS: MINISTER DUDDILLA SRIDHAR BABU PAYS CONDOLENCES.



“P. S. ASHOKAN “KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. “State Minister for IT, Industries, and Legislative Affairs, Shri Duddilla Sridhar Babu, described late Thurupati Rajaiiah as an enduring source of inspiration and guidance for photographers in the Manthani region. The Minister visited the bereaved family members at their residence and expressed his deepest condolences over the untimely demise of Rajaiiah.“Speaking on the occasion, Shri Sridhar Babu remarked that Rajaiiah, known for his gentle demeanor, affable nature, and ability to build harmonious relationships, was not only a pillar of strength for his family but also a respected figure in society. His passing, the Minister noted, has created an irreparable void, not just within his family but among all who knew him.“The Minister further observed that Rajaiiah’s lifelong aspiration to see his children rise to respectable and dignified positions in life has been meaningfully re-

alized through their achievements. He lauded Rajaiiah’s sons for earning a reputable standing in their respective professions, maintaining unity, and steering clear of disputes, thereby upholding the values instilled by their father.“Several dignitaries and party leaders were present during the visit, including Thurupati Satyanarayana, Thurupati Ramu, Thurupati Damodar, Manthani Mandal Congress President Aili Prasad, Block Congress President Totla Tirupati Yadav, Market Committee Chairman Kududula Venkanna, former Manthani MPP Konda Shankar, former Manthani Sarpanch Vodnala Srinivas, senior Congress leader Shashi Bhushan, along with Kache, Akula Srinivas, and other prominent leaders and well-wishers.“[8:42 PM, 1/28/2026] +91 94401 53424: THURUPATI RAJIAH REMEMBERED AS A BEACON OF GUIDANCE FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS: MINISTER

Tractor Overtakes En Route to Medaram; Mother and Daughter Killed



“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 27 (Indian Chronicle)“Jayashankar Bhupalpally District: In a tragic road accident on the Mahamuttharam–Katarm–Medaram main road, a mother and her daughter were killed on the spot when the tractor in which they were travelling overturned on Wednesday.“The deceased have been identified as Kasturi Lakshmi (45) and her daughter Kasturi Akshitha (21), residents of Mutyampet village in Koutala mandal. They were on their way to attend the Medaram Sannakka–Saralamma Jatara when the tractor reportedly lost control and overturned.“Both victims sustained severe injuries and died at the scene, police said.“The tragic incident cast a pall of gloom over Mutyampet village. On learning about the incident, former Sirpur MLA Koneru Konappa visited the village, paid floral tributes to the mortal remains of the deceased, and consoled the bereaved family members, expressing his deep condolences.

Strengthen Government Education System: Peddargallu Chandrayya and Dr. Yasa Malla Reddy

“Indian Chronicle, Tandur (January, 28)“Peddargalla Chandrayya, former ZPTC member of Parigi and Chairman of Ankita Foundation, and Dr. Yasa Malla Reddy, recipient of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule-Ambedkar National Best Social Service Award, emphasized the need to strengthen the government education system, which is a haven for poor and middle-class students.“They distributed bags, shoes, and mats to students at the primary school in Navanggi village, Bashirabad mandal, on behalf of Ankita Foundation International Chairman Naveen Kumar. Speaking on the



occasion, they highlighted that despite lacking infrastructure, rural schools are producing talented students who are becoming IAS and IPS officers.“Chandrayya said that serving the poor and needy gives him immense satisfaction. Malla Reddy urged everyone to cultivate a spirit of service and emphasized the importance of patriotism, devotion, and social responsibility among youth.“The Ankita Foundation has been providing books, bags, shoes, and teaching aids to government schools in Vikarabad district. District Coordinator Prakash announced plans to provide bags to students in government schools across the district. Sarpanch Sreekanth pledged to work towards village development, transcending politics.“The event was attended by Yasa Venkat Ram Reddy, Karunam Malhari Rao, Vidya Committee Chairperson Swapna, former Chairman Mahipal Reddy, and other dignitaries.

Dommata Ravinder Helping Hand Geaved To The Sports Women

“Jan28, indian chronicle.medak.“in the medak district pragathi dharmaram village civil engineer dommata ravinder helping hand geaved to the 9 th standrd girl raghavi,she is selected state level kabaddi tournament, ravinder donated sports track and shoes, the young civil engineer ravunder conducted so many



programs in the village, pragathi dharmaram people aprecated ravinder service

Condolences on the Demise of Maharashtra Deputy Ajit Pawar Medchal District DC Member & MBC Chairman Ravindra Sagar

“Nacharam, Indian chornicle, January 28:“ Medchal District DC Member and MBC Chairman Ravindra Sagar expressed deep sorrow and heartfelt condolences over the demise of Maharashtra Deputy Ajit Pawar. He said that the passing away of Ajit Pawar is an irreparable loss to public life and the political fraternity. Remembering his contributions, Ravindra Sagar noted



that Ajit Pawar played a significant role in the development of Maharashtra and was known for his administrative experience and commitment to public service.“He conveyed his sympathies to the bereaved family members, party colleagues, and supporters, and prayed for the departed soul to rest in peace. Ravindra Sagar also wished strength and courage to the family to bear this profound loss during this difficult time.

Congress leaders protested against the removal of the name of the father of the nation Gandhiji from the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Scheme

“AICC in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan and PCC president Mahesh Kumar Goud were the chief guests“Jan 28.indian chronicle.medak“ After removing the name of the father of the nation from the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Scheme, the Congress leaders started a protest in Korivi Pally, Mynampalli hometown of Medak District, Chinna Sankarampet Mandal. On the second day of February 2005, Sonia Gandhi, the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, started this scheme in Bandlapalli village of Anantapur district. AICC in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan expressed her anger at the removal of Gandhiji’s name due to the trend. She said that when the Congress party will stand by the poor people, today the Prime Minister of Bharatiya Janata Party, Narendra Modi and Amit Shah are acting like dictators. Natarajan informed that the President of Pradesh Congress Committee Mahesh Kumar Goud, former



Rajya Sabha members Hanumantha Rao, spokesperson PCC spokesperson Eravathi Anil Kumar PCC spokesperson Prabhakar Ali Khan Medak MLAs Mynampalli Rohit Medak District Congress President Anjaneyulu Goud, Chairman Granthala. Suhasini Reddy, Narsapur in-charge Avula Rajireddy, Dubbaka in-charge Cheruku Srinivas Reddy, sarpanches, sub-sarpanches and Congress workers participated.

After Gurgaon civic body forms area sabhas' for accountability, RWAs rue 'exclusion' from process

GNS News Agency, Jan 28

The Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) on January 20 constituted 117 'Area Sabhas' across its 36 wards under the Haryana Municipal Citizens' Participation Act to enhance public involvement in local governance and service delivery. In an official order, the MCG divided each ward into 3-4 Area Sabhas (4 if the population exceeded 35,000) based on polling booths from the latest electoral rolls and voter numbers. Each Sabha comprises all registered voters in its area as members, with a municipal corporation employee appointed as Member Secretary to coordinate activities. Residents welfare associations (RWAs), however, said excluding them from the process will be detrimental and should have been avoided. "Who is representing residents at grassroots? Us. The area sabhas under MCG should simply also include the rwa presidents, as long as proper audit are done and ready like with The Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority's (GMDA) Residents Advisory Council. If any tom dick harry is chosen, how will they represent issues facing so many people", Chaitali Mandhotra, co-convenor of United Gurugram RWAs, an umbrella forum of over 60 RWAs, said.

She added that the MCG was totally ignoring the lowest level of governance with such a move. "Every ward in Gurgaon is huge. There are more than 10 RWAs in most of them. We are openly raising issues, which they perhaps don't want, they want tick boxes to show citizens' participation. Having every voter as member is such a big joke — the Act does not call for it. The policy and act should change to include RWAs otherwise Gurgaon will be in an even worse disaster. Right now, they do not want to find solutions when

we have been working on them for years", she said. "Decentralisation is most welcome, but it should be done properly. RWAs knowing about their areas can micromanage, so they cannot be excluded. There isn't any much clarity on the role of councillors. How will the sabhas understand the issues of citizens? RWA will know specific issues, without them they cannot be fixed", said Kusum Sharma, chairperson of Suncity RWA. When contacted, MCG Commissioner Pradeep Dahiya said the move is purely for accountability, and the area sabhas are in line with statutory and constitutional mandates for decentralisation. "The State government had asked us to form them for identifying and finalising beneficiaries of different schemes, apart from their other functions. No RWA needs to feel threatened. Every citizen can contribute including RWA members, their powers and autonomy are not being taken away in any manner. As per the Act, Area Sabhas are tasked with generating development proposals and prioritising schemes, verifying eligible beneficiaries for government programs, suggesting locations for civic amenities like streetlights and sanitation units, identifying service deficiencies and remedial measures, assisting public health initiatives, including epidemic reporting, mobilizing voluntary labor and contributions for projects, and supporting tax mapping while reminding residents of payment obligations. "The formation of area sabhas will increase citizens' participation in identifying local problems, finding solutions, and monitoring development works. This will strengthen transparency, accountability, and better urban governance. Citizens should actively cooperate in city development through area sabhas", an MCG spokesperson stated.

SAD to hold rallies in assembly constituencies from February

GNS News Agency, Jan 28

Cheema said the SAD would launch a people's movement against the anti-Punjab policies and decisions of the AAP government. Cheema said the SAD would launch a people's movement against the anti-Punjab policies and decisions of the AAP government. The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) Saturday announced it would hold rallies in all assembly constituencies of the state from next month onwards, at a meeting presided over by Sukhbir Singh Badal at SAD's Chandigarh office. The rallies would be held to tell Punjabis about the party's role in the state's development as well as its vision for the state ahead of the 2027 polls. This decision was taken at a meeting of the district presidents and constituency in-charge of the party.

Senior leader Daljit Singh Cheema said, "Sukhbir Singh Badal emphasised at the meeting that the successive SAD governments had carried out unprecedented development in the state — be it making the state power surplus, connecting all major cities with four lane roads, establishing new thermal plants and airports to overhauling rural infrastructure. "The previous Congress government and the present AAP government had failed to create any new infrastructure due to which the state had suffered immensely. "We are committed to restarting a new era of development and infrastructure creation to take Punjab forward," Cheema said.

Cheema said the SAD would launch a people's movement against the anti-Punjab policies and decisions of the AAP government. "We assure Punjabis that we will take the state out of the lawlessness, ensure peace and communal harmony, and bring investment to create jobs for our youth." The meeting also decided to complete the entire organisational structure by February 10. It was said that booth level committees would be completed by then including the constitution of all party wings such as the Youth Akali Dal, Istri Akali Dal, Scheduled Caste, Backward Caste and Trade wings. The leaders who played an important role



in the recent Block Samiti and Zila Parishad elections would get an important role in the structure.

Cheema said the meeting took a strong note of the manner in which Panchayats were being coerced into paying the pending bills of the Tubewell Corporation. "We support all Panchayats who are resisting these illegal orders as the central funds which are earmarked for roads, sanitation, drinking water and street lighting cannot be used for paying water supply bills." SAD leaders alleged that a fraud was being played in the name of the Mukh Mantri Sehat Bima Yojana scheme launched by the AAP. Cheema said the government was indulging in gimmicks by making grand announcements when it did not have any money to implement the medical insurance scheme. The senior leader also said the scheme was being used as a ploy to collect data for the AAP to use in the forthcoming Vidhan Sabha elections. The meeting also condemned the fact that eight per cent non-Sikh voters were registered for the forthcoming elections to the Patna Sahib Gurdwara Board. It demanded an independent probe into the derogatory remarks made by Delhi AAP leader Atishi against the Guru Sahiban. Amarjit Singh Chawla, Arshdeep Singh Kler, Bikram Singh Allahbakh and other SAD leaders were also present at the meeting.

ODOC initiative to become strength of UP, promote local cuisine at global level: CM



GNS News Agency, Jan 28

Highlighting the 'One District, One Cuisine' (ODOC) initiative, launched by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said one traditional food item each from 75 districts will become the new strength of the state and help promote local cuisine at the global level. Addressing the UP Diwas ceremony at Rashtra Prerna Sthal in Lucknow, Adityanath said, "Today, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has launched the 'One District, One Cuisine' (ODOC) scheme under which hygienic and nutritious food items can be made available to people, local products can be geo-tagged, and enable branding, packaging and designing of local cuisines in line with domestic and global demand, opening up export opportunities for traditional dishes from across the state."

Speaking about the state's foundation day celebrations, the chief minister said, "This event is being held along with Rashtriya Prerna Sthal in all 75 districts of the state and many other places. People from Uttar Pradesh living elsewhere in the country or abroad can associate themselves with this event. When Uttar Pradesh organised its foundation day program for the first time in 2018, Governor Ram Naik was there and Union Minister Amit Shah was the BJP National President. "The chief minister referred to a message sent by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying the country has witnessed a "transformed India over the past 11 years under Modi's leadership" and that Uttar Pradesh had played a key role in that journey. He then read out the prime minister's letter from the stage, in which PM Modi praised Uttar Pradesh's rich heritage, development trajectory, improving infrastructure and public facilities. The chief minister also congratulated five individuals who were honoured with the 'Uttar Pradesh Gaurav Samman' for their distinctive contributions, saying their work reflected innovation and dedication aligned with the prime minister's 'Viksit Bharat' mission. Adityanath announced the launch of a new

youth-focused initiative, the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Employment and Industrial Zone, to be inaugurated by Shah. "Under the scheme, around 100 acres would be developed in each district to support skill development, employment and entrepreneurship by aligning youths' abilities with job and business opportunities," he said.

The event was attended by BJP's Uttar Pradesh unit president Pankaj Chaudhary, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, among others. Meanwhile, five District Magistrates were honoured for best performance under 'CM YUVA' scheme. They are Dr Dinesh Chandra, DM Jaunpur, Ravindra Kumar, DM Azamgarh, Anunay Jha, DM Hardoi, Anupam Shukla, DM Ambedkarnagar, and Mridul Chaudhary, DM Jhansi. Under the theme 'Viksit Bharat-Viksit Uttar Pradesh', five individuals were honoured with Rs 11 lakh, an angavastram, a memento, and a citation.

'A guide for emerging surgeons': Book on paediatric bladder exstrophy released by joint India-US team

A JOINT team of paediatric surgeons from the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital and Cincinnati Children's Hospital on Saturday released their book on 'Bladder Exstrophy' and complex surgical interventions of the urinary tract in children. This book, compiled and published after being worked on for two years, contains cases based on 18 years of workshops conducted by the two hospitals in Ahmedabad, India. The book was released by Dr Rakesh Joshi, HOD of Pediatric Surgery at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital and Dr Aseem Shukla of Cincinnati Children's Hospital. A statement from the team on Saturday said, "This book, which is a summary of the experiences of the 18-year-long Bladder Exstrophy Workshop, will be a guide for new and emerging paediatric surgeons in the treatment of children with complex diseases. This 450-page book has been compiled keeping in mind the success and international response of the Bladder Exstrophy Surgical Workshop being run at Civil Hospital for the last 18 years with a team of international experts and aims to inform surgeons from all over the world about modern treatment methods.

Roots in air, returns of Rs 1 crore: A Bathinda farmer cultivates potato seeds without soil



GNS News Agency, Jan 28

At a time when Punjab's agriculture is grappling with shrinking farm incomes, rising input costs and an overdependence on the wheat-paddy cycle, Ramandeep Singh, a small farmer, is quietly scripting a high-tech success story by growing seed potatoes in the air instead of conventional soil-based methods. The 30-year-old farmer from Maur Khurd village in Bathinda district, in the very first year of cultivation through aeroponic potato seed production, has achieved a turnover of over Rs 1 crore.

Ramandeep's father, Sarabjit Singh, owns only four acres of land, traditionally devoted to wheat and paddy seed production. Out of which, the 30-year-old has converted just 2.5 kanal of land — less than one-third of an acre — into a technology-driven venture that is redefining the economics of farming. He holds a BSc in Agriculture from Punjab Agricultural University (PAU, Ludhiana) and is currently pursuing an MSc in Plant Breeding. Instead of taking loans to settle abroad or selling family land, he chose to stay and invest a substantial amount in agriculture. The aeroponic facility includes high-tech greenhouses, dark chambers for root and tuber development, drying chambers, cold rooms and cold storage units, he informed. Plants are supported on specially designed sheets with holes, allowing roots to hang freely in the air, with proper systems for water and nutrient application. "This allows precise control over nutrients, water, temperature, moisture and disease, making it ideal for producing genetically pure, virus-free planting material," Ramandeep explained. "Like most farming families in Punjab, our livelihood revolved entirely around the wheat-paddy cycle. Three years ago, I realised that surviving in agriculture required moving beyond conventional crops and adopting advanced technologies," Ramandeep recalled. Instead of taking loans to settle abroad or selling family land, he chose to stay and invest a substantial amount in agriculture.

Ramandeep explored hydroponics and zeroed in on aeroponic potato seed production. The practice has the ability to generate high returns from a very small area and by the growing national demand for virus-free, early-generation potato seed. "I entered the aeroponic potato seed segment three years ago, producing Generation-0 (G-0) mini-tubers — the first and most critical link in the potato seed multiplication chain. These virus-free seeds are further multiplied into G-1, G-2 and G-3 generations, which ultimately form the backbone of commercial potato cultivation across India. "Only around eight per cent of India's potato seed requirement is currently met through organised, virus-free systems. This huge gap offers immense opportunities for farmers willing to invest in technology," Ramandeep explained. Punjab has for decades supplied quality seed potatoes to farmers across India, and new aeroponic seed potato technology could prove to be a game changer for India's seed supply system, he said.

The Bathinda facility is among the largest aeroponic potato seed units in the region. The Bathinda facility is

among the largest aeroponic potato seed units in the region. The total investment in the project so far ranges between Rs 1.65 crore and Rs 1.70 crore. Unlike many protected cultivation ventures, no government subsidy is available for aeroponic potato seed production, Ramandeep said. On the family's 2.5 kanal of land stands the aeroponic facility that houses double greenhouse units, each measuring 40x100 feet, with a combined production capacity of nearly one million G-0 mini-tubers per season. Depending on the variety, the G-0 produce alone is valued at over Rs 1 crore. When these tubers are multiplied into G-1 seed, their quantity increases nearly five-fold and the turnover rises to Rs 2-2.5 crore, he said. The greenhouses are covered with high-grade thermo-volatile poly sheets, designed to last nearly ten years. The cost also includes a fee for acquiring the technology under a technology transfer memorandum of understanding (MoU). The ICAR-Central Potato Research Institute (CPRI), Badshahpur, Jalandhar, has developed this technology and is now disseminating it to interested farmers by signing MoUs for technology transfer, while also providing technical guidance.

Ramandeep said, "We are grateful to Dr Sukhwinder Singh of CPRI, who developed this aeroponic technology and provided us with complete knowledge and support in setting up this facility." The unit became operational in 2023, Ramandeep said, adding that the first harvest was taken in early 2024. This is now the third year of production, and he has almost recovered the entire setup cost this year, earning over 50 per cent profit. Each fresh tissue culture plant, costing Rs 16 per plant, produces 70-80 mini-tubers... These are carefully plucked, dried, hardened and stored under controlled conditions. The planting cycle begins in October-November. After a month of growth, tuber formation starts. Harvesting begins in December and continues till April and even May. "G-0 mini-tubers are planted in open fields to produce G-1 seed, which is further multiplied into G-2 and G-3. Around 40,000 G-0 tubers are required per acre, which can produce nearly two lakh G-1 tubers... increases nearly five times at each stage, making early-generation seed extremely valuable." The unit became operational in 2023, Ramandeep said, adding that the first harvest was taken in early 2024. From one million G-0 tubers, nearly five million G-1 tubers are produced in around 25 acres of land through contract farming. Ramandeep supplies G-0 seed to farmers free of cost and later procures the entire produce at pre-agreed per-acre rates, paying farmers as per the contract. G-1 seed is sold at Rs 4-5 per tuber. After meeting all expenses, net annual profits range between 50 and 60 per cent. G-1 seed is further sown in over 100 acres to produce G-2 seed, and eventually across nearly 1,000 acres for G-3 seed through contract and direct farming. Ramandeep said the unit produces multiple varieties including Santana Fry and Dona Fry, chipping varieties like Chipsona-1, Chipsona-2 and LR, table varieties such as Diamond and Pukhraj. The Bathinda facility is among the largest aeroponic potato seed units in the region. "The initiative is already benefiting other small farmers, many of whom purchase G-0 seed in limited quantities and multiply it on small landholdings to produce seed for much larger acreage," said Sarabjit. However, Ramandeep cautions that the system is not for the unprepared. "Aeroponics requires high initial investment, technical understanding and constant monitoring. Even a minor pump failure or power outage must be avoided." Yet, he believes that with proper training and institutional support, aeroponics can be a game changer in the production of virus-free seed. "Once the chain is established, it becomes a long-term ecosystem involving farmers, seed producers and processing companies, and one can earn a high amount depending on one's reach and efforts."

'A guide for emerging surgeons': Book on paediatric bladder exstrophy released by joint India-US team



GNS News Agency, Jan 28

A JOINT team of paediatric surgeons from the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital and Cincinnati Children's Hospital on Saturday released their book on 'Bladder Exstrophy' and complex surgical interventions of the urinary tract in children. This book, compiled and published after being worked on for two years, contains cases based on 18 years of workshops conducted by the two hospitals in

Ahmedabad, India. The book was released by Dr Rakesh Joshi, HOD of Pediatric Surgery at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital and Dr Aseem Shukla of Cincinnati Children's Hospital. A statement from the team on Saturday said, "This book, which is a summary of the experiences of the 18-year-long Bladder Exstrophy Workshop, will be a guide for new and emerging paediatric surgeons in the treatment of children with complex diseases. This 450-page book has been compiled keeping in mind the success and international response of the Bladder Exstrophy Surgical Workshop being run at Civil Hospital for the last 18 years with a team of international experts and aims to inform surgeons from all over the world about modern treatment methods.

This book covers in detail the diagnosis of birth defects during pregnancy and delivery, their genetic risks and modern surgical approaches to correct the defects by leading doctors from all over the world. "Moreover, the details of innovative surgical techniques that reduce post-operative pain, minimise the patient's hospital stay and improve the appearance of the child even cosmetically after surgery make this book special for pediatric urologists worldwide," the statement added.

Govt notifies norms to skip test licences for drug R&D to boost ease of doing business

GNS News Agency, Jan 28

New Delhi: Pharma companies will no longer be required to seek a test licence and may proceed with pharmaceutical development upon submitting an online intimation to CDSCO, except in certain cases, as part of broad simplification notified by the Union Health Ministry. Union Health Ministry has notified key amendments to the New Drugs and Clinical Trials (NDCT) Rules, 2019, aimed at simplifying regulatory processes, reducing approval timelines, and enabling faster conduct of clinical research and pharmaceutical development in the country. The amendment is in line with the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reduce regulatory burden and promote Ease of Doing Business, the ministry said. Under the existing regulatory framework, pharmaceutical companies are required to obtain a test licence from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) for the manufacture of small quantities of drugs intended for examination, research, or analysis purposes. Through the notified amendments, this licensing requirement for non-commercial manufacture has been replaced with a prior-intimation mechanism. As a re-

sult, the industry will no longer be required to seek a test licence and may proceed with pharmaceutical development upon submitting an online intimation to CDSCO, except in the case of a limited category of high-risk drugs, including cytotoxic drugs, narcotic drugs, and psychotropic substances. This reform is expected to lead to a minimum saving of 90 days in the drug development life cycle, providing a significant boost to pharmaceutical research and innovation. Furthermore, for categories where test licences continue to be applicable, the statutory processing timeline has been reduced from 90 days to 45 days. Considering that CDSCO processes approximately 30,000 to 35,000 test licence applications annually, the reform is expected to substantially reduce regulatory burden and benefit a large number of stakeholders. In another important step to expedite clinical research, the requirement of obtaining prior permission for certain categories of low-risk Bioavailability/Bioequivalence (BA/BE) studies has been dispensed with. Such studies may now be initiated on the basis of a simple online intimation to CDSCO, enabling faster commencement of studies, particularly for the generic pharmaceutical industry.

'Right to dignified life': Haryana human rights panel orders Gurgaon authorities to remove encroachments at Sector 57



GNS News Agency, Jan 28

The complaint, filed last year by Roshan Lal Yadav, president of the Residents Welfare Association (RWA) of Sector 57, alleged ongoing illegal activities at the site despite previous interventions. The complaint, filed last year by Roshan Lal Yadav, president of the Residents Welfare Association (RWA) of Sector 57, alleged ongoing illegal activities at the site despite previous interventions. The Haryana Human Rights Commission (HHRC) recently directed the Gurgaon authorities to take immediate and permanent measures to remove encroachments and prevent the unlawful dumping and storage of building materials at a nursery school site at Sector 57. The sector is just 3 km away from the Golf Course Road. In its order issued by Chairperson Justice Lalit Batra on January 14 and made public Saturday, the Commission emphasised the need for sustained enforcement to avoid recurrence.

The complaint, filed last year by Roshan Lal Yadav, president of the Residents Welfare Association (RWA) of Sector 57, alleged ongoing illegal activities at the site despite previous interventions. During the hearing, Yadav informed the Commission that unauthorised dumping and storage of building materials continued, and he supported his claim with recent photographs sent via WhatsApp that showed persistent alleged encroachment and misuse of the land. The Commission reviewed multiple reports submitted in compliance with a previous order dated October 31, 2025. A report dated January 12 from the Municipal Corporation

of Gurgaon (MCG) stated that enforcement in Sector 57 had not been handed over to the MCG and that Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran (HSVP) itself handled all such activities in its sectors. A December police report stated that the people involved were instructed to shift operations to non-residential areas. Some complied, while others were in the process of doing so. The report listed five FIRs registered at the Sector 56 police station last year for offences under the Motor Vehicles Act, the Disaster Management Act, and for negligent acts that led to the spread of infections. Yadav, during the hearing, explained that while HSVP removed encroachments periodically, the same individuals re-encroached due to a lack of continuous monitoring, deterrent measures, and strict enforcement by the district administration.

During the hearing, DCP East Gaurav Rajpurohit was directed via teleconference to personally oversee the matter, ensure effective and time-bound steps for permanent removal of the encroachment, and prevent future illegal activities. He was also instructed to submit a detailed status report on the FIRs, including whether trials had commenced, and if not, the investigation status in each case. HSVP Administrator Vaishali Sharma, also contacted via teleconference, informed the Commission that a tender had been floated for barricading the area. In view of repeated encroachments, she was directed to implement robust protective measures, including the construction of RCC/CC boundary walls not less than 8 to 10 feet high, the erection of permanent iron grills or fencing where feasible, installation of prominent warning signboards stating "Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted", and reflective signage visible at night. Additional directives included exploring CCTV installation at vulnerable points, providing adequate lighting, demarcating the land with boundary pillars, and coordinating with local police for periodic patrolling and surprise inspections. Assistant Registrar Dr Puneet Arora stated that the Commission views encroachment on public land as a violation of citizens' right to a safe, clean, and dignified life, and not merely a law-and-order issue. Speaking with Yadav said HSVP officials had since visited the site again, and told him that work on the directions would commence soon.

Fishing in Tapi River, man & 9-year-old daughter killed as angle iron falls on boat



GNS News Agency, Jan 28

A MAN and his nine-year-old daughter were killed in Surat on Saturday as their boat overturned after a heavy angle iron fell on it even as work was underway on the under-construction bullet train bridge on the Tapi River. The Utran police identified the deceased as Mohsin Ikbai Shaikh (35) and his daughter Huma, 9. Police said the incident took place in the afternoon, when Mohsin, a resident of Badat street in Kathor village of Kamrej taluka in Surat, was engaged in fishing activities in the Tapi River along with his

mother Mumtaz Shaikh (55) and daughter. Construction work on a bridge – that will connect Kamrej with Kathor villages – as part of the bullet train project was also underway at the spot at the time, police said. The boat overturned after the angle iron fell on it, throwing all three persons overboard. Mumtaz raised an alarm. A press release issued by the NHRCL (National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited) later on Saturday said, "... a workman heard a distress call. Upon reaching the spot, he noticed a woman in the water. He took prompt action, jumped into the water and rescued the woman. During the rescue, it was reported that two more persons, who were in the same boat, had fallen into the water. In the meantime, some local fishermen reached the location, traced the other two persons and took out out of the water. Later, it was learnt both could not survive."

A police team also reached the spot and sent the bodies for post-mortem examination. Mumtaz's condition is stable, doctors said on Saturday evening. The release added that the NHRCL and its contractor are extending full cooperation to the police in the ongoing investigation. Inspector D U Barad said, "The girl died due to drowning and Mohsin suffered a head injury. We have registered an accidental death case and started a probe."

Amit Shah meets senior BJP leaders amid buzz over cabinet, organisational rejig

GNS News Agency, Jan 28

Amid buzz over a reshuffle in the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet and organisational changes in the state BJP unit, Union Home Minister Amit Shah held a closed-door meeting with senior leaders at the party headquarters in Lucknow on Saturday. On his way to the airport after inaugurating the UP Diwas ceremony at Rashtra Prerna Sthal, Shah held the meeting. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, his deputy Brajesh Pathak, party state president Pankaj Chaudhary, state general secretary (organisation) Dharampal Singh, and other state general secretaries were present in the meeting that lasted for about 30 minutes. "By holding the meeting with top functionaries of the government and party organisation, Shah has sent out a clear message that both the government and the party will have to work together over the next one year to ensure BJP victory for the third consecutive time in the state next year," said a BJP leader.

With the state elections scheduled next year, the reshuffle of the state cabinet is expected to accommodate new ministers to set the caste and regional equations right. Currently, both the chief minister and party state president are from Gorakhpur in Eastern UP. Also, Pankaj Chaudhary, who was elected state president in December, has to constitute the new state committee, regional committee, and district committees as soon as possible to set the organisation ahead of the assembly elections. Notably, those aspiring for a position in the state organisation as well as the state cabinet are making rounds of the state headquar-



ters in Lucknow and the central headquarters in Delhi. Meanwhile, the party has currently deployed the entire state organisation in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise of electoral rolls. After the end of the first phase, data showed that the state's predominantly urban districts are facing a higher number of voter deletions than their relatively rural counterparts, triggering concern among the party. The BJP central leadership has held several rounds of meetings with the state leaders regarding the electoral exercise. Lalmani is an Assistant Editor with The Indian Express, and is based in New Delhi. He covers politics of the Hindi Heartland, tracking BJP, Samajwadi Party, BSP, RLD and other parties based in UP, Bihar and Uttarakhand. Covered the Lok Sabha elections of 2014, 2019 and 2024; Assembly polls of 2012, 2017 and 2022 in

1 arrested, 4 minors held days after man found near railway underpass in East Delhi

A 22-year-old youth has been arrested and three juveniles apprehended in connection with the murder of a 25-year-old man whose body was found near a railway underpass in East Delhi's Preet Vihar last week, police said on Saturday. Police identified the arrested man as Aman, a resident of Mandawali, who has been booked previously in three criminal cases. The juveniles are in the 14 to 16 age group. Police said the deceased, Deva – originally from Rama Bai in Kanpur – who lived under a railway bridge in Mandawali, was allegedly involved in theft and snatching incidents along with the accused. A quarrel reportedly broke out over sharing of money between them. "In a fit of rage, the accused beat up Deva and also hit him with stones and knives, causing fatal injuries," said an officer.

The matter came to light on January 22, when a head

constable on patrol spotted the body near the railway underpass close to Hotel Mona International on PPG Road. The deceased, who was initially unidentified, was sent to Hedgewar Hospital for medico-legal examination and the body was kept at Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital mortuary. A murder case was registered at Preet Vihar police station under BNS. "Considering the gravity and blind nature of the case... multiple teams from the Anti-Narcotics Squad, Special Staff of the East district and the local police station were formed to trace the killers. The teams conducted extensive CCTV camera analysis and technical surveillance, tracing the movements of the deceased prior to the incident," said DCP (East) Abhishek Dhania. After the police identified the four suspects, Aman, during questioning, allegedly admitted that he was involved in the murder.

HC orders UP DGP to deal sternly with cops not disclosing ground of arrest in 'memo'



GNS News Agency, Jan 28

The Allahabad High Court has directed the Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) that police officials not disclosing the grounds of arrest to the accused in the prescribed document while making the arrest should be dealt strictly and shall face a departmental inquiry after suspension to stop them indulging in such "illegality".

The division bench of Justices Jai Krishna Upadhyay and Siddharth said in the order that the DGP had issued a circular on July 25 last year in the matter along with a "memo" that has to be filled during arrest. The bench observed... "his own Subordinate Officer of Police is not complying the same and therefore the purpose of new arrest memo having been made and circulated to all the police officers of the State has been frustrated". The directive was issued while hearing a habeas corpus writ petition for issuing a writ order or direction to the Gautam Buddha Nagar police to produce and release the petitioner, Umang Rastogi, from "illegal custody", while declaring his "arrest, detention and remand as illegal, null and void".

The petitioner also prayed for issuing a writ order quashing the remand order passed by Civil Judge (SD) FTC/ACJM, Gautam Buddha Nagar. According to the petitioner, his father, a permanent resident of Haldwani, Uttarakhand, was "abducted" by the Bistrakh police station (Gautam Buddha Nagar) station house officer (SHO) from their business premises at Laxmi Nagar in Delhi and was kept in illegal custody for 5 days. During his illegal detention, evidence was fabricated and an FIR was registered against his father under Section 317(2) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita on December 3, 2025, it was alleged. After the petitioner's father filed a writ petition in the Delhi High Court, the police on December 26, 2025, arrested Umang Rastogi from Haldwani without disclosing to him the ground of his arrest, it was further claimed.

Umang Rastogi was produced in the Gautam Buddha Nagar district court the next day seeking his remand but was not given a copy of the arrest memo, he said. His counsel moved an application in the local court seeking his release, but it was rejected. Then they approached the High Court challenging the remand order dated December

27. Justifying Umang Rastogi's arrest, the additional advocate general argued that the petitioner had a "criminal history" with six cases and he did not deserve any leniency from the court.

The division bench, however, said, "After considering the pleadings of the parties and the rival submissions, we find that the crux of the dispute between the parties is that the petitioner was arrested without disclosure of grounds of arrest in the arrest memo brought on record and it was also not supplied to him though his signature was taken thereon." "The grounds of arrest must be informed to every person arrested. The ground of arrest should be furnished to the arrestee in writing. Breach of any such requirements will render the arrest of arrestee illegal," the court added. "Earlier there was no definite pro forma of memorandum of arrest in the state of Uttar Pradesh and the investigating officer used to make his own memo of arrest and arrest of accused was made on its basis. Finding total anarchy in this regard, this court passed number of orders and thereafter the DGP office UP, got a proforma of arrest memo prepared and the same was directed to be circulated to all the Police Commissioners, SSPs/SPs, AIGs, zonal AIGs, DIGs were informed about the new arrest memo by the circular of the DGP issues on July 25, 2025," the bench stated. It further said, "The direction of the Director General of Police clearly amounts to dereliction of duty on the part of the police personnel investigating this case. The empty compliance of law and justification of the same before the court, as in this case by the respondents, deserves to be discouraged." It said, "In the instant matter, admittedly, no such effort had been made by the learned Magistrate to ensure adequate legal aid to the accused petitioner and appropriate opportunity of hearing at the time of judicial remand. Even the arrest memo does not contain any column regarding grounds of arrest of the petitioner." It further observed, "No details of the material collected by the investigating officer, till the time of arrest of petitioner, which necessitated his arrest was disclosed. Details of other material collected, documentary or electronic, relating to person arrested was also not disclosed. Even the details of sections of B.N.S.S and other laws, their supporting material and evidence collected against the arrested accused were not disclosed in the arrest memo. Therefore, it is clear that the arrest of the petitioner was absolutely illegal. The purpose of preparing the arrest memo was frustrated by the Sub-Inspector of Police." The court ordered, "In such view of the matter, the impugned order dated 26.12.2024 is hereby set aside. The arrest of the petitioner is also quashed. The petitioner shall be set at liberty, unless required in connection with any other case." The bench directed that the "order be communicated to Director General of Police, Uttar Pradesh through Registrar General of this Court and accordingly, a circular be issued to all the Commissioners of Police / SSPs/ SPs for necessary compliance in the light of the observations made".

EC publishes 1.5 crore voter names on list of 'logical discrepancies'

GNS News Agency, Jan 28

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Saturday published a list of 1.50 crore names for hearing in connection with the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Out of them, 30 lakh names have been categorised as "unmapped voters" meaning they have no link with the last SIR conducted in 2002, and 1.20 crore names with logical discrepancies. According to the EC sources, the list has been published for Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and District Election Officers (DEOs), who will take printouts of the list and display it at various locations as per the Supreme Court guidelines. A senior ECI official stated that the commission had aimed to publish the list by Saturday night. "However, it was not mandatory to publish a list within January 24. The Supreme Court did not govern any such deadline," a senior official of the EC said. The Supreme Court had on January 19 issued a set of directions to the Election Commission to ensure that the verification of the persons put in the 'logical discrepancies' category is conducted in a transparent manner, without causing stress and inconvenience to the persons. It had also directed the EC to display the names of those on the "logical discrepancies" list at gram panchayat bhavans, block offices of talukas and ward offices in West Bengal. The court noted that about 1.25 crore notices have been sent to various persons, citing discrepancies such as mismatch in parents' names, low age-gap with parents, number of progeny exceeding six. The Supreme Court also clarified that persons, who have received notices from the EC, will be entitled to submit their documents/objections through their authorised agents, who can be the Booth Level Agents (BLAs). The agents have to be



appointed through a letter marked with a signature or thumb impression.

Taking into consideration the concerns expressed by the petitioners, that persons will have to travel hundreds of kilometres to respond to the notices, the Supreme Court directed that the office for submitting the documents/objections shall be set up within the Panchayat Bhavan/Block offices. If the documents are found to be unsatisfactory, the election officers should give the persons an opportunity of hearing, which can be attended by the authorised agent. According to sources, some districts had already published a hearing list after the Supreme Court verdict. "Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) ordered DEOs that no one can publish the list because it will be published by ECI centrally. Those who have already published lists locally, CEO asked DEOs to withdraw such lists because that can create confusions."

Shiv Sena (UBT) corporators from Kalyan East untraceable, party leaders claim they have filed missing complaint

GNS News Agency, Jan 28

The formal group registration of corporators was held at the Konkan divisional commissioner's office, where corporators from the Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the MNS were present together. The formal group registration of corporators was held at the Konkan divisional commissioner's office, where corporators from the Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the MNS were present together. Four newly elected corporators of the Shiv Sena (UBT) from Kalyan East have been untraceable for the past few days, prompting the party's district leadership to approach the police, claimed a Sena UBT leader.

The missing persons complaint was lodged at Kolsewadi police station in Kalyan by Shiv Sena (UBT) district chief Sharad Patil, who sought a technical probe into the matter, including examination of CCTV footage and call detail records, the party leaders claimed.

Patil said that two of the four corporators fall within his jurisdiction, and that concern for their safety led him to formally approach the police. "After instructions from the party leadership, we decided to lodge a complaint. If the corporators are safe, they should come forward and clarify their position before the media," he said. The development comes amid heightened political activity in the Kalyan-Dombivli Municipal Corporation (KDMC) following post-election realignments. Earlier this week, five corporators of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), led by Raj



Thackeray, extended support to the Shiv Sena headed by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, strengthening the ruling alliance's numbers in the civic body. The formal group registration of corporators was held at the Konkan divisional commissioner's office, where corporators from the Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the MNS were present together.

The move altered the post-poll arithmetic and added momentum to negotiations over the mayor's post. In the recently held KDMC elections, the Shinde-led Shiv Sena emerged as the largest party with 53 seats, followed by the BJP with 50. The Shiv Sena (UBT) secured 11 seats, while the MNS won five, Congress two and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP one, in the 122-member House.

Top General Zhang Youxia threatened Chinese Communist Party's leadership over military: PLA Daily



GNS News Agency, Jan 28

Beijing: PLA Daily, the mouthpiece of the Chinese military, has accused top military official Zhang Youxia and senior General Liu Zhenli of threatening the Communist Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces as one of the reasons why they were placed under investigation. They have severely fuelled political and corruption problems that threaten the Communist Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces and undermine the party's governance foundation, an editorial in People's Daily said on Sunday. The two senior Chinese military officials were placed under investigation for serious violations of the ruling Communist Party's discipline and laws, the Defence Ministry here said on Saturday.

The charge of threatening the party's absolute leadership is regarded as "very serious" as the Chinese military functioned under the command of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which exercises absolute control of the armed forces. Ever since he took over the leadership in 2012, President Xi Jinping, 72, who also heads the party, the military besides the presidency has been emphasising that it is imperative for the military to function under the party leadership. The party holds the gun, he has been persistently reminding the military generals. Observers say the emphasis of party loyalty also means endorsing his absolute leadership as he has been declared as the core leader of the party and action against Zhang 75, came as Xi may regard the top general undermining his leadership.

Unlike the other generals, Zhang is the first-ranking Vice Chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high command of the Chinese military headed by Xi. Zhang's position on the CMC makes him the highest-ranking uniformed officer in the Chinese military. In the end, his fate is no different to the two defence ministers and eight other generals who were sacked since

2023 under his watch as he too was detained by the military corruption investigators on Monday, according to reports. He was accused of corruption and of failing to rein in his close associates, family members and relatives and blamed for not flagging problems to the party leadership at the first instance, the charges against him said. Foreign observers view the intensification and continuation of anti-graft and disciplinary crackdown against the top brass of the military as aimed at unsettling the higher echelons and keeping them on tenterhooks. The PLA Daily editorial said the decision made by the CPC Central Committee to investigate Zhang and Liu has once again demonstrated the clear stance of the CPC Central Committee and the CMC that in the fight against corruption, no place is out of bounds, no ground is left unturned and no tolerance is allowed.

It shows the determination of the party to persevere in the fight against corruption and the firm stand that no matter who they are or what position they hold, anyone involved in corruption will be dealt with without leniency, it said. The editorial carried by state-run Xinhua news agency hailed the investigation as a major outcome of the anti-corruption fight and an important demonstration of the determination and strength of the party and the military, adding that it carries great significance for winning this tough, protracted and all-out battle in the military. Zhang and Liu, as senior officials of the party and the military, have gravely betrayed the trust placed in them by the CPC Central Committee and the CMC, and seriously trampled on and undermined the system of ultimate responsibility resting with the CMC chairman, the PLA Daily says. They have severely fuelled political and corruption problems that threaten the party's absolute leadership over the armed forces and undermine the party's governance foundation, according to the editorial. They have gravely tarnished the image and authority of the CMC leadership and severely damaged the political and ideological foundation of unity and progress among all military personnel, it said. They have inflicted grave harm on efforts to strengthen political loyalty in the military, the military's political environment and overall combat readiness, posing a serious adverse impact on the party, the country and the military, it said. The investigation against Zhang and Liu will help the military undergo a thorough renewal, injecting powerful momentum into the development of a strong military, it said. It has been well demonstrated that the more the military combats corruption, the stronger and purer it becomes, with greater combat capacity. The more thoroughly corruption is eradicated, the more confident and capable the armed forces will be in achieving the centenary goals of the PLA, says the editorial.

Protesters demand immigration agents leave Minneapolis after man is shot and killed during crackdown



GNS News Agency, Jan 28

Minneapolis: Democrats demanded that federal immigration officers leave Minnesota after a US Border Patrol agent fatally shot a man in Minneapolis, drawing hundreds of protesters onto the frigid streets and increasing tensions in a city already shaken by another shooting death weeks earlier. Family members identified the man who was killed as Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old intensive care unit nurse who protested President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown in his city. After the shooting, an angry crowd gathered and protesters clashed with federal officers, who wielded batons and deployed flash bangs. The Minnesota National Guard was assisting local police at the direction of Gov. Tim Walz, officials said. Guard troops were sent to both the shooting site and a federal building where officers have squared off with demonstrators daily.

Information about what led up to the shooting was limited, Police Chief Brian O'Hara said. Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement that federal officers were conducting an operation and fired "defensive shots" after a man with a handgun approached them and "violently resisted" when they tried to disarm him.

In bystander videos of the shooting that emerged soon after, Pretti is seen with a phone in his hand but none appears to show him with a visible weapon. O'Hara said police believe he was a "lawful gun owner with a permit to carry." DHS Secretary Kristi Noem said during a news conference that Pretti had shown up to "impede a law enforcement operation." She questioned why he was armed but did not offer details about whether Pretti drew the weapon or brandished it at officers. The officer who shot him is an eight-year Border Patrol veteran, federal officials said. The president weighed in on social media by lashing out at Walz and the Minneapolis mayor.

He shared images of the gun that immigration officials said was recovered and said: "What is that all about? Where are the local Police? Why weren't they allowed to protect ICE Officers?" Trump, a Republican, said the Democratic governor and mayor are "are inciting Insurrection, with their pompous, dangerous, and arrogant rhetoric." Republican Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York was among several Democratic lawmakers demanding federal immigration authorities leave Minnesota. She also urged Democrats to refuse to vote to fund US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, saying via social media: "We have a responsibility to protect Americans from tyranny." Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer later said that Democrats will not vote for a spending package that includes money for DHS, which oversees ICE. Schumer's statement increases the possibility that the government could partially shut down January 30 when funding runs out. Pretti was shot just over a mile from where an ICE officer killed 37-year-old Renee Good on January 7, sparking widespread protests. Pretti's family released a statement Saturday evening saying they are "heartbroken but also very angry" and calling him a kind-hearted soul who wanted to make a difference in the world

through his work as a nurse. "The sickening lies told about our son by the administration are reprehensible and disgusting. Alex is clearly not holding a gun when attacked by Trump's murdering and cowardly ICE thugs.

He has his phone in his right hand and his empty left hand is raised above his head while trying to protect the woman ICE just pushed down all while being pepper sprayed," the family statement said. "Please get the truth out about our son. He was a good man." In a bystander video obtained by The Associated Press, protesters are heard blowing whistles and shouting profanities at federal officers on Nicollet Avenue. An officer shoves a person who is wearing a brown jacket, skirt and black tights and carrying a water bottle. That person reaches out for a man, and the two link up, embracing. The man, wearing a brown jacket and black hat, seems to be holding his phone up toward the officer. The same officer shoves the man in his chest and the two, still embracing, fall back. The video shifts to a different part of the street and then comes back to the two individuals unlinking from each other. It shifts focus again and then shows three officers surrounding the man. Soon at least seven officers surround him. One is on his back, and another who appears to have a canister in his hand strikes a blow to his chest. Several officers try to bring the man's arms behind his back as he appears to resist. As they pull his arms, his face is briefly visible. The officer with the canister strikes him near his head several times.

A shot rings out, but with officers surrounding the man, it's not clear where it came from. Multiple officers back off. More shots are heard. Officers back away, and the man lies motionless on the street. The police chief appealed for calm, both from the public and from federal law enforcement. "Our demand today is for those federal agencies that are operating in our city to do so with the same discipline, humanity and integrity that effective law enforcement in this country demands," the chief said. "We urge everyone to remain peaceful." Gregory Bovino of US Border Patrol, who has commanded the administration's big-city immigration campaign, said the officer who shot the man had extensive training as a range safety officer and in using less-lethal force. "This is only the latest attack on law enforcement. Across the country, the men and women of DHS have been attacked, shot at," he said. Walz said he had no confidence in federal officials and the state would lead the investigation into the shooting. But Drew Evans, superintendent of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, said during a news conference that federal officers blocked his agency from the scene even after it obtained a signed judicial warrant. Demonstrations broke out in several cities across the country including New York, Washington and Los Angeles. In Minneapolis, protesters converged at the scene of the shooting in Minneapolis despite dangerously cold weather — by the afternoon the worst of an extreme cold wave was over, but the temperature was still -6 degrees (-21 Celsius). An angry crowd gathered after the shooting and screamed profanities at federal officers, calling them "cowards" and telling them to go home. One officer responded mockingly as he walked away, telling them: "Boo hoo." Agents elsewhere shoved a yelling protester into a car. Protesters dragged garbage dumpsters from alleyways to block streets, and people chanted "ICE out now" and "Observing ICE is not a crime." As dark fell hundreds of people mourned quietly by a growing memorial at the site of the shooting. Some carried signs saying "Justice for Alex Pretti." Others chanted Pretti's and Good's names. A doughnut shop and a clothing store nearby stayed open, offering protesters a warm place as well as water, coffee and snacks. Caleb Spike said he came from a nearby suburb to show his support and his frustration. "It feels like every day something crazier happens," he said. "What's happening in our community is wrong, it's sickening, it's disgusting."

Hindu man burnt alive while sleeping in Bangladesh's Narsingdi amid rising violence against minorities



GNS News Agency, Jan 28

Dhaka: A horrifying act of violence against a Hindu minority member has shocked Bangladesh, coming just weeks ahead of the national elections as a 23-year-old Hindu man, identified as Chanchal Chandra Bhowmik, was reportedly burned alive while sleeping in a garage in Narsingdi, around 50 km from Dhaka, raising renewed fears over the security of minority communities in the Muslim-majority nation. Bhowmik, son of Khokan Chandra Bhowmik and a resident of Lakshampur village in Cumilla district, worked at a garage located in the Khanabari Mosque Market area near Narsingdi Police Lines. According to local media reports, he had finished his work on Friday night and fell asleep inside the garage when unidentified attackers set

the premises ablaze. With large quantities of petrol, engine oil, and other inflammable materials stored in the garage, the fire spread rapidly, leaving Bhowmik trapped.

Authorities have seized CCTV footage from nearby cameras that reportedly captured the attackers in action, but the culprits have not yet been identified. A police official said, "The police are conducting a thorough investigation, considering the seriousness of the case. We have recovered the body and seized the CCTV footage. Several police teams are working to identify and arrest the culprits."

Bangladesh's Hindu population is estimated at 13.13 million, accounting for nearly 8 per cent of the country's total population, according to the 2022 census. In recent weeks, violence against Hindus has been rising, prompting India to express concerns over the safety of its minority community in the neighbouring country. The attack on Bhowmik comes shortly after several other incidents targeting Hindus. Last week, a Hindu sweetshop owner in Gazipur district was beaten to death while defending an employee from an assault. In the same period, a Hindu household was set on fire in Sylhet district, and a Hindu autorickshaw driver was stabbed to death in Feni district. These incidents underscore the growing fears of minority communities in Bangladesh, particularly ahead of the upcoming elections, as the government faces scrutiny over its ability to protect vulnerable populations from extremist violence.

Last 2 pandas in Japan are leaving for China as ties are strained



Tokyo: Japanese panda fans gathered on Sunday for the final public viewing at Tokyo's Ueno zoo before twins Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei return to China this week. Their departure on Tuesday will leave Japan with no pandas for the first time in half a century, and the chances of getting a replacement are poor, with Tokyo's relations with Beijing at their lowest point in years. China first sent pandas to Japan in 1972, a gift meant to mark the normalisation of diplomatic ties between the two wary neighbours. The cuddly black-and-white bears immediately won Japanese hearts, and a dozen successors have become national celebrities. The latest departing panda twins have attracted massive crowds despite a one-minute viewing limit per visitor in the panda zone set by the zoo. Visitors, many of them carrying panda-themed toys, call out the bears' names and use smartphones to capture them as they nibble bamboo and stroll around. Many of those who couldn't get panda viewing tickets still came to the zoo anyway to mark the last day. Longtime panda fan Michiko Seki, in a panda-patterned black-and-white shirt, said she was happy to see and photograph the twins looking healthy and eating well. She was using the same camera she had bought when she started taking photos of their elder sister Xian Xian, who left Japan two years ago.

Seki says she doesn't want to see pandas stuck in the diplomatic row. "They are the animals that can provide tremendous comfort," she said. "Japan needs pandas, and (I) hope politicians will work something out." Beijing lends pandas to other countries but maintains ownership, including over any cubs they produce. Xiao Xiao and his sister Lei Lei were born in the Ueno zoo in 2021. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun, asked about China sending new pandas to Japan, said: "I know giant pandas are loved by many in Japan, and we welcome Japanese friends to come visit them in China." A devoted panda fan takes millions of photos. Web engineer Takahiro Takaiji's days revolve around pandas. It started 15 years ago when he visited the Ueno Zoological Gardens and fell in love with the twin pandas' parents, Shin Shin and Ri Ri, soon after their arrival from China. "Their shape and the way they move are honestly so cute and funny," he said at his home near Tokyo. "Sometimes they are baby-like; at other times they act like an old man."

A daily zoo visit has since become essential. He has taken more than 10 million photos of the pandas and published a number of panda photo books. On a recent afternoon, Takaiji was among thousands who entered a competitive online booking system to see the pandas one last time. During the one-minute viewing session, Takaiji held

his camera high above the other fans and took as many as 5,000 still shots to capture every motion of Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei. Back at home, in a room adorned with dozens of panda mascots and ornaments, Takaiji carefully went through his fresh photos from the day and uploaded them to his blog, "Every Day Pandas." Having seen the twins since birth, he considers them "just like my own children." "I never imagined there would come a day when pandas would be gone from Japan," he says.

Ties are strained between Tokyo and Beijing. Japan has faced increasing political, trade and security tensions with China, which was angered by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's recent remarks that potential Chinese action against Taiwan, the self-governing democratic island Beijing claims as its own, could spark Japanese intervention. Ties between Japan and China have been fraught since the Japanese aggression in the 19th century. There are still territorial disputes in the East China Sea as China's rise is accompanied by security threats and increasing economic influence in the region. Japan's top government spokesperson, Minoru Kihara, acknowledged on Thursday that the Japanese Consulate in Chongqing has been without a consul for a month because China has delayed approval of a replacement. Pandas have long been part of Chinese diplomacy.

Giant pandas, native to southwestern China, serve as an unofficial mascot. Beijing lends them to other countries as a sign of goodwill and as part of research and conservation programs. The first pair of pandas, Kang Kang and Lan Lan, that China gifted to Japan, arrived in Ueno on Oct. 28, 1972. It was one month after Japan's prime minister at the time, Kakuei Tanaka, and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai signed a joint communique normalising ties between the countries. Japan noted it "fully understands and respects" China's claim on Taiwan as "an inalienable part" of its territory. China also gifted the first giant pandas around that time to other Western nations, including the United States, France, Britain and Germany. China switched to leasing programs in the 1980s, with participating overseas zoos paying annual fees for habitat conservation or scientific research to benefit the species.

Japan has seen panda diplomacy turn political. A plan to bring a panda to Japan's northern city of Sendai after the 2011 quake and tsunami disaster was shelved in the wake of a 2012 territorial dispute. Pandas are beloved in Japan. Panda images appear in and outside of the Ueno zoo on cookies and sweets, stuffed dolls, stationery and photo books. Panda statues sit outside a train station. A department store has a section dedicated to panda goods. "Pandas are a symbol of Ueno, a star," said Asao Ezure, manager of a souvenir shop. "We worry how the pandas' absence will affect us." Showing a cartoon of Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei on a shop signboard, Ezure says he believes that pandas will come back. "So we are not going to change the signboard." The absence of pandas at the zoo would cause an annual loss of about 20 billion yen (\$128 million), according to Katsuhiko Miyamoto, an economics professor at Kansai University. "If the situation continues for several years, the negative economic impact of having no pandas is expected to reach tens of billions of yen," Miyamoto said in a statement. "For panda-loving Japanese, including myself, I hope they return as soon as possible."

India decimates New Zealand in Under-19 World Cup

Bulawayo: Skipper Ayush Mhatre's 27-ball 53 underlined India's another dominant show as they notched a crushing seven-wicket victory via DLS method over New Zealand in the U-19 World Cup here on Saturday. An all-round India won a truncated game of 37-overs-per-side with complete ease, stamping their authority in the competition with another big victory. Chasing a revised target of 130, India made 130 for three in a mere 13.3 overs to record their third consecutive win and top Group B. RS Ambrish (8-1-29-4) and Henu Patel (7.2-1-23-3) led the bowling charge early for India who had asked New Zealand to bat first in damp conditions of the rain-truncated game.

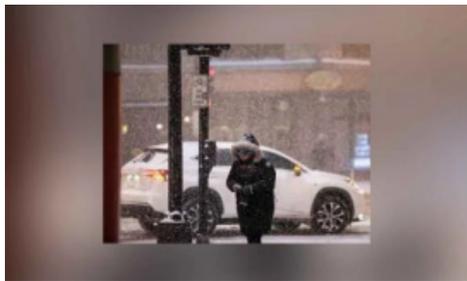
New Zealand were reduced to 69 for 7 as Indian bowlers continued to strike right from the word go, and eventually bowled the Kiwis out for 135 in 36.2 overs. Snehit Reddy (10) was the only New Zealand batter among the top five to score in double digits. Even as the lower-order resisted, New Zealand never had enough runs on the board.

Jacob Cotter (23), Callum Samson (37) and Selwin Sanjay (28) added some valuable late runs for New Zealand but none of them could impose themselves against the Indians, for whom the trio of Khilan Patel, Mohamed Eanaan and Kanish Chouhan claimed a wicket each. In reply, India lost Aaron George (7) early but Vaibhav Sooryavanshi (40 off 23 balls; 2 fours, 3 sixes) and skipper Mhatre led the response with a robust 76-run stand for the second wicket.



Both Sooryavanshi and Mhatre struck at over 150 to pulverise the New Zealand bowlers, who just did not have enough to defend. Sooryavanshi, however, missed his personal milestone when Jaskaran Sandhu had him caught by Mason Clarke. But Mhatre raised a fine fifty, falling for 53 off 27 balls with two fours and six sixes, caught by Flynn Morey off Selwin. The pair of Vihaan Malhotra (17 not out) and Vedant Trivedi (13 not out) then took India over the line halfway through the 14th over. "There was a simple plan because the ball was coming nicely on to the bat. There was nothing planned (on the weather), just reacted to the ball and there was a simple plan."

Winter storm leaves thousands without power, grounds flights nationwide



declared states of emergency. Washington, D.C. also declared a state of emergency, according to officials. President Donald Trump approved federal emergency declarations for multiple states, allowing the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to assist with emergency work such as debris removal and protective measures. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem urged residents to heed local guidance and avoid unnecessary travel.

"We want to remind everybody that in these emergency disaster situations, it's your local officials and local emergency managers that go out and execute response to these disasters," Noem said. "Your states manage it and the federal government is here to support." National Guard units were activated across large parts of the country. Guardsmen from at least 12 states were deployed to help clear roads, assist stranded motorists and support local communities, officials said. In South Carolina, authorities warned residents to prepare for prolonged outages. Governor Henry McMaster said some areas could be without electricity for several days due to heavy ice accumulation. "You may be without electricity for maybe four days or maybe longer," McMaster said, urging residents to check on neighbors and vulnerable populations.

Weather officials in the state described the storm as the most severe ice event in the region in nearly two decades, warning of widespread tree damage, downed power lines and impassable roads. Virginia Governor Abigail Spanberger described the approaching system as potentially "catastrophic," citing the risk of heavy snow, significant ice and extended power outages even after precipitation ends. Federal offices in the Washington, D.C. region were ordered closed on Monday, with maximum telework in effect. Emergency employees were told to report unless otherwise notified, officials said. Public transportation systems also shut down in anticipation of dangerous conditions. New Jersey Transit announced the suspension of most bus, light rail and commuter rail services, warning that service would not resume until conditions safely allowed. The storm renewed concerns about the resilience of the US power grid, particularly in Texas. The US Department of Energy issued an emergency order authorizing the Texas grid operator to deploy backup generation resources to prevent widespread blackouts, officials said.

Energy Secretary Chris Wright said the administration was moving to ensure all available power generation could be used during the storm. Federal officials cited warnings from reliability monitors that extreme weather combined with rising winter demand continues to strain parts of the national grid. Utilities across the country mobilized tens of thousands of workers from dozens of states to help restore power as quickly as conditions permit, industry officials said. Forecasters said conditions should gradually improve next week, though snow and bitter cold may linger in parts of New England and around the Great Lakes. Until then, authorities urged people to stay home where possible, limit travel and prepare for extended disruptions as the storm continues its eastward march.

Washington: A massive winter storm swept across a broad stretch of the United States, dumping snow and ice, plunging temperatures far below normal, knocking out power to tens of thousands of homes and forcing authorities in more than 20 states to declare emergencies, according to multiple media reports and government officials. Nearly 190 million people — more than half the US population — were under winter weather alerts across 37 states, from the Rocky Mountains to New England. Snow, sleet and freezing rain spread from New Mexico through the Tennessee Valley, while heavier snow advanced into parts of the Midwest and the mid-Atlantic, officials said. The storm brought dangerous cold to much of the central and eastern United States. Wind chills fell into the minus 20s and minus 30s in some regions, with temperatures running 10 to 40 degrees below seasonal averages, according to weather officials.

Power outages mounted as ice and heavy snow weighed down lines and damaged infrastructure. More than 132,000 homes across the country were without electricity by Saturday, according to outage tracking data cited by US media. The hardest-hit areas were in the South and Southwest, including Texas, Louisiana and New Mexico. Texas reported more than 57,000 customers without power by Saturday afternoon, while Louisiana had over 45,000 customers without service, roughly 2 per cent of the state's total. Officials said outages in Louisiana were concentrated in the northern part of the state, where freezing rain and ice accumulation were most severe. The storm also severely disrupted travel, especially air traffic. More than 9,000 flights were canceled nationwide over the weekend, with additional cancellations expected as the system pushed east, according to flight-tracking services cited by US media.

Officials warned that Sunday could rank among the worst days for weather-related flight disruptions in US aviation history. American Airlines canceled more than a third of its scheduled flights, while nearly 85 per cent of departures from New York's LaGuardia Airport were scrapped, according to airline and airport data. Airports in Dallas-Fort Worth, Charlotte and Nashville were among the most affected, officials said.

As conditions worsened, emergency declarations spread rapidly. At least 20 states — including Texas, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia and several Midwestern and Southern states —

India pivots crude sourcing for certainty, keeps Russian barrels selectively



Ritolia, Lead Research Analyst, Refining & Modeling, Kpler. Energy security and diversification are shaping the narrative — but refinery economics still drives the decision-making. "India will likely keep buying of Russian crude in early 2026, but at a slightly lower level than the record highs seen in 2023-2025. The pullback looks more like a short-term disruption from compliance issues rather than India moving away from Russia completely. It's just a near term realignment, nothing else in my view. Russian crude is economical and remains a driver for refinery margins," he said. India's Russian crude purchases in January 2026 and across Q1 2026 are expected to average around 1.2 million bpd (January) and 1.3-1.5 million bpd (Q1), he said. Following the US sanctions on Rosneft, Lukoil and their majority-owned subsidiaries taking effect on November 21, refiners including Reliance Industries, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), HPCL-Mittal Energy and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals (MRPL) temporarily halted Russian imports. The only exception is Rosneft-backed Nayara Energy, which continues to rely heavily on Russian crude after EU sanctions curtailed alternative supplies.

"India has increased crude imports from the Middle East over the last 2 months, while Russian volumes have declined as sanctions and compliance pressure have intensified," Ritolia said. "This reflects a mix of changing economics and rising execution complexity around Russian crude, including shipping, insurance, payment pathways, and compliance screening." The result is a clear rebalancing of India's crude slate, with the Middle East inflows rising as refiners prioritize supply reliability, flexibility, and smoother cargo execution. This shift also supports operational stability for refiners that prefer predictable supply chains and fewer downstream constraints. Indian refiners such as Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) are buying Russian oil from non-sanctioned entities. There are indications that Reliance too may soon resume purchases from non-sanctioned entities. That is primarily because Russian crude remains compelling on price. Urals is currently trading at a significantly wider discount than earlier in the fourth quarter, with differentials around US\$ 5-7 per barrel below Oman/Dubai grades on a delivered basis to India, compared with roughly USD 2-4 per barrel before late November. This places Urals around USD 4-5 per barrel cheaper than its pre-reset range, continuing to support refinery margins where compliance risks can be managed, Ritolia said.

New Delhi: India's crude oil sourcing strategy has shown a clear shift toward lower-risk and more execution-reliable supply, with the Middle Eastern barrels gaining share as Russian crude flows remain present but increasingly selective and compliance-driven. Import of Russian crude oil dropped to around 1.1 million barrels per day in the first three weeks of January, from an average of 1.21 million bpd in the previous month and over 2 million bpd imports in mid-2025, according to data from real-time analytics company Kpler. India, which is almost 90 per cent dependent on imports to meet its needs for crude oil — the raw material which is turned into fuels such as petrol and diesel in refineries, is again leaning on its traditional suppliers in the Middle-East.

Iraq is now supplying almost the same volumes as Russia, up from an average of 9,04,000 bpd in December 2025, according to Kpler data. Volumes from Saudi Arabia too have risen to 9,24,000 bpd this month, from 7,10,000 bpd in December and lows of 5,39,000 bpd in April 2025. Russia displaced Iraq as India's top crude supplier in 2022 after Indian refiners moved quickly to buy heavily discounted Russian oil that was left stranded when Europe and other Western buyers turned away following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Russian crude rose from under 1 per cent of India's imports to roughly 40 per cent at its peak. Fresh US sanctions on Russian suppliers, however, have triggered a slowdown in purchases as compliance and execution risks rise.

"India's crude buying in January 2026 shows a clear shift toward lower-risk and more reliable supply, with Middle East barrels rising while Russian crude flows remain present but more selective and compliance-driven," said Sumit

AI adoption to generate \$1.7 trillion for India by 2035: KPMG report

New Delhi: As India's semiconductor industry scales up, its adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) is projected to generate \$1.7 trillion in economic value by 2035 and reshape industries across the economy, a new report has said. A KPMG report, launched at the World Economic Forum 2026 in Davos, said that India's responsible AI scaling gained support from robust data governance frameworks, sectoral adoption in healthcare, agriculture, education, and defence, and the creation of the IndiaAI Safety Institute.

"India's emergence as a pivotal force in global trade, technology, and sustainability is underpinned by bold investments in semiconductor manufacturing and rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI)," the report said. The business advisory firm highlighted India's achievement in the sector,

such as approval of six semiconductor fabrication plants with an outlay of \$1.3 billion and allocation of \$2.2 billion for deep-tech research and development. Government-supported flagship initiatives such as the India Semiconductor Mission and Semicon India are accelerating chip-making infrastructure, testing and advanced packaging, the report said. The report highlighted over 38,000 GPUs deployed under the IndiaAI Mission, over 6 million people employed in the technology and AI ecosystem and that 89 per cent of new startups in 2024 leveraged AI, the report said. "India's transformation is remarkable. What we're seeing is more than economic growth, it's about building trust and shaping the future of global collaboration."

What lies behind Trump's Greenland moves? | Explained



The story so far: U.S. President Donald Trump originally mooted the idea of the U.S. taking over the Arctic territory of Greenland during his first term in office. He later cancelled a visit to Denmark after its Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, said Greenland was "not for sale". Early in his second term, in January 2025, Mr. Trump re-upped his demand for Greenland, vowing that Washington "would tariff Denmark at a very high level" if it played spoiler, adding that he would not rule out the use of military force to push the deal through.

What happened next?

In mid-January 2026, the White House proposed a plan to slap eight European countries with a 10% tariff on "any and all goods" beginning on February 1, which was then set to increase to 25% on June 1, until an agreement was reached on Greenland. However, speaking in recent days at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Mr. Trump backed down from this strident rhetoric, announcing "the framework of a future deal with respect to Greenland and, in fact, the entire Arctic region." At that forum, Mr. Trump suggested that the time frame of such a deal would be "infinite". He said additional discussions on Greenland were ongoing, including the Golden Dome missile defence plan, a \$175 billion system which aims to position U.S. weapons in space.

Why does Greenland matter to the U.S.?

Greenland is primarily coveted by the Trump administration for two broad reasons: its rich natural resources base and strategic location. The strategic location aspect is one that is claimed by the Trump administration, the access to resources less so. At Davos, Mr. Trump said that it is rightful for the U.S. to "have" Greenland "for security [and not] anything else." Commenting on the complexities of Arctic exploration, he noted, "You have to go 25ft down through ice to get it. It's not something that a lot of people are going to do or want to do." This argument is premised on the Trump White House's claim that Russian and Chinese influence in the region is expanding, one that is not substantiated by intelligence reports — especially given that Greenland is also protected by the security umbrella of NATO. Similarly, there is regional reassurance for the U.S. and its allies in the fact that under the U.S.-Denmark pact of 1951, security threats to the Arctic territory could legally trigger the U.S.'s option to broaden its military presence in Greenland. Reports have noted that Washington had sta-

tioned close to 10,000 troops on the island in the Cold War period, compared to only 200 or so U.S. troops there currently.

However, there is little doubt that Greenland is home to considerable and possibly vast reserves of oil and natural gas, as well as certain raw materials vital for the military technologies sector, electronics industry, and clean energy outputs. Reports suggest that 25 of 34 minerals considered to be "critical raw materials" by the European Commission are present in Greenland, including graphite and titanium. Thus, while some U.S. lawmakers have said that the Trump administration's apparent adventurism in forcing Denmark's hand on surrendering Greenland to Washington is based on protecting U.S. national security interests in areas such as shipping lanes, energy and fisheries, the true motivation for this quest likely has far more to do with striking bargains for the extraction of natural resources than what public proclamations suggest.

What about the latest agreement?

The so-called "framework of a future deal with respect to Greenland" that Mr. Trump mentioned at Davos has been long on rhetoric and short on details. The only fact known is the meeting that Mr. Trump had with NATO Secretary General, Mark Rutte, and the latter's clear statement that the discussion had not touched upon the question of Danish sovereignty over Greenland. Yet it is hard to conceive of the terms of an agreement that would be acceptable to Mr. Trump that did not at least cede partial control of certain territories within Greenland to Washington. Anonymous U.S. officials have been quoted in certain reports suggesting exactly this — that any viable agreement would likely mirror the concept of the U.K.'s military establishments in Cyprus, considered to be part of British territory.

What are the broader ramifications?

The Trump climbdown from an aggressive posture on U.S. control of Greenland was quite likely precipitated by the prospect of a potential judicial ruling against the White House's use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to slap allies and partner nations with broad-based tariffs. Importantly, European nations had also signalled that in the event of such aggression, they would seriously consider bringing into force a hard-hitting counter-tariff mechanism that would negatively impact the trade in goods and services of large U.S. tech firms conducting business in the EU. Yet, the deeper concern for other countries is the fact that there is a lingering possibility of a territory-hungry Washington interfering in the politics of not only Denmark and Venezuela, but other countries as well.

What role should other nations play?

The rules based international order may not be what it was at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. However, it must be true that countries such as India, China, and others, still subscribe to certain basic principles of that order. These nations now need to find ways to push back on the neo-imperialist depredations of Washington, Moscow, and Tel Aviv, in terms of their brazen disregard of territorial sovereignty and human rights in the pursuit of commercial and strategic interests.

Can India eliminate malaria by 2030? | Explained

The story so far: In 2016, under its National Framework for Malaria Elimination in India (2016-2030), India set an ambitious target to eliminate malaria (zero indigenous cases) by 2030, with an interim milestone of interrupting indigenous transmission across the entire country, including all high-transmission States and Union Territories (UT), by 2027. By the end of 2025, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) reported that robust surveillance and sustained interventions had led to 160 districts across 23 States and UTs reporting zero indigenous malaria cases from 2022 to 2024. This was seen as a significant milestone as it meant that the country was getting closer to completely eliminating malaria.

How is prevalence of the disease measured?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a country is granted a certification of malaria elimination when "the chain of local transmission of all human malaria parasites has been interrupted nationwide for at least three consecutive years, and that a fully functional surveillance and response system is in place to prevent re-establishment of indigenous transmission". As of mid-2025, 47 countries or territories have been officially certified malaria-free by the WHO.

Where does India stand?

The World Malaria Report 2025 notes that India made significant progress in reducing malaria incidence and mortality in its high-endemic States, officially exiting the WHO "High Burden to High Impact" Group, in 2024. Malaria cases reduced by around 80% from 2015 to 2023 in the country. In 2024, India accounted for 73.3% of the 2.7 million estimated malaria cases in the WHO South-East Asia Region. While localised transmission driven by population movement and cross-border importation remain as key challenges, India is on track to achieve the WHO Global Technical Strategy (GTS) for malaria 2016-2030 target of at least a 75% reduction in incidence by 2025 (compared with a 2015 baseline), having already achieved reductions exceeding 70% by 2024, the World Malaria Report added.

If Tamil Nadu is taken as an example, data from the State's Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine show a steady decline in malaria cases, from 5,587 in 2015 to 321 in 2025. Since 2023, 33 of 38 districts have reported zero indigenous cases, placing them in "Category O" (prevention of re-establishment phase). The remaining five districts, including the capital Chennai, are classified as "Category I" (Elimination phase) where the Annual Parasite Incidence (API) is less than one case per 1,000 population at risk (API is the number of confirmed new malaria cases registered in a specific year, expressed per 1,000 individuals under surveillance, for a given country, territory, or geographic area).

How is India working to eliminate malaria?

The country has put in place two national plans to guide and accelerate malaria elimination — the National Framework for Malaria Elimination in India (2016-2030), which outlines the vision, goals, and targets for a phased malaria elimination, and the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Malaria Elimination (2023-2027) that builds upon earlier frameworks. According to the NSP, transforming malaria surveillance as a core intervention for malaria elimination, ensuring universal access to malaria diagnosis, treatment by enhancing and optimising case management by "testing, treating and tracking" and ensuring universal access to malaria prevention by enhancing and optimising vector control are among the key strategies. In Tamil Nadu, measures to detect malaria are being carried out intensively in gov-



ernment hospitals and primary health centres. Larval control measures are implemented alongside. One of the key focus areas is to monitor migrant workers. Intensive surveillance is being taken up among workers coming from malaria-prone neighbouring States.

What are the challenges?

One of the challenges is migration from malaria-endemic neighbouring States that poses a risk of reintroduction in low-transmission areas. Urban areas, according to NSP, pose a different set of challenges for malaria elimination. Special focus is given to challenging malaria paradigms such as in urban, forest, tribal, project/and border areas, hard to reach areas and migrant populations, it said. Acknowledging that the WHO South-East Asia Region has made major progress towards malaria elimination, achieving reductions in both incidence and mortality over the past two decades, the World Malaria Report stated that significant challenges remain. Persistent Plasmodium vivax transmission, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of regional cases, continues to complicate elimination efforts. Localised transmission in India and Nepal, driven by population movement and cross-border importation, points to the need for targeted subnational and regional coordination, it added. Other strategies by India include drug resistance monitoring, insecticide resistance monitoring and ensuring compliance with the 14 days of radical treatment for Plasmodium vivax cases. The World Malaria Report 2025 has also highlighted the growing threat of antimalarial drug resistance. As the WHO noted: "Partial resistance to artemisinin derivatives — the backbone of malaria treatments after failures of chloroquine and sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine — has now been confirmed or suspected in at least eight countries in Africa, and there are potential signs of declining efficacy of some of the drugs that are combined with artemisinin." With the government focusing on achieving zero indigenous cases by 2027 and ensuring prevention of malaria re-establishment, measures to strengthen the surveillance system and diagnostic capacities, and intensifying control measures in high burden districts, are pivotal.

What is the road ahead?

In its annual report of 2024-2025, the MOHFW said that in 2023, 34 States/UTs achieved an annual parasite incidence of less than one except in two States, Tripura (5.69) and Mizoram (14.23). T. Jacob John, senior virologist, said the most important aspect in this phase is the accuracy of data. Next, to ensure that private practitioners report cases, strict public health surveillance is needed. "All doctors should mandatorily report even suspected cases of malaria," he added. T.S. Selvarajagopal, former Director of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Government of Tamil Nadu, said malaria in urban areas continues to be a challenge.

India's long battle with lymphatic filariasis: progress and the path ahead



EMS News Agency, Dec 20

In many Indian villages, people living with lymphatic filariasis still recall the day their leg began to swell. It starts innocuously, with a slight puffiness around the ankle or knee. Over time, the swelling hardens into something immovable - a weight they carry for life. Lymphatic filariasis, or haathipaon ("elephant foot"), is one of India's most persistent diseases. Caused by microscopic worms transmitted by the Culex mosquito, the disease silently invades the lymphatic system, blocking fluid flow and leaving limbs grotesquely swollen. The damage is irreversible.

Unlike malaria or dengue, filariasis does not kill quickly. It disables - stripping away mobility, dignity and income. It is a leading cause of long-term disability worldwide, yet its victims often live unseen, tucked away in villages where the disease is both normalised and stigmatised. Mentions of filariasis date back to ancient Ayurvedic texts, yet the disease continues to remain embedded in India's public health landscape. India today accounts for approximately 40% of the global burden. An estimated 740 million Indians are at risk, and over 7,00,000 live with its visible effects including limb swelling, scrotal hydrocele or milky white urine. The numbers are blurry, masked by shame and underreporting. In many rural districts, the disease is so commonplace that people no longer name it; they simply live with it, generation after generation.

Infection begins in childhood. Mosquitoes transfer larvae into the bloodstream, which mature silently in the lymphatic vessels. Years later, irreversible deformity appears. For some, it emerges during adolescence, for others, not until middle age. But by then, the economic and emotional costs are already high. Filariasis thrives where sanitation fails, among open drains, stagnant water and inadequate healthcare. It also worsens the poverty that sustains it. For labourers and domestic workers, swollen limbs mean the end of livelihoods. Families slip into debt and cycles of dependency begin. The National Elimination Drive India's elimination strategy hinges on annual preventive drugs, through Mass Drug Administration (MDA). The two medicines - diethylcarbamazine (DEC) and albendazole - kill the larvae circulating in the blood, preventing mosquitoes from carrying them to others. More recently, a triple-drug regimen - Ivermectin + DEC + Albendazole (IDA) - has been introduced in select States. The newer combination shortens the elimination timeline, requiring fewer rounds for impact. But social hurdles persist; misinformation abounds. Some fear infertility from the pills; others stash them away. Marginalised communities remain mistrustful, haunted by memories of coercive health campaigns. Awareness campaigns through schools, temples and local radio have helped, but communication remains as critical as medicine. The difference between compliance and failure often comes down to a conversation at a doorstep - one in which fear must be met with empathy, not instruction. Hidden burden on women For women, lymphatic filariasis carries a particularly heavy social cost. In patriarchal communities where a

woman's social worth is often tied to her appearance, the disfigurement becomes a source of isolation. Marriage prospects vanish and employment becomes impossible. In some villages, women with visible swelling are barred from cooking for others or participating in community rituals. The stigma cuts deep. Many women hide their symptoms out of fear, delaying treatment until it's too late. They bear dual burdens of managing households despite disabilities and enduring recurring infections that leave them bedridden for days. Yet it is also women - thousands of ASHAs and Anganwadi workers - who are leading India's elimination efforts. These frontline workers go door-to-door, distributing annual preventive tablets. Their work is physically demanding and emotionally taxing. But their persistence has yielded results. Between 2018 and 2025, India conducted MDA rounds across 328 districts and 143 of these have now achieved elimination thresholds, meaning transmission has dropped below one per 10,000 people. The success of this effort rests not only on medicine but on persuasion - on the ability of women health workers to translate the suspicion of unknown science into trust.

Climate change is redrawing the disease's map. Once confined to coastal belts and river plains, lymphatic filariasis is appearing in upland and semi-urban areas. Longer monsoons, warmer winters and urban flooding are ideal for Culex mosquito breeding. The National Action Plan on Climate Change and Human Health (NAPCCHH) warns that mosquito density could rise by as much as 20% as rainfall and temperature patterns shift. Every flooded construction site or clogged drain becomes a potential breeding ground.

Filariasis is no longer just a rural affliction: in peri-urban zones, where construction is outpacing sanitation, the disease is finding new ground. India's goal is to eliminate lymphatic filariasis by 2027, three years before the global targets. Progress is real, but fragile. As temperatures rise, mosquitoes adapt. Extended breeding seasons mean longer windows for transmission. Urban flooding turns new neighborhoods into mosquito zones. The epidemiological frontier of LF is shifting - expanding into places where public health systems are unprepared. The challenge is no longer to end an old disease, but to stop it from finding new life in a warming world. Elimination now requires adaptability, ongoing surveillance, and cross-sector collaboration. The line between success and resurgence is razor thin. Stigma, long road to care

Even as elimination nears, millions still suffer. For them, "elimination" is a distant concept. Morbidity management and disability prevention (MMDP) are crucial. Patients are taught daily washing, antiseptic use, limb elevation and exercises to prevent flare-ups. But self-care training rarely reaches those in isolated villages. The psychological toll is immense. Studies show high levels of anxiety and depression among LF patients, compounded by lost income. The disease becomes a form of social invisibility - one that no drug can fix. India's long fight against lymphatic filariasis has been arduous, but it has not been in vain. About 40% of endemic districts have broken the chain of transmission. Millions of lives have been spared from future disability. The disease that once defined regions may soon be confined to history books. But for that future to arrive, elimination must not be mistaken for the end. The people already living with LF - the women who still wash their swollen limbs in courtyards, the men who limp to work on thickened feet - remain the measure of progress. The story of LF is, in the end, not just about parasites or pills. It's about how a country chooses to care for its most invisible citizens. (Hasina Khatun is an independent communications professional focused on public health and social impact and an Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation Social Engagement 2025 Fellow. connectwithhasina@gmail.com)

The way to reconciliation in Jammu and Kashmir

The bomb blast in New Delhi that claimed the lives of innocent civilians and injured many others saddened me deeply. No one who values humanity can remain untouched by such loss. As Kashmiris, we have lived through the pain of violence for decades and, therefore, understand better than most what it means for families to lose loved ones, suddenly and brutally. Every act of violence against the innocent is unacceptable and no cause or ideology can ever justify it. The rush to judge

Yet, while we mourn, it is troubling to see how quickly such tragedies are converted into sensational narratives. Even before investigations establish facts, sections of the media are quoting "inside sources" and are ready with headlines that cast suspicion on a particular community and religion. This rush to judge not only misleads the public but also places an entire population under scrutiny - especially Kashmiri students and professionals living across India, who suddenly find themselves being treated as suspects. Fear replaces safety, and anxiety grips families back home. Condemnation of acts of terror must not be allowed to transform itself into collective punishment. Unfortunately, this has become a recurrent pattern in Jammu and Kashmir. In recent years, we have seen houses, the homes of aging parents, spouses and children, being blown up or demolished because a family member was accused of supporting militancy. A house is not just a structure. It represents dignity, belonging and memories. Destroying it punishes those who have committed no crime. Similarly, detaining or harassing relatives and the acquaintances of suspected militants is neither justice nor strategy. It spreads anger and pain further. Young people do not turn to violence, that too educated professionals if they feel heard and hopeful. They do so mostly when they feel oppressed, humiliated and disempowered. While the larger issue remains unaddressed, there is also the curtailment of civil liberties, constant police surveillance, fear of arbitrary dismissals from government service, and attachment of properties by investigative agencies and frequent raids and arrests. Combined with shrinking employment avenues and the unjust reservation and recruitment policies that leave local educated youth feeling excluded even from the limited jobs that exist, all these have created a deep sense of suffocation among them.

Furthering alienation This alienation is further intensified by the abrogation of constitutionally guaranteed Article 370, the withdrawal of land and job protections, and the widespread fear of demographic change through policies that encourage outsider settlement and domicile rights. These steps and measures - however, they may be defended officially - are experienced on the ground as attacks on identity, dignity, and ownership of one's homeland. Such measures do not foster integration. They reinforce the feeling of dispossession. And the stronger that feeling, the more extreme the retaliatory violence. Highlighting these realities is not justification of violence - it is an attempt to prevent it.



Condemnation of acts of terror must not be allowed to become collective punishment

Peace cannot be built on the denial of wounds. If peace is the goal then the causes that lead to violent extremism must be addressed. Security operations may suppress symptoms, but only justice and empathy can heal the root. The path to pursue

I have also always urged the youth not to resort to violence or extremism measures. It is totally unjustifiable, completely against religious tenets, destructive and self-defeating. To me, the best way to redress issues among people is dialogue, rooted in compassion and mutual respect. Guns, demolitions, collective punishment, and blanket suspicion will not bring peace. They produce resentment, distrust and alienation. But when dignity is protected, aspirations are addressed and rights are respected, hearts open and reconciliation becomes possible. I, therefore, urge policymakers in India to view Jammu and Kashmir not merely as a law-and-order issue, but as a human and political reality that requires engagement, redress and confidence building.

The framework once articulated by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee - insaniyat and jamhooriyat - still holds the promise of a dignified future for all. Whether those in power choose that path or ignore it, is for them to decide. As for us, the pulpit of Jama Masjid will continue to advocate for peace, condemn injustice and violence wherever it occurs. We will not give up on hope fostered by our faith in the belief that hope is the strength that sustains societies through their most difficult moments and leads them toward better days. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq is Chairman, Hurriyat Conference. This article is an elaboration of the Friday Sermon he delivered at the Jama Masjid, Srinagar

Rediscovering lost flavours: Restaurateurs from Ladakh preserve culinary heritage in a changing world



Succulent, mildly spiced chunks of lamb, nestled in sweet ghee-washed long grain rice arrive in gold bowls. This is Yarkhandi pulao, stark white and studded with meat and whole spices. It travelled along the Silk Route, and is one of Chinese nobility's most luscious gifts to Ladakh. As local legend goes, tradesmen once dabbed ghee on their lips like balm since true wealth was measured by how much of it dripped from your elbows after two bites. During our walk along Leh market, this hotelier who is a passionate advocate for Ladakhi culture, stops to point at a number of shops and cafes that have mushroomed in the last decade. "You will find momos, noodles, dal chawal, and chilli chicken here. Is this the food of Ladakh? I'd argue otherwise," he says.

One of globalisation's greatest casualties is authenticity; its collateral damage, culture. Since the 2000s, as tourism began thriving in Ladakh and development entered the conversation including better roadways, sewage systems, and high-altitude passes that now function year-round, two important ingredients central to India's diet became readily available at the union territory: rice and fresh vegetables. Rice and its supply through the Public Distribution System (PDS) scheme has immensely aided the average Ladakhi in the way of cooking quicker meals. In the process though, an entire cuisine seems to have gone missing. "This wasn't the case before," says Padma Yangchan whose venture Namza Dining brings traditional Ladakhi food to the fine diners of the world. She remembers purchasing a kilo of tomatoes at an alarmingly high rate of ₹400 when she was a young girl. "Earlier, families would dehydrate and store herbs foraged according to the season, particularly summers, and save them during the winters when it was hard to grow food and harder to commute across the Union Territory. We'd do the same for tubers - carrots, turnips, potatoes, and the likes," she says. While both Padma and Stanzin are thrilled about development as it paves way for increased tourism - a sector that they depend on for their livelihood - a casualty is the meals that they grew up eating.

It is why an important movement in Ladakh has sprung up, one where chefs, hoteliers, and cooking enthusiasts from the region, are combing through phone books, and traversing this region's expansive mountains and valleys, to speak to grandmothers, uncles, neighbours and strangers, to preserve recipes that once soothed several generations. Here, buckwheat, barley, wild garlic, chives, nettles and capers, rule the roost. In a country where measurements cease to exist and are assessed by the handful, documenting the food and presenting them in cutlery palpable to an audience that perceives this culture foreign, has been nothing short of an adventure. It is one that every single one of them is intent on taking up. Around the fire "Each of Ladakh's seven divisions has its own cuisine, distinguished entirely by each tribe. What is staple in Sham Valley is entirely different from Turtuk, where I am from. We are from the other side of the mighty Karakoram range, part of the Greater Gilgit Baltistan belt [stretching all the way from Afghanistan to China]," says Rashidullah Khan, the founder of Virsa Baltistan, a boutique

property along one of India's last village before the Pakistan border.

After having spent years in Japan and Bengaluru, Rashid came back home to Turtuk, intent on showing people the bounty that his village had to offer - people and fresh produce. At his property, where The Balti Farm is located, women from Turtuk who cook meals at home, make a course-based meal full of fresh fruits and vegetables at the hotel for an authentic Balti experience. These include salads, hand-rolled noodle soups with chuffa (a dry cottage cheese), buckwheat pancakes, and praku, a pasta made with a creamy walnut sauce. The meal usually ends with a fruit-based dessert. If you are lucky enough, during apricot or apple season, pick them off trees for a post-meal snack. Since Turtuk became part of India only in 1971 post the Indo-Pak war, women of the village remain custodians of a cuisine that goes beyond war and long-geographical boundaries. "I call my relatives, many of whom live across the border, for some recipes too," he adds. Much of Chef Jigmet Mingyur's cooking is influenced by the time he spent cooking at Kathmandu's Zhichen Bairo Ling monastery, where he was a monk for two decades. "In the monastery I learnt that the produce must shine," he says. This ascetic who gave up his robes to become a chef, forages for herbs in mountains and hills near his restaurant Tsam Khang in Leh. Having come from the village Khemi, in the sand dune-laden Nubra Valley, (only 30 kilometres from the Siachin Glacier), the Ladakhi chef is an expert at making the tedious churpi, or cheese made from Yak milk. During winters, Jigmet does two things: speak to family about other old recipes, and travel to different parts of India for a pop-up. "Ladakhi food is medicinal. It was created to heal during the cold and fill our stomachs during days when the next meal was six hours away. It is why you find the likes of nettle, and capers in our cuisine. When I travel to other cities for popups, my boxes are full of dehydrated fruits, vegetables and herbs. There is something about the air and water in the mountains. Even our turnips are delightfully sweet," he says.

Chef Nilza Wangmo agrees. Having come from Sham Valley in Ladakh, Nilza is used to premium meat from yak and lamb, dehydrated over a fire and stored for difficult winters. Her eponymous restaurant located in Alchi, the village she grew up in and it serves delectable soups, and meat-based fare. "I learnt most of my recipes after having assisted my mother and grandmother in the kitchen. Serving yak is banned now but the process of curing and dehydrating meat is quite the task. Now we serve mutton and lamb. You should try the Ladakhi mok-mok [a version similar to the momo] and paba, a doughy multi-grain bread served with thangthur, a yoghurt made from the shoots of capers. We interestingly discard the caper itself," she says, speaking from Japan where she is hosting a Ladakhi popup. Stanzin Tsepel, who runs The Heritage Kitchen in Nubra Valley invites us to his family home where the kitchen is the centre of the house. "We saved this home from demolition and we now realise that very few homes have Ladakhi architecture. How times have changed," he says, as we slurp on noodles made of barley with pieces of peas and potatoes. Stanzin says that both he and his wife have been seeking out family recipes as many people in Hunder, where his property is located, are related to each other. "It is full of trial and errors though. Nobody uses measurements in India," he says, chuckling and lamenting at once. Namza's Padma states that the measurements are hardly a concern when documentation is lax in remote places like Zaskar valley, home of the snow leopards. "But that is where the most interesting meals exist. During one of my visits, I learnt of the gyuma that is interesting, made with minced mutton and also blood. We serve one without the blood at Namza because where do we go looking for blood? It will be too barbaric, no?" she says. Her favourite story is how she snagged the recipe for Yarkhandi pulao, now on every Ladakhi chef's menu list. "My neighbour used to make this pulao at home and he would call it the Hor pulao. Hor or Horpa refers to the community originating from Yarkhand, while also referring to the region. Imagine going to a fine dining space and asking for this dish," she says, cackling. Then adds, "The food from this region has always been exceptional. Our aim is to take it to several parts of the globe. For now though, we want it to fill every Ladakhi's plate too."

Feminising hormone therapy can alter proteins in transwomen's blood

The effects of feminising gender-affirmative hormone therapy (GAHT) are more than skin deep, new research in Nature Medicine has reported, with the changes going down to the very proteins circulating in a person's blood. University of Melbourne endocrinologist Ada Cheung, who co-led the study, has called the findings "a world-first". Sanjay Kalra, an endocrinologist and the former president of the Indian Professional Association for Transgender Health, added that the study "sheds light on a new aspect of transgender medicine". Transgender people are those whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Transgender women, who are assigned male sex at birth but identify as women, may opt for GAHT to help align their bodies with their gender identity. Feminising GAHT typically involves a combination of the hormone estrogen and an antiandrogen like cyproterone acetate (CPA) or spironolactone (SpiroL). Antiandrogens block the effects of testosterone and dihydrotestosterone, hormones that play key roles in the development of male sexual characteristics, muscle growth, and in determining how fat is deposited in the body. Scientists and physicians have known since the 1970s that GAHT redistributes fat, reduces facial and body hair growth, and develops breasts in transgender women's bodies. The new study has now shown that GAHT also shifts the profile of proteins circulating in a transgender woman's blood towards levels observed in cisgender women. It took researchers this long to find this because "transgender health has historically been under-researched," Dr. Cheung said. Also, the technology required to measure thousands of proteins in the body at the same time "has only been around for 2-3 years, and is very expensive," Boris Novakovic, a team leader at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Australia and who collaborated with Dr. Cheung on the study, said. These deeper biological changes may also increase the long-term susceptibility of transgender women to asthma and autoimmune disorders, the study added. While experts said these risks have yet to be clinically observed, cisgender women are known to be more susceptible to them than cisgender men. Changing protein levels The study recruited 40 transgender women in Melbourne and placed half on a combination of estrogen + CPA and the other half on estrogen + SpiroL. The researchers collected their blood samples once before they began GAHT and after six months on the therapy. The team then isolated plasma, the liquid component of blood, from the samples and measured the levels of over 5,000 proteins.

By comparing their levels in samples collected before and after GAHT, the researchers could estimate the therapy's effects. Their analysis identified 245 proteins whose levels had changed in the group that received CPA and 91 proteins in the group that received SpiroL. In both the groups, GAHT had decreased the levels of most of these proteins. Using statistical methods, the researchers were able to attribute GAHT's effects on the protein levels to three factors: decreased testosterone concentration, increased body fat percentage, and higher breast volume. Beneath the surface The team also checked proteins whose levels had already been reported to vary with sex in a cisgender population using the UK Biobank's Pharma Proteomics project. In 2023, this project profiled nearly 3,000 proteins from around 54,000 UK-based participants and identified those most strongly associated with sex. Using a computational technique, they discovered that the levels of 36 such proteins were correlated with GAHT involving CPA use. For GAHT that involved SpiroL, the list numbered 22. For both groups, GAHT led to a noticeable change in these proteins' levels towards the pattern generally observed in cisgender women. The findings suggest feminising GAHT "changes thousands of proteins in the blood, aligning the body's biology more closely with a person's gender identity," Dr. Cheung said. "The changes go far beyond what we see on the outside; they happen deep inside the body's cells and systems." In the long-term The study's results also suggested that using either CPA or SpiroL might shift protein profiles towards those consistent with increased risks of allergic asthma and autoimmune diseases. Only CPA use shifted protein levels to those suggestive of lower atherosclerosis risk, i.e. the risk of blood vessels narrowing and hardening due to fat deposits. That said, Dr. Cheung warned that the risks are "only possibilities, not proven. We don't yet have clinical evidence showing higher rates of these diseases in trans women on hormones." Dr. Kalra also said he hadn't observed transgender women being more susceptible to autoimmune diseases in his clinical practice. The difference between clinical observations and the study's findings might arise because "autoimmune or allergic conditions take years to develop, and depend on multiple genetic and environmental factors," Dr. Cheung said. The protein-level changes observed are "early molecular shifts, not diagnoses". She also stressed the need for longitudinal studies that track transgender women's health over a period of time to understand whether these "biological patterns translate into real-world health effects".

Despite financial strain, public sector discoms clear power dues faster than private utilities



Public sector electricity distribution companies (discoms) take less time to clear dues to suppliers such as power generators than their private sector counterparts, despite the former facing significantly higher financial stress. On the days payable parameter — which measures the average time taken by discoms to settle supplier payments — public sector utilities recorded 112 days, marginally lower than the all-India average of 113 days. In contrast, private sector discoms reported higher days payable of 133 days, the 14th Integrated Rating and Ranking of Power Distribution Utilities for 2024-25, released by the Union Ministry of Power on Friday, showed.

The relatively better performance by public sector discoms on days payable stands in sharp contrast to their overall financial position, especially as private sector discoms outperform them on most other key metrics, including revenue collection, cost recovery, and aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses. The findings come amid growing concerns over the financial health of public sector discoms in the country's power sector. A majority of state-owned utilities continue to incur losses and rely heavily on borrowings to finance their operating shortfalls and accumulated liabilities. At present, the total accumulated losses of public sector discoms stand at Rs 6.77 lakh crore, while their total borrowings amount to Rs 7.11 lakh crore.

The recently released draft National Electricity Policy 2026 has also acknowledged these structural challenges, and has proposed measures to address the persistent financial stress faced by discoms. The report assessed the financial and operational performance of 65 power distribution utilities, including 42 public sector discoms, 12 private sector discoms, and 11 power departments. Of these, 31 utilities received top ratings of A+ or A. These included 14 public sector discoms, eight private sector discoms, and nine power departments.

An A+ rating denotes "exceptionally strong financial and operational performance," while an A rating indicates "very high financial and operational performance," according to the report. The top three positions were secured by private sector players — Torrent Power Ahmedabad, Torrent Power Surat, and Adani Electricity Mumbai Ltd (AEML), respectively. Whereas, the three lowest-ranked utilities were all state-owned: Telangana's TGNPDCL, Jharkhand's JBVNL, and Telangana's TGSPDCL. All three were assigned a C- grade, indicating low financial and operational performance. Cost recovery remains a challenge.

There's path to take off 25% Russian oil tariffs: US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent

AS European Union leaders land in Delhi and India and the European Union look set to announce the conclusion of negotiations for a trade deal, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said there is a path to take off the 25 per cent tariffs that the US imposed on India's purchase of Russian oil. In an interview to Politico, Bessent said, "We put 25 per cent tariffs on India for buying Russian oil, and the Indian purchases by their refineries of Russian oil have collapsed. So, that is a success... The 25 per cent Russian oil tariffs are still on. I would imagine that there is a path to take them off," he said.

Pointing to the Russia oil tariffs, the US Treasury Secretary said it's a check and huge success, but took a dig at his European allies. "...our virtue-signalling European allies refused to do it because they wanted to sign this big trade deal with India," Bessent said. According to him, before the Ukraine invasion, approximately 2-3 per cent of Indian oil that went into its refineries came from Russia. "The oil was sanctioned, it got deeply discounted, and it moved up into the high teens — 17, 18, 19 per cent — being refined. Huge profit for refiners," he said, adding it was the Europeans who were buying the refined products and financing the war against themselves.

Bessent's comments came in the backdrop of European countries standing up to US President Donald Trump's demand for Greenland, and EU President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa being invited as chief guests by New Delhi on the occasion of India's Republic Day on January 26. EU chief Ursula von der Leyen has already landed in Delhi. Earlier this week on Tuesday, she had referred to the imminent EU-India Free Trade Agreement as the "mother of all deals". The two were on the cusp of signing a trade deal, giving the 27-member bloc a "first mover advantage". In an exclusive interview to The Indian Express on Friday, Kaja Kallas, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, said the agreement is a "strategic choice" and provides a chance to reduce reliance on China, Russia and US.

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. Commenting on the findings, Nirajita Banerjee, LinkedIn Career Expert and Senior Managing Editor, LinkedIn India News, said Hyderabad's job market is evolving into a multi-sector ecosystem with rising demand for adaptable talent. She noted that professionals who combine AI literacy with domain expertise, demonstrate outcomes through project-based work, and remain flexible in their roles are better positioned as hiring expands beyond technology into areas such as marketing, analytics and consulting. The research also reveals that while Indian professionals are largely comfortable using artificial intelligence, concerns remain about its role in hiring. About 94% of respondents said they are comfortable using AI in their job search, but nearly half (48%) are unsure how to stand out when AI is involved in recruitment. More than half (54%) believe AI can be an obstacle to getting noticed by recruiters, even as 65% feel it can improve communication and bridge gaps in recruiter-candidate interactions.

Here's why pahadi gahat dal is a must-try winter superfood



Gahat dal, commonly known as horse gram, has been a staple in pahadi households for generations, valued for both its traditional significance and strong nutritional profile. In Uttarakhand, parathas made with gahat dal are a popular winter delicacy, and are served with ghee and chutney. Amreen Sheikh, Chief Dietitian, KIMS Hospitals, Thane, explains what sets it apart and how it may affect conditions such as kidney stones and diabetes.

"Gahat dal stands out nutritionally because it contains slightly higher protein and fibre than many common dals, making it particularly filling and supportive of steady digestion." She adds that the dal is also a good source of iron, calcium, and polyphenols, nutrients which support energy production, gut health, and immunity. "This is one reason people in the hills often consider it a strength-building,

warming food ideal for colder climates and physically demanding lifestyles."

Does gahat dal actually help with kidney stones?

According to Sheikh, early studies suggest that gahat dal may help improve urine flow and reduce certain stone-forming substances, particularly in cases linked to high oxalate levels. However, she stresses that while it may offer supportive benefits, it should never be considered a substitute for proper medical treatment for kidney stones.

Is gahat dal beneficial for people with diabetes or insulin resistance?

Dt. Sheikh says gahat dal is especially useful because it digests slowly and releases glucose more gradually than many other pulses. "This slower digestion helps control post-meal sugar spikes and supports more stable energy levels through the day." Its fibre content, she adds, also helps curb cravings and maintain satiety levels, which is an advantage for blood sugar management and weight control.

Are there any downsides?

Despite its benefits, Sheikh says, moderation is key. "Some people may feel bloated if they eat too much at once, especially if their gut is already sensitive," she says. "Gahat dal is also slightly higher in natural purines, so individuals with high uric acid levels should exercise caution. Anyone trying it for the first time can start with small servings to see how their body responds."

Ameesha Patel on why she thinks men and women are not equal: 'Just by wearing pants...'; relationship expert weighs in



Ameesha Patel's bold take on men's and women's roles in society may ruffle a few feathers, but the Bollywood actor has seldom shied away from speaking her mind. During a recent conversation with podcaster Ranveer Allahabadi, the Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai actor opened up about why she believes men and women are not equal: "Just by wearing pants, a woman does not become a man. I definitely feel a woman can match a man at every step, but there are certain special things reserved for men and women. Let's not cross the line; we were made biologically like this." According to Ameesha Patel, softness and charm are inherent traits of a woman. "A man should still take her out for dinner, pull the chair out for her, sit her down, open her door, all that should remain," she said, further adding, "Even women have forgotten to teach this, because we are so caught up in asking for equal rights, we have forgotten that we are girls at the end of the day."

Reflecting on the above statements, Priya Parulekar, Consulting Psychologist and Relationship Expert, told indianexpress.com that when someone is in survival mode—financially, emotionally, or socially—they develop a hypermasculine side. Traits like independence, assertiveness, and self-reliance dominate because survival requires action and control. In today's day and age, where women are trying to catch up with decades of being sidelined and ignored by men when it comes to stepping out and taking on work, it is easy for them to slip into masculine mode. "Feminine energy is more about openness, receptivity, emotional expression, intuition, and the ability to surrender or relax around someone safe. Masculine energy is more about protection, decisiveness, structure, problem-solving,

and providing safety (physically, emotionally, or materially)," explained Parulekar.

According to her, someone in survival mode often develops more masculine traits, which can make connecting with a healthy masculine partner tricky because they unconsciously "test" whether a man is safe enough to drop the armour. Ameesha Patel on why men and women are not equal Ameesha Patel on why men and women are not equal (Source: Instagram/@ameeshapatel9) Surrendering is not weakness. It's trusting someone enough to let down your defences. When Ameesha says that women should remain true to their biological traits, she reiterates the point that with the right man, women will surrender and feel safe. There's an unspoken awareness that her energy will soften around someone reliable. This is a conscious choice, not default behaviour.

"For feminine women, masculine energy is attractive because it creates a container where feminine energy can emerge without fear. If the man is inconsistent, controlling, or emotionally unstable, it reinforces survival instincts rather than allowing surrender," shared Parulekar, adding that the right man doesn't just provide materially or protect physically; he signals emotional and energetic safety that allows her to shift from survival mode to feminine presence.

How can you identify safe, masculine men?

"Look for consistency, protective capability, and emotional maturity," said Parulekar, while elaborating on the traits: a) Protector in Action - Should be able to handle crises without panic, act rather than overreact. Physically or materially capable (even if he has modest means) of creating boundaries that prevent harm. b) Emotional Safety - Listens without judgment, allows vulnerability without exploiting it. Maintains composure even when expressing anger, fear, or frustration. And keeps promises and demonstrates integrity. c) Decisiveness and direction - Knows what he wants and can make decisions confidently. Doesn't require constant validation or approval, so he's "anchored" rather than reactive. Provides structure, not control, guides without dominance. d) Boundaries and respect - Doesn't get triggered by your independence or past trauma. Can say "no" without fear of conflict and respects your "no" as well. Recognises the difference between control and protection. e) Energy and presence - Has consistent energy that doesn't fluctuate wildly with stress. When he's present, you instinctively feel calmer.

From regenerating limbs to intimidating predators: 10 animals with real superpowers

Superheroes might fill our movies and comics, but nature has been making its own amazing creatures for millions of years. In oceans, forests, and even tiny worlds, some animals have abilities so incredible they seem almost made up: regeneration, invisibility, incredible strength, and even immortality. Here are 10 animals with natural abilities that could be called real-life superpowers.

1. Axolotl — the regeneration champion

While most animals can heal wounds, the axolotl can fully regenerate limbs, spinal cords, parts of the brain and even heart tissue without scarring. Scientists study this salamander in hopes of unlocking the secrets of human regeneration.

2. Mantis Shrimp — the fastest punch on the planet

The mantis shrimp's club-like forelimbs strike with the acceleration of a bullet, creating underwater shockwaves that can shatter glass. It also has 16 types of photoreceptors, allowing it to see colours and light invisible to humans.

3. Tardigrade — the immortal microbe

Tardigrades can survive extreme heat, freezing, radiation, the vacuum of space, and decades without food or water. Their superpower lies in entering a "tun" state, essentially pausing life until conditions improve.

4. Cuttlefish — masters of invisibility

With skin cells that shift colour, texture and pattern in milliseconds, cuttlefish can camouflage flawlessly against any background. Their adaptive ability rivals the high-tech cloaking devices imagined in sci-fi.

5. Honey Badger — the fearless tank

Honey badgers have thick skin, immunity to certain venoms, and fearless aggression that intimidates predators far larger than they are. Their superpower is a mix of pain resistance, boldness and near-impossible-to-kill resilience.

6. Electric Eel — the 600-volt generator

Electric eels generate powerful electric shocks strong enough to stun prey, defend themselves, or navigate murky waters. Think of it as built-in taser technology developed by evolution.



From creatures that regrow limbs to animals that see electricity, nature's true superheroes don't wear capes—they evolve them.

Story continues below this ad

7. Octopus — the escapist genius

Octopuses can squeeze through coin-sized gaps, open jars, solve puzzles and escape enclosures with Houdini-like skill. Add to that their camouflage abilities and near-alien intelligence, and they're one of nature's most versatile superheroes.

8. Pistol Shrimp — the sonic blaster

This tiny shrimp snaps its claw so fast it creates a bubble hotter than the surface of the sun and loud enough to stun or kill prey. Its "sonic weapon" is one of the most powerful tools in the ocean relative to size.

9. Archerfish — the sharpshooter

The archerfish shoots precise jets of water at insects sitting on leaves above the surface—adjusting for light refraction and distance. Its superpower is mathematical precision and ballistic accuracy.

10. Peregrine Falcon — the speed demon

As one of the fastest animals on Earth, the peregrine falcon reaches speeds of over 320 km/h during a dive. Its aerodynamic design and unshakable vision make it the closest thing nature has to a rocket-powered predator.

Padma Bhushan Vijay Amritraj: The OG tennis legend who smashed the snake-charmer cliché and won the world



Many decades after his retirement, India's OG tennis super-star Vijay Amritraj has received the title he truly deserves – Padma Bhushan. The citation accompanying the announcement says he won 16 singles titles, was the Davis Cup captain and put India on the international map. An extra line could have been added: As an influential voice on television – rubbing shoulders with US presidents, British royalty and also Hollywood circles – he continues to polish India's image abroad. Much before "Incredible India" became a brand; Vijay, both on and off the court, was articulating to the world that there was more to his country than the usual snake charmers and yogis stereotyping. For the generations that feel that tennis started with Federer vs Nadal at the turn of the century and no Indian in the singles draw is a tennis norm, the Vijay story needs to be retold.

Far ahead of the era he grew up in, Vijay was the crowd-puller at Slams and a magnet at after-match parties of the rich and famous. He, and his brothers Anand and Ashok, didn't need to be a yogi or play sitar to get acceptance in the western world. Vijay played their sport and played it way better than them. He spoke their language and was far more eloquent than them.

MUST READ | When Amitabh Bachchan was mistaken for Vijay Amritraj and other stories about the Hall of Famer who introduced India to the world as a Top 20 player he could hold his own against the likes of Laver, Smith, McEnroe, Connors. His charm, wit and intellect would get him entry into elite circles. As a 6'3" broad-shouldered athlete, Vijay wasn't the archetypal Indian of those times. He and his dreams were bigger than most in pre-liberalisation India. When travelling the world, Vijay didn't carry any third-world baggage. He was soft spoken but he did raise his voice if forced. He was a true global citizen but remained fiercely patriotic. He was an asset to his sport but he remained committed to his Davis Cup duties. He played a decisive role in India's many epic Davis Cup triumphs. With

him in the team, India reached the final of Davis Cup but had to boycott the match since their opponent was South Africa of the apartheid era. For a sickly child born with cystic fibrosis, potentially a fatal lung ailment that needs constant hospital visits, Vijay turned out to be a spectacular over-achiever. He took up tennis since the doctor wanted him to pursue an out-door sport. With barely a few pounds in their pockets, he and his brother Anand would travel to England. Long before words like "hustle" and "jugaad" started getting used by Corporate India, the Amritrajs had aced them. On a frugal budget, the brothers had a hand-to-mouth economic model. There was a time, they faced a series of adverse results. "Every Monday I was out of the tournament and had the whole week free, with 5 dollars in my pocket. We literally had to win in the afternoon to be able to eat at night," he would say. To avoid going hungry to bed, Vijay came up with a 'hustle' that involved betting on Anand's brilliant chess playing skills. Since the tournaments were at posh clubs, the big-talker Vijay would take bets from the moneyed members to beat Anand at chess. The back-up plan worked. Now, they could afford to lose at tennis since they were winning at chess.

With time the results changed and America was steadily warming up to the tall, lanky Indian with a tight serve and volley game. While at his peak, Vijay once went on to play at another spectacular hotel frequented by white elderly Florida folks. He would wear his Chennai shirts and Kolhapuri chappals to dinner, inviting stares. Opinion would change when Vijay would beat Rod Laver in earlier rounds and Jimmy Connors in the final. Now, the club members were asking where to buy Chennai shirts and the Kolhapuris. Later at the US Open, Vijay would defeat Laver again. The New York Times would applaud the effort but there was a line from the report – "The incredibly poised and polite dark-skinned Amritraj" – doesn't read right in present times. Revisiting his much talked about role in the James Bond movie Octopussy doesn't feel right. As an under-cover agent, he is a snake charmer one minute and an auto driver the next. Driving Mr Bond in his auto in a dramatically-congested Indian street, he dodges cows, camels, fire-eaters, sword swallowers, a yogi on a bed of nails and beggars. Finally, they escape because of the chaos caused by the natives fighting for cash thrown at them by Mr Bond. The film-makers don't miss a single Indian imagery that is objectionable. With time, India's image would change. That had a lot to do with Mr Bond's auto-driver on screen who in real life would go on to be a Hollywood producer, a broadcasting icon, UN ambassador for peace, ATP Hall of Famer and now Padma Bhushan Vijay Amritraj.

'Marry my sister-in-law': Carlos Alcaraz gets propositioned thrice by fans at Australian Open

GNS News Agency, Jan 28

Carlos Alcaraz may not have won an Australian Open title yet in his career, but he seems to have won plenty of hearts at Melbourne Park. A now-viral clip shared by the Instagram handle of the Australian Open showed fans propositioning the Spaniard thrice in the span of a few seconds while he was out on the court attempting to complete a career Grand Slam at the age of 22. On Sunday, top-ranked Alcaraz defeated 19th seed Tommy Paul with a 7-6 (6), 6-4, 7-5 scoreline to enter his maiden quarter-finals at the Australian Open. The man standing in front of him in the quarters will be local favorite Alex de Minaur, who advanced with a 6-4, 6-1, 6-1 win over No. 10 Alexander Bublik. If the Spaniard manages to win, it will be his first foray into the semis at Melbourne Park.

It's unlikely that the local fans will be behind Alcaraz for the quarter-finals at least with Alex de Minaur being the fan favourite. But fans did make their love for the Spaniard apparent in previous rounds. The clip on Instagram posted by Australian Open shows fans propositioning Alcaraz. First, a fan shouts "Marry my daughter". As laughs ring out, another fan raises the bar with a far more audacious proposition: "Marry my sister-in-law". Finally, a fan yells "Marry me". After finishing off the match in 2 hours and 44 minutes, Alcaraz did a little dance move on the court to entertain the crowd.



The Spaniard also addressed questions about his serve, which Novak Djokovic has jokingly said was copied from his own serve. The 24-time major winner Djokovic had joked earlier in the tournament that he'd sent Alcaraz a message asking for a copyright fee. When Alcaraz was asked about it in an on-court TV interview on Rod Laver Arena, he played along. "Yeah. I heard that. I have the contract over there, but I haven't seen him yet!" the Spaniard said of his exchange with Djokovic. Expanding on the theme, he said when videos of the service motion emerged in the pre-season he checked on his phone and had a message from Djokovic which, more or less, said: "Alright, you have to pay!"

'One of best coaches I've worked with': Joe Root bats for McCullum after Ashes disaster



GNS News Agency, Jan 28

England mainstay Joe Root has come out in defence of captain Harry Brook and coach Brendan McCullum after both copped flak for different reasons during the Ashes series. Root scored 75 in a one-day international against Sri Lanka, which helped England achieve a 5-wicket win in Colombo.

Root batted for both Brook and McCullum after the captain-coach duo one their first ODI victory abroad while in charge of England's white-ball team. Root said that Brook had apologised for his actions and he was fully behind him. "He's apologised, he's taken his punishment and he's desperate to take this team forward. I think he's going to be a brilliant England captain and he's going to do wonderful things in an England shirt, both as a player and as a leader. So I'm fully behind him and want to see him, I suppose, move past it and learn from it and grow as a person and as a captain off the back of it," said Root according to the Guardian after the match.

McCullum's role as England's coach has come under question after yet another Ashes failure, one where England were only able to win a solitary Test match and withered in the clutch moments of the game where Australia stood tall. In Test matches decided within sessions, it made all the difference. Root said that while he hadn't taken the time to

analyse the Ashes series, he felt McCullum had considerably improved England as a team. "I think Baz [McCullum] is one of the best coaches I've ever worked with. If you look at my own personal game, the time that he's been a coach, it's improved tenfold. I think most of the players, if you look individually, all of their games have improved under his tenure as coach. Same with [Jeetan Patel] and [Marcus Trescothick] as batting coach and assistant coach. They've done a lot of really good things for English cricket and will do in the future as well. Obviously, we're disappointed with the way things went out in Australia, but I still think that there's a lot of more really exciting things to come from this group," said Root.

'India won Champions Trophy because they played well': Salman Ali Agha on Pakistan's 'advantage' in T20 World Cup

GNS News Agency, Jan 28

Pakistan playing all their 2026 T20 World Cup matches in Colombo is an advantage but they will still have to play good cricket to win the trophy, captain Salman Ali Agha has said. The 2009 champions will be playing all their matches at two stadiums in Colombo – the R Premadasa Stadium and the Sinhalese Sports Club ground. This is after India, Pakistan and ICC agreed upon a hybrid model for tournaments hosted by either countries until 2027. It means that matches involving Pakistan in tournaments hosted by India will be played at neutral venues and vice versa. The latter was the case for the 2025 Champions Trophy hosted by Pakistan, with India playing all their matches in Dubai and ultimately winning the tournament. Agha said that while staying in the same hotel throughout the tournament is an advantage, India had won the 2025 Champions Trophy because they played well. "It is an advantage, the other teams

6 titles in 15 seasons! Perth Scorchers crush Sydney Sixers in final to secure record-extending BBL crown



GNS News Agency, Jan 28

Perth Scorchers continued their dominance and further cemented their legacy by defeating arch-rivals Sydney Sixers in the 2025-26 Big Bash League (BBL) final, claiming a record-extending sixth BBL title in front of their home crowd at Perth's Optus Stadium on Sunday. Murphy's Law played out for the Sixers, for whom nothing went their way in the final. After losing the toss, Moises Henriques' side was invited to bat first by Scorchers captain Mitchell Marsh. The Sixers managed an underwhelming 132 in their 20 overs. Scorchers' Jhye Richardson and David Payne were the pick of the bowlers, taking three wickets each to bundle out the Sixers for an under-par total in Perth.

Scorchers' openers Marsh and Finn Allen stitched together 80 runs for the first wicket, and the Men in Orange

had little trouble chasing down the total and won the game by six wickets with 15 balls to spare to lift the trophy. The Scorchers were clearly the best side in BBL 2025-26, having finished at the top of the points table with 14 points from seven wins in ten league matches. They also completed a triple over the Sixers, beating them in their opening game, then in the Qualifier, before finally thwarting them in the finals to claim the title. Perth Scorchers' players elated after the wicket of Sydney Sixers' opener Steve Smith. (PHOTO: Cricket Australia) Perth Scorchers' players elated after the wicket of Sydney Sixers' opener Steve Smith. (PHOTO: Cricket Australia) Veteran Australian batter David Warner (433 runs in 8 matches), who played for Sydney Thunder, was the tournament's highest run-scorer, while Melbourne Stars pacer Haris Rauf (20 wickets in 11 matches) finished with the most wickets. History and Rivalry Perth Scorchers and Sydney Sixers are two of the most successful franchises in BBL history. Out of 15 seasons, there have been only three finals in which neither the Sixers nor the Scorchers featured

Ahead of the 2025-26 final, the Scorchers and Sixers had met six times in the decider, with the Perth-based franchise winning four summit clashes and the Sixers coming out on top twice. After Sunday's win, four of the Scorchers' six BBL titles have now come against the Sixers in the final. For the Sixers, two of their three titles have also come against their arch-rivals, the Scorchers.

'The worst pitch I've ever played on': Harry Brook & Joe Root slam Colombo pitch after 5-wicket win vs Sri Lanka in 2nd ODI

GNS News Agency, Jan 28

England white-ball captain Harry Brook and veteran cricketer Joe Root slammed the Colombo pitch used for the second ODI on Saturday against Sri Lanka. While Root said the surface was "not a great wicket for ODI cricket", Brook was even more critical, calling it the "worst" pitch he had ever played on. England defeated Sri Lanka by five wickets on a slow, low surface at the R Premadasa Stadium to level the three-match ODI series one-all after two games. The visitors fielded six spinners and bowled 40.3 overs of spin – the most by England in an ODI – bundling out Sri Lanka for just 219. Chasing a modest target of 220, Ben Duckett and Brook played poised innings, but it was Root's 90-ball 75 that helped England win the match.

Known for their attacking cricket, both Duckett and Brook played against their instinct and took time to settle. Duckett scored at a strike rate of 75.00, while Brook made his 42 off 75 deliveries, striking at 56.00.

Brook was harsh in his assessment of the surface and said, "The pitch is probably the worst pitch I've ever played on. You had to go out there and adapt as quickly as possible and try to get off strike and get the other batter on strike," he said after the win. "It's nice to get a win away from home on a tough surface, we are happy to get the victory," he added.



'Not a great ODI wicket'

Although Root also praised Sri Lanka as a country, "Always love coming to Sri Lanka, it's a great country. Always feel extremely welcomed by everyone. Enjoy playing here", he criticised the pitch, saying, "Nice to get the win on a very difficult surface. (Adjustments to bat on this surface) Just try to take the ball as late as possible. I don't think that's a great wicket for ODI cricket if I'm being brutally honest, but we found a way today and we adapted and learned from the mistakes we made in the first game with both bat and ball and got across the line," said Player of the Match Root.

'MS Dhoni will bat at No. 3 and be a Powerplay enforcer in IPL 2026': R Ashwin's bold claim as CSK superstar begins training



GNS News Agency, Jan 28

Five years on since his international retirement, MS Dhoni continues to keep his ardent fans guessing. Confronting the question of calling time on playing for the Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League, the ageing talisman has now played six seasons since his last appearance for India in 2019. Gearing up for the 19th IPL season with CSK, the 44-year-old Dhoni resumed training in Ranchi on Saturday, two months ahead of the proposed start of the tournament.

With several high-profile acquisitions, including India wicket-keeper Sanju Samson, many believe that Dhoni could move to a non-playing capacity during the IPL 2026 season. However, his former teammate, R Ashwin, thinks otherwise. Ashwin, who retired from IPL cricket in August 2025 after spending the previous season with CSK, made

a bold claim that Dhoni could don a fresh role with the bat, moving to exploit conditions in the batting Powerplay for the five-time champions.

MSD at No. 3?

"Dhoni looks set to play as he has already started practising. He's looking fit. Some said he may not play in the 11, or this might be his last season. But it looks like he got motivated seeing Imran Tahir. Looking at him, it doesn't look like he'll bat at No. 9. He looks like he'll come out to bat at No. 3 in the Powerplay and be the enforcer, the way he has begun practice," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel. While CSK finished at the bottom of the points table last season, Dhoni remained far from his best too, scoring only 196 runs at 135.17 in 14 games. Ashwin also raved about the quality of players CSK have assembled in their bid for a strong reset this year. "They've scouted very well and boast a powerhouse of a batting lineup. Ruturaj Gaikwad, Sanju Samson, Ayush Mhatre, Dewald Brevis, Shivam Dube, Karthik Sharma, and Prashant Veer is a batting lineup, barring the inexperience in the last two, you ask how are teams going to stop this batting lineup? Even a 200 to 200 becomes really difficult for teams to stop CSK to," added Ashwin. "Even Jamie Overton is going great guns. Only the combination CSK decides to go with is to be seen. Ayush Mhatre, irrespective of what happens in the U-19 World Cup, will deliver in the IPL. CSK's batting is a tough one to stop. If they get the combination and momentum right, that is a batting lineup that's really going to make work very difficult for bowlers around the tournament."



announced it too far in advance, (January) 30th was the deadline. The government has to decide, there is nothing I can say about that. The chairman has said that the government will decide so definitely we will wait for their decision."

Mohanlal rose to superstardom with a film that was rejected by Mammooty; it was shot in 32 days on a Rs 40 lakh budget



Joshi, with whom the writer had already worked on several movies, who asked him to write a script for Thambi. Following the failure of his Mammooty-starrer Aa Neram Alpa Dooram (1985), the director was in crisis, with no producer willing to work with him anymore. Thus, once Dennis agreed to write for him, Thambi decided to produce the movie himself, in addition to directing it. During discussions, Dennis pitched a gangster film centred on an antihero, and Thambi was instantly impressed. The writer also suggested that Mammooty would be the best fit for it. Having shared a close bond with the actor for many years, Thambi approached Mammooty as usual. However, the failure of Aa Neram Alpa Dooram had affected the actor, and he straightaway refused to work with Thambi. Dennis noted that Mammooty even made some remarks that hurt the director.

Nonetheless, Thambi was determined to proceed with the project and approached Mohanlal instead. Despite not knowing Dennis beforehand or having worked with him, Mohanlal agreed to do the film without even hearing its story. That's how Rajavinte Makan was born. Once the discussions were over, Dennis completed the full script in just five to six days. He mentioned that Thambi bankrolled the film by selling his car and pawning some ancestral properties. While Mohanlal was cast as the antihero crime boss, Vincent Gomes in Rajavinte Makan, Ratheesh played the second antihero, Home Minister CK Krishnadas. Nonetheless, the character of the female lead, Advocate Ancy, was equally important in the movie and required a strong actor to play it. Thus, Thambi zeroed in on Ambika, with whom he shared a warm relationship. However, this was the time when Ambika was a far bigger star than Mohanlal across the South, having played heroine to Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan, too, in a couple of Tamil movies. She was also a highly sought-after actor in Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu. Hence, her mother initially demanded that Ambika be paid Rs 1.25 lakh in remuneration, as per a Manorama report. However, a few days after filming began, Ambika informed Thambi that she needed only Rs 1 lakh, much to the director-producer's relief, as he was struggling to finish the movie. Mohanlal, too, was paid the same remuneration as Ambika, Rs 1 lakh. The filming was completed in 32 days. Although the entire industry was sceptical about the movie, considering that Thambi was a "flop director" and the notion that people wouldn't like seeing Mohanlal in such an avatar, Rajavinte Makan opened to universally positive reviews after the first show itself, catapulting Mohanlal to superstardom instantly. Mounted on a budget of Rs 40 lakh, it reportedly collected Rs 80-85 lakh at the time, despite severely low ticket prices. While Rajavinte Makan was subsequently remade in various languages, Mohanlal hasn't had to look back since and has been ruling Malayalam cinema for the past 40 years.

At a time when artistes are struggling to survive in Tinseltown for even a few years, Mohanlal and Mammooty's life stories stand out, having reigned over an industry for four decades. What's more impressive is that neither of them seems to have entered the last leg of their careers yet, and continues to race ahead at full throttle. After making their on-screen debuts in 1980, Mohanlal and Mammooty have worked in hundreds of movies across various languages, bagging several National and Kerala State Film Awards. While Mohanlal rose to superstardom in 1986, exactly 40 years ago, Mammooty joined him there a year later, and they have since been the undisputed pillars holding Malayalam cinema high. Interestingly, both Mohanlal and Mammooty achieved superstardom through movies penned by the same screenwriter, Dennis Joseph. Widely regarded as one of the finest commercial screenwriters in Malayalam cinema, Dennis shared a warm bond with both actors and, in fact, wrote several of their blockbuster movies. However, Dennis first forged a bond with Mammooty, as he headlined the writer's debut movie, Eeran Sandhya. After that, Dennis became a recurring presence in Mammooty's films and penned several notable scripts for the actor, including Nirakkootu, Sayam Sandhya, Shyama, Nyayavidhi, and Pranamad.

Yet, when Dennis Joseph decided to join forces with director Thambi Kannanthanam for a movie, Mammooty opted out, despite previously sharing a strong bond with the latter. During an episode of Safari's "Charithram Enniloode" talk show, Dennis revealed that it was director

Sunny Deol poses with Esha Deol, Ahana as Dharmendra gets posthumous Padma Vibhushan

Ahead of Republic Day, Dharmendra was conferred with Padma Vibhushan. Sunny Deol was seen with Esha Deol and Ahana Deol at a Border 2 screening shortly after the announcement. While Sunny is Dharmendra's son from his first marriage to Prakash Kaur, Esha and Ahana Deol are daughters of Dharmendra and Hema Malini. (Credit: Instagram/@aapkadharam, X/@yogenshahyogen) It was a special day for the Deol family as it was announced that veteran actor Dharmendra, who passed away in November last year, will be conferred with Padma Vibhushan awards. The announcement of Padma award honour 2026 coincided with Dharmendra's eldest son Sunny Deol with his step-sisters Esha Deol and Ahana Deol at a special Border 2 screening. Sunny's Border 2 is getting a lot of acclaim from the audience as it does a blockbuster business at the box office.

It was an emotional family moment as Sunny stepped out with his sisters, Esha Deol and Ahana Deol, at the special screening of Border 2. While Sunny is Dharmendra's son from his first marriage to Prakash Kaur, Esha and Ahana are daughters of Dharmendra and Hema Malini. It was a rare appearance of the siblings together. The families were not seen together after Dharmendra's demise, including at his prayer meet. While Sunny and Bobby Deol organised a prayer meet in Mumbai, Hema Malini and her daughters were not in attendance. They held separate ones in Delhi and Mumbai.

However, Hema had later dismissed any talk about a speculated rift between the two families in an interview to SCREEN. "It has always been very nice and cordial. Even today it is very nice. I don't know why people think something is wrong with us. It is because people want gossip. Why should I answer them? Is it necessary for me to give an explanation? Why should I? It's my life. My personal life, our personal life. We are absolutely happy and very close to each other. That's it. I don't have anything more to say about this. I don't know what stories people are making up. So sad that people use other's grief to write a few



articles. That is why I don't answer (such speculation)," she had said. She had also added that Sunny usually consults with her and is doing so when it comes to setting up a museum for Dharmendra.

ICYMI | When Esha Deol learnt about Dharmendra's first marriage with Prakash Kaur at school, says he never stayed home at night: 'You have two moms?' Dharmendra conferred with Padma Vibhushan Dharmendra, who passed away in November 2025, will be conferred with a posthumous Padma Vibhushan, it was announced on Sunday evening. One of the most celebrated actors in the history of Hindi cinema, he won the Padma Bhusan in 2012.

Anushka Sharma, Virat Kohli perform puja at their London home.

Anushka Sharma, Virat Kohli perform puja at their London home. Anushka Sharma, Virat Kohli perform puja at their London home. While Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma prefer to keep their personal lives private, photos and videos of the couple often surface on social media. A recent viral picture shows Virat and Anushka posing with a priest after performing a puja at their London home. In the photo shared on Virat Kohli's fan page wrogn.virat, Anushka is seen wearing a white cardigan layered over an orange outfit, while the Indian cricketer sports a simple white kurta, perfectly complementing his wife's look. The couple is seen posing with a priest and a woman after the puja. The text on the pic read, "Virat Kohli And Anushka Sharma Performed A Religious Ceremony At Their Home In London." Fans couldn't stop gushing over the star couple's heartwarming moment. "They both look so cute together in white," a fan wrote. Another person commented, "Anushka Virat so religious...love love." Several other social media users dropped heart emoticons in the comments section. Both Anushka



Sharma and Virat Kohli are deeply spiritual and are often spotted visiting ashrams, temples, and spiritual leaders.

Vikrant Massey recalls working 16-hour days, balancing two jobs at 16: 'I survived on Parle-G and water, couldn't even get tea'



Vikrant Massey is a household name today on the back of popular hits such as 12th Fail but his success has come after years of sloggling and hard work. An outsider to the Hindi film industry, he started working at the age of 16 as he and his family faced financial hardship and he had no choice but to earn money to pay for his education. The actor, who will be seen in a biopic of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar next, has revealed that at the age of 16, he was balancing two jobs and pulling off 16-hour days to ensure that he earns enough money to keep his education going.

"I've been very fortunate as the audiences have been so generous, even after 21 years of professional work. I started off with TV and did nearly a decade of television before acting in cinema. The love and support have only grown. And I say this with all humility because I'm 38 and audiences are still out there supporting me," he said in an interview to Republic. The actor said that he faced the camera for the first time when he was 16 and the reason was purely monetary. "I was 16 when I faced the camera for the first time; I still remember the date, it was December 19, 2024. Prior to that, I was working as a barista. I did that job because I had to support my own education. I am not going to get into that sob story or my struggle. I used to also work as an assistant instructor in Shiamak Davar's troupe and at that restaurant in Mumbai," Vikrant recalled.

Recalling those days, the actor said he took inspiration from his own struggles for his 12th Fail character. "I was just 16 when I was changing four local trains every-

day, working 16-hour days and often living off only Parle-G and water to survive. No one does it of their own accord, definitely not a young boy. I did because I had to," Vikrant said. However, the actor recalled that his first show never saw the light of the day despite him giving him over 8 months of his life. "I was offered my first TV stint by a lady named Deepthi Kalwani at the restaurant while I was working. I think she liked my face. I was young and I had stars in my eyes. She offered me my first TV show then — to play the lead role. It was a fantasy show about a guy who goes invisible. I quit my stable job at Shiamak for this TV show. I used to conduct classes with some of the senior instructors in Shiamak Davar's Institute for Performing Arts. The TV show offered me a lot of money and I decided to take up the offer as I needed the money." Vikrant said the show never materialised and along with that a major portion of the fee due to him was never given. "I was in college, first year junior college, which is basically Class 11 in Delhi. I shot for the TV show — seven episodes for 8-9 months — but it was never telecast. Something happened between the broadcasters and the producers and it was never shown. I was absolutely crushed. I was waiting for it and half the money due to me was unpaid. It eventually ended up becoming a pilot. I remember it was eventually telecast years later at 2 am on Star Plus as it was a Star property. There are so many things that happen which actors actually don't know as they are the last people to come on board. The producer was kind enough. She knew that I had quit a stable job and also the financial situation that I was in. They offered me a job in the production office."

In an earlier interview to Faye D'Souza, Vikrant had recalled his family's riches to rags journey when they had no choice but to leave their comfortable Juhu home and live in a godown for a while. "They used to live in Juhu and were neighbours to the Kapoor family. Theirs was a classical Hindi film story: they had a family feud, was thrown out of their own home, lived in godowns with a baby for almost a year and then finally move into Versova. They have seen massive ups and downs. Even though you are no longer a part of it, your parents make sure that you remember this through their experiences; the transience and fickle nature of life. Today I'm sitting in a position of privilege and am not feeling how I did 20 years ago when I started off. But can it not happen to me again tomorrow? Of course it can!"

Vijay says he won't 'succumb to pressure or commit corruption' at TVK event; unveils party symbol

Taking indirect jibes at the DMK and AIADMK, Vijay stated that only the TVK has the "guts and attitude" to take on the "evil force" that's currently ruling the state, as well as the "corrupt force" that previously governed it. TVK chief and actor Vijay waves to the gathering during a party event at Mamallapuram, in Chengalpattu district, Tamil Nadu. (PTI photo)

Even though the release of his political action drama, Jana Nayagan, remains in limbo with no respite in sight, Tamil star "Thalapathy" Vijay seems to have moved on and returned to the helm of his political party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), as it gears up for the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. On Sunday, January 25, Vijay took part in a massive party event in Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram), where he addressed the TVK cadre and assured them that he wouldn't yield to political pressure.

"The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) has directly surrendered to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) has indirectly surrendered to it. We do not bow down to any pressure. Does this face look like it would succumb to pressure? That will never happen," Vijay reportedly said while addressing the gathering. Describing the upcoming state polls as a "democratic battle," he urged party activists to become the commanders who lead TVK to victory.

Border 2 Box Office Collection Day 2 Updates: Sunny Deol-starrer earns over Rs 18 cr; expected to cross Rs 100 cr mark today Taking indirect jibes at the DMK and AIADMK, Vijay stated that only the TVK has the "guts and attitude" to take on the "evil force" that's currently ruling the state, as well as the "corrupt force" that previously governed it. "We are here to save the people and protect the soil from anyone who intends to cause harm," news agency PTI quoted him as saying. "We will never compromise our politics for anyone or anything. I will not commit corruption like those before or those here now. I will not touch even a single paisa. Not even a drop of a corruption stain will occur." At the Mamallapuram TVK event, Vijay unveiled the party's election symbol, 'whistle,' days after the ECI allotted it. TVK chief Vijay at a party meeting in Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu.



ted it. TVK chief Vijay at a party meeting in Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu.

He added, "You might ask, 'Is this a movie? Is this the film Mudhalvan (where the protagonist becomes CM for a day)? Will he come and clean everything in one day?' Practically, that is not possible. It is a process." During the event, he also unveiled TVK's election symbol, 'whistle,' days after the Election Commission of India (ECI) allotted it to the party. On the occasion, he also blew a whistle to amp up the gathering, thus symbolically blowing the bugle and marking the commencement of TVK's election campaigns and related activities. Touted as Vijay's swansong before his full-fledged political entry, Jana Nayagan was supposed to hit the screens on January 9, coinciding with Pongal. However, it failed to get an official nod from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) and has since been stuck in court. On January 20, the matter came up again before a division bench of the Madras High Court, headed by Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava, which heard all the arguments in an appeal filed by the CBFC challenging a single-judge order directing it to give a U/A 16+ certificate to the movie. However, the division bench reserved its order.

'I was devastated': Why Imran Khan was rejected for Delhi 6; replaced by Harshvardhan Kapoor in Bhavesh Joshi after box office flop

An extremely successful debut Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na (2008) made Imran Khan — in today's parlance — a 'national crush'. On Koffee With Karan, celebs were asked to decide who will be India's next superstar — Imran or Ranbir Kapoor. Awards followed and bigger films till after Katti Batti, Imran — who is actor Aamir Khan's nephew — decided to take a break from the films. He became social media's darling a few years ago, and has now made a cameo in his Delhi Belly colleague Vir Das' Happy Patel Khatarnak Jasoos. As far as comebacks go, it is as low key as it gets but aligns with Imran's beliefs — he wants to work with friends, not be a part of Bollywood rat race.

Imran, in a recent interview to HT, also ruled out he will ever be part of Bollywood's PR machinery. "I have worked at a time when I had a PR and a manager. Having had a taste of it and knowing what it brings to your world, I now don't want those things. I don't want a manager who will go out there and look for work for me. The manager's pay percentage depends on keeping me steadily employed, because of which he may push me to do things I don't want to. I don't want them to find work for me; I want to find my work."

However, the actor accepted that when he was start-

ing his career, there were moments he was left devastated when things didn't align for him. The films he mentioned were Rohit Shetty's Chennai Express, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra Delhi 6 and Vikramaditya Motwane's Bhavesh Joshi. The three films eventually starred Shah Rukh Khan, Abhishek Bachchan and Harshvardhan Kapoor, respectively.

Imran had auditioned for Delhi 6, before his debut in Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Naa. "At various points, there have been various films that have just not come together. With Mehra, it was 'Delhi 6'. At that point, I had not made any films, I tested for the (lead role) film. But at the time, they didn't want to put the money on a new person, on an untested, unproven person," Imran told PTI in an interview. Imran Khan At this point in his life, Imran Khan prefers working alongside friends and like-minded individuals, like with Vir Das in Happy Patel.

Delhi 6 was the story of an American boy of Indian origin who gets involved in communal tension when he comes to Delhi's Chandni Chowk with his grandmother. While the 2009 film was not a box office success, it continues to get acclaim for its incisive commentary on a subject that has become more relevant with time.