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## Aswaraopet Municipality records the highest polling in the district.

"S Naga Manoj Kumar, Aswarapet constituency, Feb 11, Indian Chronicle: Aswaraopet Municipality recorded a polling percentage of 76.20% till 5 pm. Polling was held in 22 wards of the municipality with a total of 16850 voters, and 12839 votes were cast.



## Telangana Municipal Elections End in Frenzy, Congress Leads in Exit Polls

TELANGANA: FEB 11

The municipal elections in Telangana took place in a lively atmosphere today, with voters casting their ballots from morning until the closing time of 5 pm.

After polling concluded, voters present at booths were given the opportunity to vote if they had not yet done so. Immediately following the elections, the exit polls were released. The People's Pulse survey indicated that the Congress party is expected to emerge as the dominant force in the elections for 116 municipalities and 7 corporations across the state.



## Telangana CM Revanth Reddy casts vote in Municipal Elections

Kodangal, Feb 11

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy cast his vote at Kodangal ZP High School in Vikarabad district during the municipal elections. After voting, he left for Hyderabad and is scheduled to reach Shamshabad Airport before departing for Delhi.

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka voted at the 9th ward polling station under Madhira Municipality. Meanwhile, Minister Vivek cast his ballot at polling booth number 227 in Hitech City, Mancherla.

The leaders participated in the electoral process as voting across various wards continues in the region.

## High tension in Kothagudem as an empty ballot box surfaces at Paloncha police station



Kothagudem, Feb 11

High tension prevailed at Paloncha as a ballot box of polling station number 151 in the 47th division at old Paloncha in Kothagudem Municipal Corporation surfaced at Paloncha police station after polling was over.

With the news spreading in the town, hundreds of cadres of BRS, CPI and other parties arrived at the police station during late evening hours and demanded to know why the ballot box was brought to the police station.

The CPI state secretary, Kothagudem MLA Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao, the party district secretary Shaik Sabeer Pasha, BRS district president Rega Kantha Rao and other leaders also reached the police station.

The leaders entered into heated arguments with the police seeking a proper explanation over the presence of the ballot box at the police station. Paloncha DSP Sathish Kumar tried to convince the protesting leaders but in vain.

An election staff member, B Srinivas, who carried the ballot box to the police station, told protesting workers of political parties that he carried the ballot box to the police station as there was not enough space in the vehicle carrying the ballot boxes.

He later said that seven boxes were left behind as the vehicle which was supposed to take the ballot boxes to the strong room hurriedly left the polling station and he brought one empty box to Paloncha police station while the remaining ballot boxes were taken to the strong room by others.

As the protestors demanded to check what was in

the ballot box he opened and showed it to the protesting workers. There was no official statement on the issue from the concerned authorities.

### GHMC Reorganization: Commissioners take charge of 3 newly formed Hyderabad civic bodies

Hyderabad: Soon after the Metropolitan Area & Urban Development (MA&UD) department issued orders reorganising the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) into three municipal corporations, the Commissioners concerned assumed charge on Wednesday. Orders were issued in the early hours of Wednesday and soon after Jayesh Ranjan, who was appointed as Special Officer for the three municipal corporations, took charge. While GHMC will continue in the same location at Tank Bund, new office premises were identified for the two municipal corporations—Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation at HMDA premises, Tarnaka, and the Cyberabad Municipal Corporation to be located at National Academy of Construction (NCA) premises, Gachibowli. RV Karunan, who continues as GHMC Commissioner, assumed charge at the existing GHMC head office at Tank Bund. G Srijana, who was posted as Commissioner, Cyberabad Municipal Corporation, took charge at the NAC, Gachibowli, while T Vinay Krishna Reddy, posted as Commissioner, Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation, assumed charge at the HMDA office, Tarnaka.

## District SP Rohit Raju inspects polling stations in Aswarapet municipality

"S. Naga Manoj Kumar, Aswarapet constituency, Feb 11, Indian Chronicle: Bhadravati Kothagudem District"District SP Rohit Raju inspects polling stations in Aswarapet municipality."SP Rohit Raju said that a total of 1200 police personnel have been deployed in Bhadravati Kothagudem district. The SP also said that the entire process in the district went smoothly.



## Modi sold India's interests under US chokehold: Rahul on trade deal

New Delhi, Feb 11

Terming the India-US interim trade deal "one-sided", Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had "sold the interests and pride of India", surrendered energy security and compromised farmers' interests under a chokehold from Washington.

In tweets posted after attacking the PM in the Lok Sabha while participating in the debate on the Union Budget, Rahul said the US would now watch Indian oil purchases.

"Who gets to decide from whom does India buy its oil — India or the US? Who gave the US the power to halt beneficial crude purchases by India?" Rahul said on X accusing the PM of trading Indian interests. He said the future of 140 crore Indians "had been mortgaged" in the deal.

"No PM surrenders unless there is pressure and chokehold. India realises this is an unequal deal, one of compromise," Rahul said on X after levelling the same charges inside the Lok Sabha where the Chair expunged the adverse comments by a written late evening order.

Inside the Lok Sabha, allegations of the Leader of Opposition triggered sharp reactions from the treasury benches with Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju objecting to Rahul's language and rebutting to his remarks against the PM. Rijiju demanded that the remarks be expunged (which they were later).

Rahul however repeated the same charges outside through X posts. He said no Prime Minister, including Narendra Modi, would strike such a deal unless there was undue pressure on him.

In the House, Rahul began his address with an analogy of how in martial arts after securing a grip, the opponent exercises chokehold leading the rival to announce surrender via a tap. India's strength, Rahul said, was massive data generated by 1.4 billion people which needed to be protected.

He alleged that the government had given up control over digital trade rules, removed need for data localisation, allowed free flow of Indian data to the US, limited digital taxes, and removed the requirement to disclose source codes. He said if the INDIA bloc had negotiated with US President Donald Trump, it would have insisted that Indian data remain under Indian control and that energy security be protected.

On tariffs, he claimed that average rates had moved from around 3 per cent earlier to about 18 per cent now, while American goods were entering on favourable terms now from 16 per cent to zero. Citing the textile



sector, Rahul said he had visited a factory in Gurugram, Haryana, where owners told him they were finished because of tariff changes.

He referred to a 20-year tax holiday and objected to US exports to India rising from \$46 billion to \$146 billion, questioning the absence of matching commitments from Washington. India, he said, should negotiate as an equal and not allow itself to be treated on a par with Pakistan. On agriculture, he said maize, soybean and cotton farmers among others would be hit as Indian markets were opened to mechanised American farm products. He described it as unprecedented and said no previous Prime Minister had taken such steps. "You have allowed the US to weaponise our energy and finance against us," he said.

Rijiju objected to Rahul's language and utterances which were later removed from the record. But Rahul took to X to ask if "no shame was felt in trading Indian interests." He named Union minister Hardeep Puri and an industrialist for alleged links with Epstein, the chair repeatedly intervened directing him not to take names or level unverified charges. BJP MP Ravi Shankar Prasad raised procedural objections, asking whether advance notice had been given for naming the PM and ministers.

Rijiju said serious charges were being made without proof and must be authenticated. Rahul said he was prepared to authenticate his statements. The Chair again directed him to confine to the Budget. In closing remarks, Rahul said India was heading into troubled times and that farmers, energy resources and even the armed forces had been compromised.

## Revanth Reddy's meeting with Kharge triggers buzz among Ministers



New Delhi, Feb 11

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's sudden meeting with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge in New Delhi has unsettled several senior party leaders. CPI leader K Narayana's claim of a threat to the Chief Minister from within the Cabinet has further deepened tensions.

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's unexpected meeting with Mallikarjun Kharge in New Delhi on Wednesday has triggered unease among a few senior leaders, particularly Ministers who do not see eye to eye with him in the party.

With the high command reportedly taking a serious view of the recent political controversy surrounding the Singareni coal block tenders and the Congress government's image taking a hit, it is learnt that the matter was discussed along with the allegations made against Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkata Reddy.

The Chief Minister is also said to have raised issues relating to Forest Minister Konda Surekha, Revenue Minister

Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy with the AICC chief.

Konda Surekha's daughter Sushmita's outburst and the allegations made against the Chief Minister had severely damaged the Congress party's image and exposed the state of affairs within the Cabinet.

Apart from this, CPI senior leader K Narayana on Monday triggered a storm in the Congress by claiming that there was a threat to the Chief Minister from the Revenue Minister.

With insiders indicating that these issues were discussed, Ministers, right from Bhatti Vikramarka to Srinivas Reddy to Surekha, are said to be apprehensive about Revanth Reddy's meeting with Kharge.

Congress MPs Mallu Ravi, Anil Kumar Yadav and K Raghavendra Reddy accompanied the Chief Minister during the meeting with the AICC chief. The Chief Minister is expected to meet a couple of Union Ministers on Thursday to raise pending issues relating to projects in the State.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Domestic aircraft manufacturing, an uphill task

India's civil aviation market has seen consistent growth, supported by a rapidly expanding middle-class, rising air travel demand, and increasing connectivity between metropolitan areas and regional centres. The passenger traffic is estimated to grow at 6.2% per annum by 2040, the fastest among the major economies and well above the global average of 3.9%. To meet the growing needs of the country's middle-class, India would require over 2,210 new aircraft over the next 20 years. Like most other major economies, the country depends highly on sourcing aircraft from Boeing and Airbus that have a duopoly in the industry. However, with growing demand for commercial aircraft in India as well as many other parts of the world, supplies have not been able to keep pace. There is now a stronger case than ever for indigenous aircraft production. But the biggest challenge before the country is creating the ecosystem for domestic aircraft manufacturing. This requires thousands of specialised suppliers, ranging from avionics to landing gear. Notwithstanding several challenges, a beginning has to be made somewhere. Adani Group's recent MoU with Brazil's Embraer to set up a regional aircraft manufacturing facility in India is a good step. With initiatives like 'UDAN' transforming air connectivity across Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, the need for an indigenous regional aviation ecosystem has become critical. Initiatives such as the Tata-Airbus plant in Gujarat's Vadodara, deepening collaborations with Boeing and Airbus, and a newly proposed Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) could boost efforts to develop a self-sustaining ecosystem.

In October last year, India and Russia signed an initial agreement to start manufacturing SJ-100 passenger planes in India by 2029, raising hopes for domestic aircraft production. Building commercial aircraft is a big leap that India is attempting. It requires global certifications, deep supply chains, and unforgiving safety standards. Despite multiple attempts over the decades, commercial aircraft dreams have moved little beyond proposals and prototypes. While India started by supplying components of aircraft to companies, including Boeing and Airbus, the country currently contributes a mere 5% to the global supply chain, lacking super-critical, high-complexity parts and technology to build a commercial aircraft from scratch.

## Workers Must Demonstrate Unity Through the Strike Says CITU Leader

“Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, February 11, Indian Chronicle : CITU district leader M B Narsa Reddy called upon workers to participate in the general strike and make it a success in order to demonstrate worker farmer unity against the anti worker and anti farmer policies of the Central and State governments.” He was speaking as the chief guest at a round table meeting of all party trade unions held at Chandrarao Bhavan in Bhadrachalam on Wednesday. Narsa Reddy said that the historic eight hour workday was achieved through the heroic struggle and sacrifices of workers in Chicago, but alleged that the present government is undermining this legacy by promoting a 12 hour work system. “He expressed concern that workers are being denied job security and that the principle of equal pay for equal work is not being properly implemented. He criticised the replacement of existing labour laws with labour codes, stating that the new codes dilute and weaken workers rights.” He stated that the time has come for all trade unions to unite and intensify their struggle to resist policies that he alleged are detrimental to workers. He urged all unions to participate in the general strike and demonstrate solidarity and unity.” Narsa Reddy informed that a workers rally will begin at 9.30 am



from the Mandal Parishad Office and appealed to workers to participate in large numbers. He called upon building construction workers, gram panchayat workers, shop employees, footpath vendors, government and private sector workers, unorganised sector workers and scheme workers across the town to join the strike. “He also appealed to agricultural labourers to participate in large numbers, stating that the Employment Guarantee Act is being weakened and requires protection.” The round table meeting was presided over by senior CITU leader Nakirekanti Nagaraju. Leaders including Erramsetti Venkata Ramarao, Kolagani Ramesh, Amboji Ratnam, AITUC leaders Sadhanapalli Satish and Edukondalu, Prajapandha Mass Line leaders Kachela Kalpana and Munigela Siva Prasad, VRS workers wing leader Prem Kumar, INTUC leader Singh and others participated in the meeting.

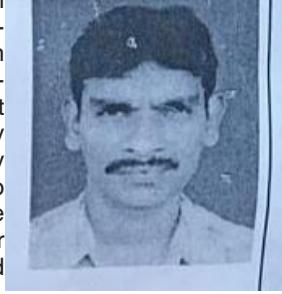
## Senior Citizens Warmly Assisted at Polling Station: DCP and ACP Interact with Elderly Voters in a Touching Display of Compassion.

“P. S. ASHOKAN “KARIMNAGAR BUREAU.” “In the backdrop of the ongoing Municipal Elections, a heartwarming and humane gesture was witnessed at the polling stations set up at Government Boys High School and Gurukul High School, Manthani.” The Deputy Commissioner of Police, Peddapalli, Shri B. Ram Reddy, along with the ACP of Godavarikhani, Shri M. Ramesh, personally interacted with elderly women voters who had arrived to exercise their franchise. The senior officers greeted them warmly and enquired with genuine concern whether they had cast their votes, whether police personnel had assisted them in entering the polling premises, and whether their health conditions were stable.” Demonstrating exemplary compassion and civic responsibility, the officers ensured that the elderly voters faced no inconvenience while exercising their democratic right.” Addressing the gathering, DCP Shri Ram Reddy reiterated that the police department remains steadfast in its commitment to public service at all times. He encouraged all citizens to participate in the electoral process fearlessly and without difficulty, emphasizing that every eligible voter should exercise their constitutional right in a free, fair, and peaceful environment.” The incident stood as a commendable example of people-centric policing and humanitarian engagement during the electoral process.



## Man dies during election

“Aswaraopet, February 11: Aswaraopet turned into chaos during the first election in the municipality. It started with the death of a person. Narala Shetty Nageswara Rao (50), a man from the Lucky Three Apartment area on Khamman Road in Aswaraopet Municipality, was casting his vote at the Mandal Parishad Primary School in Nandamuri Colony and was on his way to Tatiyakulagudem to exercise his right to vote when a major road accident occurred and Nageswara Rao died.



## District SP Rohith Raju Inspects Polling Stations During Municipal Elections

“Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, February 11, Indian Chronicle: District Superintendent of Police Rohith Raju visited several polling stations during the municipal elections and reviewed the



## Call to Make February 12 Nationwide Strike a Success



“Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, February 11, Indian Chronicle : SFI District Vice-President Koppula Ravinder called upon people to make the nationwide strike scheduled for February 12 a grand success. He urged the public to oppose what he described as the anti-worker and anti-people policies of the BJP-led Central government.” Addressing a meeting of key activists held at the Bhadrachalam division headquarters on Wednesday, Ravinder alleged that the NDA government at the Centre had scrapped 129 labour laws and replaced them with four Labour Codes, thereby weakening workers' rights. He stated that these new codes dilute provisions related to minimum wages, social security, the right to strike, and the right to form unions.” He demanded the strengthening and proper implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, stating that the scheme has been weakened and has adversely affected agricultural labourers. He also called for the withdrawal of the proposed Electricity Amendment Bill, accusing the government of attempting to introduce anti-farmer laws

indirectly. “Ravinder said that nearly 25 crore workers across the country are expected to participate in the nationwide strike. He expressed concern that the government is making decisions regarding working hours, break timings, and overtime regulations. He recalled the historic struggle that established the eight-hour workday through the spirit of May Day movements.” He alleged that several states, including Telangana, have amended labour laws to increase daily working hours up to 10 hours and overtime limits up to 12 hours. According to him, the new Labour Codes could affect benefits such as ESI, PF, gratuity, pension, and other social security measures, potentially excluding many workers from legal social security coverage.” Ravinder stated that scheme workers such as Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, Mid-Day Meal workers, IKP, VRP, MGNREGA workers, and National Health Mission staff are not being adequately recognised as workers under the new labour framework.” He alleged that the four Labour Codes would benefit corporate employers and weaken collective labour rights. He urged the government to withdraw anti-worker policies immediately. SFI leaders Kumar, Ajay, Sandeep, Arun and others were present.

## Funds Pour into Uppal; Development Works Galore

### Rs 17.50 Crore Sanctioned — Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Lays Foundation Stones for CC Roads and Storm Water Drain Works



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 11 (Indian Chronicle):” Once again, Uppal Division has received substantial funds for development works. An amount of ₹17.50 crore has been sanctioned for the construction of CC roads, storm water drain pipelines, and various other development projects in different colonies across the division.” On Tuesday evening, Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy, along with Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, representatives of colony welfare associations, and local residents, laid the foundation stones for these works.” Speaking on the occasion, Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy detailed the sanctioned works and allocated funds.” KTR Nagar, Ramanthapur: ₹1.15 crore for CC road construction” Brindavan Colony, Ramanthapur: ₹58 lakh for CC roads” Sri Sri Nagar Colony, BB Saheb Maktha area: ₹90 lakh for CC roads” Amruth Colony: ₹1.05 crore for CC roads” Sri Shakti Colony & South Swaroop Nagar: ₹40 lakh for CC roads” Rajiv Kalyana Mandapam, Uppal: ₹68 lakh for development works” Shantinagar Shadi Khana, Uppal: ₹10 lakh for internal development” Sri Ramanapuram, Ramanthapur: ₹1.50 crore for CC roads” Church Colony, Ramanthapur: ₹2.27 crore for various development works” ₹1.18 crore for CC road construction” ₹1.09 crore for drinking water pipeline and underground drainage works” Lakshminarayana Colony & Venkateshwara Colony, Ramanthapur: ₹92 lakh for CC roads” Reddy-Munnuru Kapu Cremation Ground, Uppal



polling process.” He inspected polling stations in Kothagudem, Yellandu and Aswaraopeta and examined the arrangements in place. The SP interacted with officials and staff on duty and issued necessary instructions to ensure the smooth conduct of polling.” In addition to the polling stations, he also reviewed the security arrangements at the strong rooms in Yellandu. The SP stated that elaborate security measures had been put in place to ensure that the election process proceeded peacefully and without any untoward incidents across the three municipalities.

## 65.18 Percent Polling Recorded in District Till 3 PM Says District Election Officer

“Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, February 11, Indian Chronicle: A total of 65.18 percent polling was recorded till 3 pm in the municipal elections being held in Bhadradi Kothagudem district, according to District Election Officer and Collector Jitesh V Patil. He stated that polling was progressing peacefully across the three urban local bodies in the district.” Out of a total of 1,85,348 voters in the district, 1,20,808 voters had exercised their franchise by 3 pm. Aswaraopet Municipality recorded 70.76 percent polling, Kothagudem Municipal Corporation recorded 66.31 percent, and Yellandu Municipality recorded 57.87 percent.” In Aswaraopeta, 11,923 out of 16,850 voters cast their votes. In Kothagudem, 89,370 out of 1,34,775 voters exercised their franchise, while in Yellandu, 19,515 out of 33,723 voters voted.” The Collector stated that polling was being conducted smoothly at all 288 polling stations set up across 106 wards in the district and that no untoward incidents had been reported. Adequate security arrangements were made at the polling stations and the process was being monitored through webcasting.” The District Election Officer appealed to voters to turn out in large numbers during the remaining hours and exercise their right to vote.



## “TAPRPA Extends Support to February 12 Nationwide General Strike

““Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi kothagudem Bureau, February 11, Indian Chronicle : The Telangana Pensioners and Retired Persons Association TAPRPA has announced its support for the nationwide general strike scheduled to be held on February 12, 2026. Acting on the call given by the State committee, the association has urged its members across the state to participate in large numbers and make the strike a success.”“In a statement, the association demanded the withdrawal of the four Labour Codes introduced by the Central government. It also expressed concern over the decision to allow 100 percent foreign direct investment in the insurance sector, the privatisation of public sector undertakings, and the introduction of the Validation Act 2025, which it said could adversely affect pensioners.”“The association criticised what it described as anti worker, anti farmer, anti employee and anti pensioner policies, and called upon the government to reconsider and withdraw such measures.”“According to the statement, workers, public organisations and employees from sectors including LIC, banking, postal services and BSNL, along with other unions, are expected to participate in the strike across the state.”“TAPRPA has directed its members to take part in the protest rally scheduled at 10 am on Thursday, February 12, wearing TAPRPA badges. The State committee appealed to district units to mobilise members in large numbers and coordinate participation at their respective venues.

## City Style Gym Athletes Selected for State Level CM Cup Competitions

““Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi kothagudem Bureau, February 11, Indian Chronicle : Two athletes from City Style Gym in Bhadrachalam have been selected to participate in the State level CM Cup Powerlifting Championships following their impressive performance at the district level competitions.”“The district level powerlifting event was conducted as part of the second edition of the CM Cup under the supervision of coach G V Ramireddy at the City Style Gym Centre in Bhadrachalam. In the 69 kg category, Mamidi Bhoomika secured a gold medal, while D Meghana Chowdary won a silver medal, coach Ramireddy announced.”“The medal winners will represent the district at the State level CM Cup competitions scheduled to be held on the 20 and 21 of this month at the LB Stadium in Hyderabad.”“The athletes were congratulated by Telangana State Vice President V Mallesham, District Association President Bhogala Srinivas Reddy, District General Secretary G V Ramireddy, Vice President Dr Shivarao Krishna Prasad, Treasurer Mahanti Venkata Krishnaji, Joint Secretaries Bhavani Shankar, Gugulot Shoban Naik, Abdul Farooq and M D Abbas, along with representatives of various sports associations, town dignitaries, political leaders, members of Green Bhadradi, and fellow gym athletes including D V Shankara Rao and Bhogala Veera Reddy



## Uppal Congress In-charge



PARAMASHWAR REDDY Meets First Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation Commissioner”“Kishore

## Kondapalli Ganesh casts his vote

““Yellandu, February 11 ( Indian Chronicle):“Congress candidate Kondapalli Ganesh Saritha cast his vote at a polling booth in Ward No. 23. Speaking on the occasion, Congress leader Kondapalli Ganesh said that the Congress party will win with a huge majority in the ward. The Congress won 24 seats.



## Polling ends peacefully



““Yellandu, February 11 ( Indian Chronicle):“Polling was held in 24 wards of the municipality. The polling went on smoothly from seven in the morning till five in the evening. Police and paramilitary personnel were deployed in large numbers to prevent any untoward incidents. Voters cast their votes. Congress and BRS candidates are confident of their victory. At the polling stations, the MLAs and ex-MLAs urged the voters to vote for their party.

## Bonthu Sridevi Yadav Inaugurates Free Sewing Machine Training Center

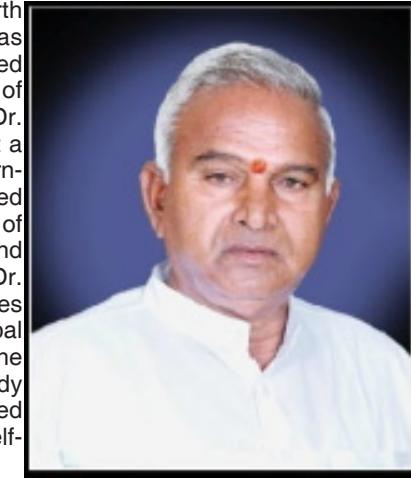
““NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 11, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“Medchal District, Cherlapally Division: A free sewing machine training center was inaugurated at Vidya Maruthi Nagar Colony under the supervision of Yahweh-Jireh Grace Trust Chairman V. Mathew and Treasurer V. Mercy Priya. The center was formally opened by GHMC Standing Committee Member and Cherlapally Division Corporator Bonthu Sridevi Yadav. Speaking on the occasion, she said that such training centers play a vital role in empowering women economically. She stated that skill-based training in tailoring enables women to become self-reliant and create self-employment opportunities. She further noted that initiatives like this help improve the financial stability of families and contribute to community development. The organizers stated that the center aims to provide free training to women from economically weaker sections, equipping them with practical skills to earn a sustainable livelihood.



## 79th Birth Anniversary of Late Former MLA Bandari Raji Reddy Observed Today under the Leadership of BRS Leader Dr. B. V. Chary

### Fruit distribution at a government hospital and notebook distribution at a government school held today

““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 11 (Indian Chronicle):“As per the instructions of Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, the 79th birth anniversary of late leader and former Uppal MLA Bandari Raji Reddy was observed today. On this occasion, a service-oriented programme was organised on Thursday morning at 8:30 AM under the leadership of senior leader of Venkat Reddy Nagar Division and former president of Habsiguda Division, Dr. B. V. Chary. As part of the programme, fruits were distributed to patients at a government hospital and notebooks were distributed to students at a government school. Speaking on the occasion, BRS leader Dr. B. V. Chary informed that these activities were organised to commemorate the birth anniversary of the late leader. He appealed to party leaders, women leaders, supporters, and activists to participate in large numbers and make the programme a success. Dr. B. V. Chary, while addressing the gathering, recalled the invaluable services rendered by late Bandari Raji Reddy, who served as the first MLA of the Uppal constituency, Chairman of Kapra Municipality, and as a Board Member of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD). He stated that Bandari Raji Reddy dedicated his life to public service and emphasised that there is a strong need to remember and honour the contributions of such leaders who worked selflessly for the welfare of the people.



## Grand Farewell Party Organized Under the Leadership of Founder Chairman Madhukar at Sri Narayana Junior College



““NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 11, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“A grand farewell party was organized under the leadership of Founder Chairman Madhukar at Sri Narayana Junior College, located in Boduppal Circle, Peerzadiguda. The event was celebrated with great enthusiasm and active participation from students, faculty, and distinguished guests. The program was attended by AISF State Secretary Putta Laxman, Medchal-Malkajgiri District Secretary Anwar, Vignan Academy Director Prasad, Manoj, and faculty member Yadagiri as chief guests. They extended their best wishes to the outgoing students and appreciated the institution for organizing a memorable event. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Madhukar described the farewell party as a significant milestone in a student's academic journey. He stated that such occasions provide an opportunity for students to cherish memories shared with teachers and friends, while also stepping confidently toward a new phase in life. He

emphasized that a farewell is not merely a goodbye, but the beginning of new opportunities and aspirations. The celebration featured vibrant cultural performances by students, including dances, songs, and mimicry acts. Fun games such as Musical Chairs and Passing the Ball added excitement to the event. Students shared their cherished memories, expressed gratitude to their teachers, and re-created memorable classroom moments through light-hearted performances. A photo booth was arranged to capture special moments, and small mementos were presented to students as tokens of appreciation. The venue was filled with joy, laughter, and emotional moments as students bid farewell to their teachers and classmates. The event concluded on an optimistic note with the message, This is not an end, but a new beginning. Chairman Madhukar thanked everyone individually for contributing to the success of the farewell celebration.

## Ashwatha-Neem Tree Kalyanam at Sri Maisamma Temple, Uppal New Bharat Nagar

— Under the leadership of BRS leaders Anya Kavitha-Balakrishna couple”“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 11 (Indian Chronicle):“The Ashwatha-Neem Tree Kalyanam Mahotsavam will be held grandly on Thursday at the Sri Maisamma Temple, Uppal New Bharat Nagar, under the leadership of Uppal Division BRS senior leaders Anya Kavitha and Balakrishna. It was announced that Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy will attend the Kalyanam Mahotsavam as the chief guest. The temple rituals will commence from 6:00 AM with Ganapati Puja, Punyahavachanam, Navagraha Puja, Mantaparadhana of the installed deity, Kalasha Sthapanam, Avahita Devata homams, and abhishekam to Sri Maisamma Ammavaru. At 8:00 AM, the Ashwatha-Neem Tree Kalyanam, followed by Harati, Mantrapushpam, and other puja rituals, will be performed. Devotees have been requested to participate in large numbers and receive the blessings of Maisamma Ammavaru. After the Kalyanam, Anna Prasadam (free meal distribution) will be organized.



## Doctor Saves Accident Victim in Charla, Wins Public Praise



““Bhukya RanjithNaik, Bhadradi kothagudem Bureau, February 11, Indian Chronicle : A road accident near Satyanarayanaipuram Gram Panchayat limits in Charla on Tuesday created tense moments after a man was found lying unconscious by the roadside. The victim, identified as Mallam Koteswara Rao, 35, a resident of Chinna Musileru village, sustained injuries in the accident, leaving locals in panic and unsure of how to respond.”“At that critical moment, a doctor passing by in a black car stopped and immediately assessed the situation. Dressed in a blue shirt, he provided first aid to the injured man and swiftly arranged for his transportation to the Satyanarayanaipuram Primary Health Centre for further treatment. His timely intervention helped avert a major tragedy.”“The doctor was later identified as Dr Krishna Prasad of Jeevan Hospital. Known for treating the medical profession as a service rather than just a job, Dr Krishna Prasad once again demonstrated his commitment to saving lives and standing by people in distress.”“The entire incident was accidentally recorded on CCTV cameras installed at the residence of Health Mitra Shiva of the Charla Community Health Centre. After viewing the footage, local residents praised the doctor's dedication and humanitarian spirit.”“The phrase Vaidyo Narayana Hari, which likens doctors to God, seemed apt in this situation. Many locals remarked that doctors who come to the rescue in times of danger are truly living embodiments of compassion.”“It is learnt that Dr Krishna Prasad had earlier rescued a young woman injured in an accident in the Bhadrachalam area, reaffirming his belief that every life is precious. The incident in Charla has once again highlighted the presence of humanity and selfless service in society, with residents expressing heartfelt gratitude to the doctor for saving a life





## Bengaluru woman accuses daughter of sharing family members' private photos with boyfriend

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

According to the FIR, the woman last month noticed her daughter on a video call with an unknown man. The daughter immediately disconnected, arousing suspicion in her. When questioned about the video call, the daughter avoided answering, according to the woman. When the woman asked her daughter to share her mobile phone password with her, she refused to do it. After hours of persuasion, the woman and her husband finally gained access to their daughter's phone. The woman said in her complaint that she had seen her nude photos and videos on the phone. She also found out that her sister's nude images had been shared with a man.

Messages retrieved from the phone indicated that the man had specifically requested such images, according to the complaint. Fearful that the material might have been distributed further, the woman deleted the images from the

phone and instructed her daughter to cease contact with the man, she added. The daughter, however, started arguing with her parents about the incident later. On February 5, the daughter left home stating that she would marry her boyfriend. A police officer said the woman's daughter and the man had been traced. "The couple married on February 6 and got their marriage registered at a sub-registrar's office. We are also verifying the claims of the mother and have issued a notice to the couple to appear before the police," the officer said. The police have registered the case under sections 67 (publishing, transmitting, or causing to be published/transmitted of obscene material in electronic form), 66 (e) (violation of privacy by intentionally capturing, publishing, or transmitting images of a person's private areas without their consent) of the Information Act, as well as 79 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman), 77 (voyeurism) and 78 (stalking) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

## Senior cyclists from Pune, Mumbai pedal 3,830 km across Southeast Asia in 41 days

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

With their bicycles carefully packed in boxes and flown from Pune to Bangkok, then assembled at the airport and along with the luggage—around 10–12 kg per rider, this team of six senior citizens went on to successfully complete an arduous and extraordinary cycling expedition across South-East Asia-Thailand-Laos-Cambodia and Vietnam covering 3,830 km in 41 days. Long distance cycling is their shared passion and the team from Pune and Mumbai comprising retired officials from an MNC, pharmaceutical firm and even Maharashtra police connected with local communities, visited schools and promoted the message about friendship and understanding across cultures.

Led by Pune based 68-year-old Sanjay Katti the other team members include Ramakant Mahadik, 72, Dhananjan Madan 67, Sanjay Kumthekar, 62, Raju (Anand) Patil, 59 and Monish Chakraborty, 55. The expedition commenced in Bangkok, Thailand, on December 6, last year and the cyclists proceeded to Ayutthaya later heading north into Laos, reaching Vientiane, the capital city. After sightseeing in Vientiane, the team traveled south to Pakse and entered Cambodia through the Nong Nok Kheine border. In Cambodia, they visited Angkor Wat in Siem Reap before proceeding to Phnom Penh, the capital city.

After crossing the Bavet-Moc Bai border to enter Vietnam, continuing on to Ho Chi Minh City. From Ho Chi Minh City, they cycled all the way to Hanoi, covering approximately 1,800 km from south to north in 30 days, passing through Nha Trang, Hoi An, Da Nang, Phong Nha, and Ninh Binh, finally reaching Hanoi. "We would begin at 6 am and cycle around 80-100 kms. After every eight days of cycling, two rest days were scheduled," Katti, who has undertaken mountaineering expeditions before he actively started cycling. "I had back pain and my knees were bothering me, especially when going downhill," Katti recalled as later he



took up long distance cycling post retirement as Deputy General Manager with Mercedes Benz. Katti would be amazed by the wide variety of natural attractions during his long-distance rides, meet like-minded cyclists and decide to ride together.

Raju (Anand) Patil who retired as ACP, Thane said that good health is the basic foundation of success. "True wealth begins with being well," Patil who was part of the team and has also engaged in several long-distance rides. For Chakraborty who decided to opt for early retirement as district manager-Pfizer India said after three decades in the field he decided to pursue his passion – mountaineering and trekking and is also part of Pune based 'Young Seniors' cycling group that meets regularly daily and follows a set schedule. The other three are also avid cyclists and the team says it was remarkable that the entire expedition was successfully completed without any mishaps, loss of belongings, illness or even a single argument among them. "Preparedness is the key. There is no room for losing concentration and while riding, we ensured to avoid distractions like phone calls or chatting. Also we had a clear rule: no alcohol, purely as a safety precaution," Katti said, adding that the team returned to Pune on Feb 4 this year.

## BMC floats 361 tenders worth Rs 600 crore after civic polls

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has floated 361 tenders worth around Rs 600 crore in the month following the civic elections according to official records, with most of them issued immediately after the withdrawal of the model code of conduct. Of the total tenders floated between January 17 and February 9, 355 are currently live. The tenders were issued after the State Election Commission lifted the code of conduct imposed ahead of local body polls, ending a month long freeze on civic contracting activity.

The tenders cover a range of infrastructure and civic works across Mumbai including resurfacing of roads in the eastern suburbs and repairs to portions of the Bandra Waste Water Treatment Facility (WWTF). Civic officials said a large number of these tenders had been pending since December but could not be floated due to the code of conduct.

BMC records show that no tenders were floated between December 15 when the code came into effect and January 16, when the civic elections were announced. "Usually five-ten tenders are floated every week. However, during the month-long period of code of conduct no new tenders could be floated and a backlog was created. Therefore, after the elections they were uploaded immediately to prefer any delay in executing the civic works" an official Among the key works tendered during this period are repairs at the municipal-run KEM Hospital, hiring of vehicles for waste collection in Borivali, drainage and passage



repairs in Malad, procurement of vehicle-mounted mist spray machines to address air pollution and maintenance of CCTV cameras at HBT College.

The tendering push comes as the civic body prepares to transition out of administrator's rule which has been in place since March 7, 2022 after the dissolution of the elected body. During this period, all tenders were cleared by the municipal commissioner as the powers of the mayor and statutory committees were vested in the post. "The administrator rule will continue in BMC till the Mayor is elected. If any of these projects whose tenders are already live faces a road block then they will be sent back to acquire a fresh process of approvals from the statutory committees which are currently not there for the past four years" a civic official said.

## Maharashtra HSC board exams begin tomorrow; 248 centres declared sensitive

Of the total candidates, 7,99,773 are from the science stream, 3,80,692 from arts, 3,20,152 from commerce, 27,378 from the vocational stream, and 4,492 from Industrial Training Institutes (ITI).

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

The Maharashtra State Board's Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) or Class 12 board examinations will begin on February 10, with 15,32,487 candidates registered across the state. As many as 248 examination centres, where malpractice or other issues were reported in the past five years, have been declared sensitive. Of the total candidates, 7,99,773 are from the science stream, 3,80,692 from arts, 3,20,152 from commerce, 27,378 from the vocational stream, and 4,492 from Industrial Training Institutes (ITI).

The gender ratio continues to remain skewed, with 8,20,229 male candidates, 7,12,240 female candidates and 18 transgender candidates registered for the exams. The examinations will be conducted across 10,664 junior colleges, with students appearing at 3,387 main centres. "Ninety-five per cent of these centres are equipped with CCTV cameras," said Nandkumar Bedse, temporary chairperson of the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (MSBSHSE). As part of the annual copy-free initiative launched by the state government, staff at the 172 centres that do not have CCTV cameras have been transferred. In addition, the board has declared 248 centres as sensitive.

A total of 271 flying squads have been appointed across the state. Vigilance committees have also been constituted in each district under the chairmanship of the District Collector, while special flying squads have been formed by the divisional boards. Board members and district-level government officers have been instructed to conduct surprise visits to examination centres. Cases will be registered under the Maharashtra Prevention of Malpractices Act, 1982, against those who instigate, aid or abet malpractices, as well as those directly involved in such acts at any examination centre. The state board has also clarified that xerox centres will remain closed within a 500-metre radius of examination centres, instead of the usual 100 metres.

Candidates have been instructed to reach their examination centres at least half an hour before the scheduled start time. Students appearing for the morning session must be present in the examination hall by 10.30 am, while those appearing for the afternoon session must report by 2.30 pm. As per existing norms, an additional 10 minutes will be provided at the end of the stipulated examination time. For mental health support, 10 counsellors have been appointed at the state board level, while two counsellors have been appointed at the divisional board level for each district, who will be available to students over the phone.

## NCP's PMC wing to urge national executive to appoint Sunetra Pawar as national unit chief



GNS News Agency, Feb 11

The PMC unit of NCP has unanimously decided to urge the party to appoint Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar as national chief of the party, which became vacant after the death of Ajit Pawar. "Considering all the factors in depth, it is believed that the leadership of Sunetra Pawar, wife of Ajit Pawar and the new Deputy Chief Minister, who is loyal to the ideological tradition of Ajit Pawar, understands the party's organisational culture, and can maintain restraint, balance, and stability during difficult times, should be the national president of the NCP. It will be in the best interest of the party, acceptable, and provide stability," said the NCP leader in PMC.

She has always contributed selflessly to the party and its leadership from behind the scenes, and her personality is one that can bring all sections together, said Nikam adding, "Therefore, considering the party's interests, organisational continuity, legal aspects, and the emotional trust of the party workers, in accordance with the constitution of the Nationalist Congress Party, this proposal to elect Sunetra Pawar as the National President of the Nationalist

Congress Party was placed before all the corporators of the Nationalist Congress Party in the Pune Municipal Corporation." He said the proposal has been unanimously approved, and a resolution has been passed in this meeting that this approved proposal should be officially sent to the National Executive Committee of the Nationalist Congress Party for further appropriate decisions and necessary action.

The unfortunate accidental death of Ajit Pawar, the national president, guide, and source of inspiration for the Nationalist Congress Party on January 28 is an irreparable loss for the NCP and for the political life of the country. His demise has cast a pall of sorrow over the party, creating a huge void at the organizational level, said Nikam. "Throughout his political career, he steadfastly upheld the party's ideological direction, organisational strength, and the confidence of the ordinary workers, leading the party through many difficult times with unwavering resolve." The NCP is a party that follows the principles of social justice, equality, and fraternity of Shahu-Phule-Ambedkar, as well as the tradition of ideal, restrained, and inclusive leadership of Yashwantrao Chavan. Preserving this ideological tradition, maintaining the party's unity, and sustaining the emotional and moral confidence of the workers has become extremely necessary at this juncture," said Nikam. "To prevent any adverse impact on the party's decision-making process, organisational functioning, and public image due to the vacancy in the national president's position, it is essential to elect a new leader immediately, but entirely within the legal and constitutional framework. According to the relevant provisions of the Nationalist Congress Party's constitution, if the national president's post becomes vacant, the party's authorised body has the right to elect a new president through a proper resolution," he added.

## Hyderabad techie arrested for 26 break-ins to fund lavish lifestyle that salary couldn't afford



A software engineer working in a Hyderabad firm has been arrested in Visakhapatnam for his alleged involvement in at least 26 house burglaries. Officials from the Gajuwaka police station alleged that the 27-year-old craved a lavish lifestyle, which he could not afford on his salary. "He broke into locked houses," said Visakhapatnam Police Commissioner Shankarappa Bagchi. "He purchased a BMW car using the stolen proceeds, including cash, gold and silver ornaments." Hyderabad techie lavish lifestyle. Common burglary items were cash, gold and silver ornaments. (Express Photo) Twenty-six cases of burglary have been registered against him across Visakhapatnam, involving the theft of over 1 kg of gold, 6 kg of silver and Rs 40,500 in cash. Following his arrest, the police recovered 699 grams of gold ornaments, 3.8 kg of silver ornaments and the luxury car. Police also believe the accused, a postgraduate, used the proceeds to fund some trips abroad.

Officials said he would allegedly drive the BMW while conducting a recce of homes where the owners were away. He used simple tools like hammers, cutters and screwdrivers to break in and wore a mask and a cap to disguise himself, police said. He allegedly travelled long distances to choose the houses, never returning to the same locality

within a short period, police said. Police found out that he had been arrested previously, too, as a teenager for allegedly breaking into four houses. He was sent to a juvenile home for a few weeks. He also spent 14 months in jail for a spate of break-ins around his native place, Kakinada. "His involvement has been found in 62 break-ins so far," an officer said.

## 'Back office' era is over, design will be focus of India's Semiconductor Mission 2.0: Ashwini Vaishnaw

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

After the release of Qualcomm Technologies' advanced semiconductor design using 2-nanometre technology in Whitefield, Bengaluru, the minister said that the era when India was merely a hub for "back office development" is over. "Today, we unveiled a 2-nanometre chip... This is in a series of companies.. AMD has done it, now Qualcomm has, it is a series of developments where companies are designing end-to-end products in India."

On AI entering the Indian tech industry, Vaishnaw said, "The opportunity that comes out of this is that we as a country have a strong industry which is ready to go to any enterprise and provide a tech-based solution. Earlier, we were providing a software-based solution; now we have the opportunity to provide an AI-based solution."

He also disclosed that two companies had expressed interest in setting up AI server manufacturing facilities in India. Vaishnaw added, "That is a direct result of the data centres coming up in India... The motherboard and other components which go into a server, the manufacturing of which can also be taken up rapidly, because as part of the Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme, there are units which are going to manufacture the most advanced printed circuit boards in the country." Regarding the physical

cal fabrication of semiconductors, he expressed optimism that manufacturing in India could take on the challenge of producing smaller boards by working toward 7-nanometre chips, having already begun with 28-nanometre chips used in applications such as the automotive sector. He said, "That experience is now being integrated into our country. We have defined the path to 7 nm, having learned from other countries that have followed this path, such as Taiwan and South Korea." Speaking to the assembled Qualcomm personnel, the minister said, "Let us keep it as a target that the 2 nm chip should also be fabbed in India."

## Karnataka cop arrested for role in robbery of Rs 5 lakh and 40 g of gold in wife's village



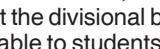
GNS News Agency, Feb 11

A 37-year-old Karnataka Police constable who allegedly orchestrated a robbery committed by a gang of thieves has been arrested and suspended from service, officials said. Pradeep Hanumantappa Naik, from Mudinakoppa in Haveri district, was working as a district armed reserve (DAR) constable in Haveri district. A 2008-batch constable, he had served as the driver for the Hirekerur police circle inspector for four years. The robbery took place in Hirekerur taluk.

According to Superintendent of Police Yashodha

Vantagodi, five masked robbers broke into the house of Mallangouda Patil in Nidnagilu village on the night of January 19. Wearing monkey caps and armed with knives, they threatened five people inside the house before fleeing with Rs 5 lakh in cash, 40 g of gold jewellery, and 244 g of silver. The others who are arrested in the robbery case are Malleshappa Venkappa Naik from Shidenur village in Byadgi taluk, Kantesha Muttappa Waddar from Kerur village in Badami taluk, Ajeya Hanumant Salhalli from Belawadi in Bailongal, Belagavi district, and Nagaraj Hanumant Waddar. The Hirekerur police formed four teams and arrested the other accused. It was during the investigation that Naik's role in planning and executing the theft emerged, the police said.

A police officer said, "Naik is married to a woman from Nidnagilu. He frequently visited the village and also claimed to be the beat constable in the area, which helped him gather information. Later, he passed the information to the robbers and fixed the date to execute the robbery. We are also looking at how Naik befriended the robbers. Phone conversations have revealed his involvement." The police said they seized Rs 52,000 in cash, 7.7 g of gold, a motorcycle used in the crime, and other items from the accused. The investigation revealed the accused had pawned the stolen gold at a finance company to obtain loans.



## Maharashtra municipal corporation elections: Jalgaon Shiv Sena candidate Lalit Kolhe, who contested from jail, wins



GNS News Agency, Feb 11

Lalit Kolhe, former Jalgaon mayor and Shiv Sena member who contested the Maharashtra municipal corporation elections from prison, was Friday declared elected from the multi-panel Ward 11 of the Jalgaon City Municipal Corporation. Kolhe is currently lodged in jail for his alleged role in a fake call centre case. His mother, Sindhu Kolhe, was also declared a winner of the same ward, and his son, Piyush, won from Ward 4.

Kolhe was arrested in October 2025 by the Jalgaon police after a raid on a farmhouse, allegedly built on land owned by him. The police arrested Kolhe along with seven others, claiming that the fake call centre was run to dupe foreign nationals involving lakhs of rupees, and the money was converted to cryptocurrency. Kolhe, who was lodged in Jalgaon jail and later transferred to Nashik jail, had sought permission from the magistrate court to complete the pro-

## 'Main PAU campus Kisan Mela on March 20 & 21': VC urges farmers to visit melas, gather latest info on agri tech

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

Dr Satbir Singh Gosal, Vice-Chancellor, PAU, has urged the farming community of Punjab and the adjoining states to note down these mela dates and make the farmers' fairs successful with their enthusiastic participation. Dr Satbir Singh Gosal, Vice-Chancellor, PAU, has urged the farming community of Punjab and the adjoining states to note down these mela dates and make the farmers' fairs successful with their enthusiastic participation. The Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) has released the itinerary for the upcoming Kisan Melas to be held in seven districts of Punjab in March 2026.

The PAU Kisan Melas are held biannually. In March, the farmers flock to the Melas to buy paddy and other seeds for the kharif sowing season, while in September, seeds are sold for rabi crops. PAU Director of Extension Education Dr MS Bhullar informed that the Kisan Melas will kick off with the first mela at Nagkalan-Jahangir in Amritsar on March 10, followed by the melas at Rauni (Patiala) and Ballowal Saunkhri on March 12 and 14, respectively.

Further, he said that the Kisan Mela at Faridkot will be held on March 17, while the two-day on-campus PAU Kisan Mela at Ludhiana will be organised on March 20 and 21. The Kisan Melas at Bathinda and Gurdaspur will be held on March 24 and 27, respectively, he said. Dr Satbir Singh Gosal, Vice-Chancellor, PAU, has urged the farming community of Punjab and the adjoining states to note down these mela dates and make the farmers' fairs successful with their enthusiastic participation. "PAU is evolving each day

## Two FIRs filed against Karnataka Congress leader Rajeev Gowda in Shidlaghatta for threats, abuse



GNS News Agency, Feb 11

Amid a controversy over the incident, the Karnataka Congress on Thursday issued a show-cause notice to Rajeev for violating party discipline. Amid a controversy over the incident, the Karnataka Congress on Thursday issued a show-cause notice to Rajeev for violating party discipline. Two separate cases were lodged against Karnataka Congress leader Rajeev Gowda on Wednesday over allegations of verbal abuse, criminal intimidation, obstruction of official duties, and attempts to disturb public order in Shidlaghatta town. Authorities said he is currently absconding.

The first First Information Report (FIR) was filed by Amruta Gowda, Shidlaghatta City Municipal Council Commissioner, who alleged that on January 13, banners bearing Rajeev's image were installed at multiple locations, including Koti Circle, without permission, obstructing traffic. Some of the banners had allegedly fallen onto the road and were removed by civic staff. The commissioner said that on January 12, Rajeev called her, allegedly used abusive language, demanded the banners be reinstated immediately, and threatened civic staff. She added that he warned of mobilising people from multiple wards, inciting unrest, damaging public property, and obstructing city council functions. She said the call caused severe mental distress to her and her staff. The FIR was registered under sections 132 (assaulting or using criminal force against a public servant), 224 (threat of injury to a public servant), 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace), 351(3) (criminal intimidation), and 56 (abettment) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023.

The second FIR was filed by N C Srinivasa Gowda, farmer and taluk vice-president of the JD(S). He alleged that during the same call, Rajeev made provocative statements, abused Shidlaghatta MLA B N Ravikumar, and falsely blamed him for the removal of the banners. The complaint also stated that Rajeev threatened to mobilise people

from 31 wards, damage government offices, and incite violence, while making indecent remarks against women government officials. A purported audio of the call circulated widely on social media, raising concerns among residents. This FIR was registered under sections 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace) and 353(2) (offences related to public mischief from false statements) of the BNS, 2023. Amid a controversy over the incident, the Karnataka Congress on Thursday issued a show-cause notice to Rajeev for violating party discipline.

## HC stays single-bench order to regularise SSA teachers in UT

Punjab widow's 28-year legal battle for compensation ends with HC ruling. Punjab and Haryana High Court stays order directing regularisation of UT teachers appointed under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Thursday stayed a single-judge bench order directing regularisation of services of all UT teachers appointed under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and having completed over 10 years of service. A division bench of Justices Ashwani Kumar Mishra and Rohit Kapoor passed an interim order, hearing an appeal by the Chandigarh Administration and another petitioner, challenging the single-bench's ruling. The Chandigarh Administration had appointed over 1,300 teachers under the SSA between 2005 and 2014 after public advertisements, written tests and verification of qualifications. Although the appointments replicated the procedure for regular government teachers, the educators remained on annual contracts, with the administration citing a lack of sanctioned posts. On November 14 last, the single bench had ordered the regularisation of all Chandigarh teachers appointed under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan who had completed more than 10 years of service, holding that the administration cannot "misuse contractual labels to deny them the rights of regular employees". The ruling had directed the Union Territory administration and the Centre to regularise eligible members of the SSA cadre within six weeks. Appearing for the administration on Thursday, senior counsel Amit Jhanji, assisted by advocate Abhishek K Premi, argued that Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was a centrally sponsored scheme and that posts created under it were never merged with the regular teaching cadre of the Union Territory. In the absence of any policy decision or sanctioned posts, he contended, the writ petitioners could not claim a legal right to regularisation.

## After 350th martyrdom day of Guru Tegh Bahadur, AAP to focus on Guru Ravidas' 650th



GNS News Agency, Feb 11

In the 2022 Assembly elections, AAP secured overwhelming support from Scheduled Castes, winning a majority of the state's 34 reserved seats, considered a decisive factor behind its landslide victory. In the 2022 Assembly elections, AAP secured overwhelming support from Scheduled Castes, winning a majority of the state's 34 reserved seats, considered a decisive factor behind its landslide victory. After wrapping up the commemoration of the 350th martyrdom anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Punjab is preparing for another major religious show with significant political overtones, the 650th birth anniversary of Guru Ravidas, scheduled for February 2027.

With Assembly elections due in early 2027, the government plans to kick off the commemorations a year in advance. The formal announcement will be made from Khuralkar in Hoshiarpur district, revered as the birthplace of Guru Ravidas, on Guru Ravidas Jayanti in February 2026. The officials of the government are already preparing for the show. "The celebrations will run through the year, with a detailed calendar of events across Punjab and outside the state. The Department of Cultural Affairs, which coordinated the Guru Tegh Bahadur commemorations across multiple states, has already begun groundwork for the Ravidas anniversary," an official said. That 2026 also marks the final year of the AAP government's tenure. With Scheduled Castes forming 32.5 per cent of Punjab's popu-

lation, the highest proportion for any state in the country, the community has always remained a central pivot of Punjab's electoral politics. Within this, the Ravidassia community constitutes the largest segment, followed by the Valmiki-Mazhab Sikhs population. In the 2022 Assembly elections, AAP secured overwhelming support from Scheduled Castes, winning a majority of the state's 34 reserved seats, considered a decisive factor behind its landslide victory. Four years into governance, the AAP is looking to outdo the rival parties to reclaim the Dalit vote. Celebrating Guru Ravidas Jayanti on an unprecedented scale, senior leaders indicate, is part of a broader effort to reinforce AAP's political messaging among SC voters, blending cultural assertion with governance outreach. Sources say the government may use the occasion to announce fresh welfare measures, scholarships, infrastructure projects in Dalit-dominated areas and initiatives linked to religious tourism around Guru Ravidas-related sites. The commemoration will throw focus on AAP's emphasis on the Scheduled Castes. With the Congress still struggling to regain credibility among Dalit voters after its 2022 rout, and the Shiromani Akali Dal attempting a revival through Panthic and community-specific outreach, AAP sees consolidation of the SC vote as critical to offset potential erosion among other social groups.

The near absence of the BSP as an independent political force has further intensified competition for Dalit support. This is not the first time a Punjab government has used religious symbolism to engage the Scheduled Castes. While former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal had announced a memorial for Guru Ravidas at Khuralkar, his successor Amarinder Singh expanded the project by announcing the Minar-e-Begumpura memorial, which was completed during the tenure of Charan Singh Channi, Punjab's first Dalit Chief Minister and a member of the Ravidassia community. For AAP, however, the stakes are even higher. With limited traditional party structures and a government record that will soon be up for electoral scrutiny, the party is leaning heavily on cultural connect, symbolism and targeted welfare to retain the loyalty of a community that not only forms nearly a third of the electorate but also has the potential to decisively shape Punjab's 2027 verdict.

## President Droupadi Murmu's Jalandhar visit cancelled due to bad weather



GNS News Agency, Feb 11

President Droupadi Murmu's scheduled visit to Jalandhar in Punjab on Friday was cancelled due to adverse weather conditions, officials confirmed. The President was to attend the 21st convocation ceremony of Dr B R Ambedkar National Institute of Technology (NIT), Jalandhar, as the chief guest.

During the event, the President was supposed to award degrees to 1,452 students from various programmes, including BTech, MTech, MBA, MSc, and PhD. In addition, 31 meritorious students were to receive gold medals from the President for their outstanding academic performance. According to the NIT administration, President Murmu's presence was meant to inspire young graduates and encourage them to contribute to technological innovation and nation-building. However, poor visibility and safety concerns arising from unfavourable weather led to the cancellation of the visit. In view of the President's proposed tour, the Jalandhar district administration had put in place extensive security arrangements. On the orders of the Additional

District Magistrate, the district was declared a "no flying zone" from January 14 to January 16. During this period, the use of drones, private helicopters, remote-controlled aircraft, and hot air balloons was strictly prohibited. Security agencies had taken control of the convocation venue and established a multi-layered security cordon. Traffic police had also implemented route diversions to ensure smooth movement and minimize inconvenience to the general public.

## Advanced 'mobile laboratory' from Pune NIV sent to West Bengal as virus hits health care workers



GNS News Agency, Feb 11

Following the confirmation of Nipah virus infections in five individuals, including a doctor, in West Bengal, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has dispatched an advanced mobile testing van from the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune to the state for testing patient samples. This Biosafety Level (BSL) 3 facility, which was also utilised during the Covid-19 pandemic, will be stationed at Beleghata ID Hospital, according to Dr Santa Sabuj Das,

Director, National Institute for Research in Bacterial Infections (Nirbi).

"A mobile van has been sent, as we all know it is a highly infectious disease with high mortality. So it requires a very special precaution for handling clinical samples. The ICMR BSL-3 van will be deployed to various locations as needed. The vehicle has been sent from NIV Pune on Wednesday," Dr Das said. According to the latest reports, a doctor, a nurse, and a healthcare staff member have been infected with the Nipah virus — a highly fatal zoonotic infection, with fruit bats as the natural reservoir and pigs as hosts — in West Bengal. This brings the total number of active cases in West Bengal to five. According to Dr Das, this mobile laboratory will handle the initial processing of samples and will decontaminate them before they are sent for RT-PCR testing. Currently, the team consists of six specialists from NIV Pune and nine from Nirbi, in addition to staff from two labs at SSKM and RG Kar Medical College hospitals in Kolkata, each equipped with three to four specialists to conduct the tests.

## From 21-day quarantine to RT-PCR test, state issues guidelines to combat virus

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

West Bengal issues Nipah virus advisory after two nurses test positive, outlines precautions for patients, caregivers and health workers (Photo generated with Gemini for representation) West Bengal issues Nipah virus advisory after two nurses test positive, outlines precautions for patients, caregivers and health workers (Photo generated with Gemini for representation) The West Bengal health and family welfare department has released guidelines on the transmission of the Nipah virus and the necessary precautions to be taken, days after two nurses tested positive for the virus. A five-member medical team from the state health department prepared the advisory for patients infected with Nipah or showing symptoms, as well as for their caregivers and health workers.

Anyone who has come into contact with the blood, fluids, saliva, sneeze or cough droplets, etc. of a patient infected with Nipah or is showing symptoms will be required to undergo a mandatory 21-day home quarantine, as per the guidelines issued on Wednesday. The state health department has described spending time in a closed, confined space with a patient infected with Nipah or showing symptoms of Nipah as 'high risk' in its guidelines. In addition, the person will have to be checked twice a day while in home quarantine. If symptoms are detected, the person in home quarantine will have to be admitted to the hospital

immediately. The person will have to be kept in the isolation ward, as per the guidelines. Similarly, anyone who comes into contact with the clothes of a patient infected with Nipah or with Nipah symptoms or comes into contact with the patient will be kept under observation for 21 days. Health department officials will call the affected person every day to check on his or her health. If the person shows symptoms, he or she will be taken to the hospital immediately.

In addition, the guidelines state that caregivers of patients infected with Nipah or showing symptoms must use adequate protective measures. The state health department has directed individuals without symptoms to take a specific antiviral medication as a precautionary measure. Those who develop symptoms, however, must be admitted to a hospital. Since no definitive treatment for Nipah infection exists, two alternative antiviral drugs will have to be used experimentally on such patients, the guidelines add. The state health department has also directed that suspected samples be sent for an RT-PCR test immediately. The guidelines state that the medication will be stopped only if the test report is negative at least twice in a day; otherwise, treatment will continue. If any health worker comes in contact with such a patient but is asymptomatic, the health worker can continue working with personal protection like masks and PPE kits, and does not need to be under quarantine.

# Trump announces 'board of peace' formed for Gaza



GNS News Agency, Feb 11

U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday (January 15, 2026) announced the formation of a Gaza "board of peace," a key phase two element of a U.S.-backed plan to end the war in the Palestine. "It is my Great Honour to announce that THE BOARD OF PEACE has been formed," Mr. Trump posted on his Truth Social platform, adding that the members of the body will be announced "shortly." "I can say with certainty that it is the Greatest and Most Prestigious Board ever assembled at any time, any place," Mr. Trump said.

## South Korean court sentences Yoon to 5 years in prison on charges related to martial law decree

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

Seoul: A South Korean court sentenced former President Yoon Suk Yeol to five years in prison Friday in the first verdict from eight criminal trials over the martial law debacle that forced him out of office and other allegations. Yoon was impeached, arrested and dismissed as president after his short-lived imposition of martial law in December 2024 triggered huge public protests calling for his ouster. The most significant criminal charge against him alleges that his martial law enforcement amounted to a rebellion, and the independent counsel has requested the death sentence in the case that is to be decided in a ruling next month.

In Friday's case, the Seoul Central District Court sentenced Yoon for defying attempts to detain him, fabricating the martial law proclamation and sidestepping a legally mandated full Cabinet meeting. Yoon has maintained he didn't intend to place the country under military rule for an extended period, saying his decree was only meant to inform the people about the danger of the liberal-controlled parliament obstructing his agenda. But investigators have viewed Yoon's decree as an attempt to bolster and prolong his rule, charging him with rebellion, abuse of power and other criminal offenses.

Judge Baek Dae-hyun said in the televised ruling that imposing "a grave punishment" was necessary because Yoon hasn't shown remorse and has only repeated "hard-to-comprehend excuses." The judge also restoring legal systems damaged by Yoon's action was necessary. Yoon, who can appeal the ruling, hasn't immediately publicly responded



to the ruling. But when the independent counsel demanded a 10-year prison term in the case, Yoon's defense team accused them of being politically driven and lacking legal grounds to demand such an "excessive" sentence. Prison sentences in the multiple, smaller trials Yoon faces would matter if he is spared the death penalty or life imprisonment at the rebellion trial. Park SungBae, a lawyer who specializes in criminal law, said there is little chance the court would decide Yoon should face the death penalty in the rebellion case. He said the court will likely issue a life sentence or a sentence of 30 years or more in prison. South Korea has maintained a de facto moratorium on executions since 1997 and courts rarely hand down death sentences. Park said the court would take into account that Yoon's decree didn't cause casualties and didn't last long, although Yoon hasn't shown genuine remorse for his action.

## Senior Hamas figure killed in Israeli air strike in Gaza

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

A senior figure in the armed wing of Hamas was among seven people killed on Thursday (January 15, 2026) in a pair of Israeli airstrikes in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, a Hamas source said. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the incident. The Hamas source said one of the dead was Mohammed Al-Holy, a local commander in the group's armed wing in Deir al-Balah. Hamas condemned the strikes on the Al-Holy family, in a statement that did not mention Mohammed or his role in the group. It accused Israel of violating the ceasefire deal in place since October, and attempting to reignite the conflict.

Health officials said the six other dead in the incident included a 16-year-old. Israel and Hamas have traded blame for violations of the ceasefire and remain far apart from each other on key issues, despite the United States announcing the start of the agreement's second phase on Wednesday. More than 400 Palestinians and three Israeli soldiers have been reported killed since the ceasefire took effect in October. Israel has razed buildings and ordered residents out of more than half of Gaza where its troops remain. Nearly all of the territory's more than 2 million people



now live in makeshift homes or damaged buildings in a sliver of territory where Israeli troops have withdrawn and Hamas has reasserted control. The United Nations children's agency said on Tuesday that over 100 children have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire, including victims of drone and quadcopter attacks. Israel launched its operations in Gaza in the wake of an attack by Hamas-led fighters in October 2023 which killed 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's assault has killed 71,000 people, according to health authorities in the strip, and left much of Gaza in ruins.

## At least 100 children killed in Gaza since ceasefire: UN



GNS News Agency, Feb 11

At least 100 children have been killed by Israeli airstrikes and ground forces in Gaza since the start of a tenuous ceasefire three months ago, the United Nations said on Tuesday (January 13, 2026). The UN children's agency UNICEF said that at least 60 boys and 40 girls had been killed in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory since early October. "More than 100 children have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire," UNICEF spokesman James Elder told reporters in Geneva. "That's roughly a girl or a boy killed here every day during a ceasefire," he said, speaking from Gaza City. "These children are killed from airstrikes, drone strikes, including suicide drones. They're killed from tank shelling. They're killed from live ammunition. They're killed from quad copters." "We are at 100 — no doubt," he said, adding that the true number was likely higher. "A ceasefire that slows the bombs is progress but one that still buries children is not enough." AFP has sought a response from the Israeli military. An official at Gaza's health minis-

try, which maintains casualty records, has reported a higher figure of 165 children killed during the tenuous ceasefire, out of a total 442 fatalities. "Additionally, seven children have died from exposure to cold since the beginning of this year," Zaher Al-Wahidi, Director of the Computer Department at the Ministry of Health, told AFP. Mr. Elder stressed that the ongoing Israeli attacks came after more than two years of war which has "left life for Gaza's children unimaginably hard." "They still live in fear. The psychological damage remains untreated, and it's becoming deeper and harder to heal the longer this goes on," he said. In November, authorities in Gaza said more than 70,000 people had been killed there since the beginning of the war waged by Israel in response to Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel. Nearly 80% of buildings in Gaza have been destroyed or damaged in the relentless air and ground offensive, according to UN data. On January 1, Israel suspended 37 international aid agencies from accessing the Gaza Strip, despite what the UN said at the time was an "outrageous" move. "Blocking international NGOs, blocking any humanitarian aid... that means blocking life-saving assistance," Mr. Elder stressed on Monday (January 12, 2026). While UNICEF had managed to significantly increase aid entering the densely populated strip since October, he stressed: "You need partners on the ground, and it (the aid) still doesn't meet the need." "It's impossible to overstate just how much still is required to be done here." He also insisted: "When you've got key NGOs banned from delivering humanitarian aid and from bearing witness, and when foreign journalists are barred" it begs the question if the aim is "restricting scrutiny of suffering of children".

## Social media platforms removed 4.7 million accounts after Australia banned them for children



GNS News Agency, Feb 11

Wellington: Social media companies have revoked access to about 4.7 million accounts identified as belonging to children in Australia since the country banned use of the platforms by those under 16, officials said. "We stared down everybody who said it couldn't be done, some of the most powerful and rich companies in the world and their supporters," communications minister Anika Wells told reporters on Friday. "Now Australian parents can be confident that their kids can have their childhoods back."

The figures, reported to Australia's government by 10 social media platforms, were the first to show the scale of the landmark ban since it was enacted in December over fears about the effects of harmful online environments on young people. The law provoked fraught debates in Australia about technology use, privacy, child safety and mental health and has prompted other countries to consider similar measures. Under Australian law, Facebook, Instagram, Kick, Reddit, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, X, YouTube and Twitch face fines of up to 49.5 million Australian dollars (\$33.2 million) if they fail to take reasonable steps to remove the accounts of Australian children younger than 16. Messaging services such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are exempt.

To verify age, platforms can either request copies of identification documents, use a third party to apply age estimation technology to an account holder's face, or make inferences from data already available such as how long an account has been held. About 2.5 million Australians are aged between 8 and 15, said the country's eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant, and past estimates suggested 84% of 8- to 12-year-olds held social media accounts. It

## Syrian army declares closed military zone east of Aleppo as tensions rise with Kurds

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

The Syrian army on Tuesday (January 13, 2026) declared an area east of the northern city of Aleppo a "closed military zone," potentially signalling another escalation between government forces and fighters with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. Several days of clashes in the city of Aleppo last week, that displaced tens of thousands of people, came to an end over the weekend with the evacuation of Kurdish fighters from the contested neighbourhood of Sheikh Maqsoud. Since then, Syrian officials have accused the SDF of building up its forces near the towns of Maskana and Deir Hafer, about 60 km (37 mi) east of Aleppo city, something the SDF denied. In a statement, the SDF said government forces have started shelling Deir Hafer, but said there are no reported casualties.

Damascus has yet to comment. Eastern Aleppo province has been a tense frontline, dividing areas under the Syrian government and the large swaths of northeastern Syria under the SDF. SANA, the state news agency, reported that the army had declared the area a closed military zone because of "continued mobilization" by the SDF "and because it serves as a launching point for Iranian suicide drones that have targeted the city of Aleppo." A drone hit the Aleppo governorate building on Saturday (January 10, 2026) shortly after two Cabinet ministers and a local official held a news conference on the developments in the city. The SDF denied being behind the attack. The army's statement on Tuesday (January 13, 2026) said armed groups should withdraw to the area east of the Euphrates River. The tensions come amid an impasse in political negotiations between the central state and the SDF. The leadership in Damascus, under interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, signed a deal in March with the SDF which controls much of the northeast, for it to merge with the Syrian army by the end of 2025. There have

been disagreements on how it would happen. Some of the factions that make up the new Syrian army, which was formed after the fall of former President Bashar Assad in a rebel offensive in December 2024, were previously Turkey-backed insurgent groups that have a long history of clashing with Kurdish forces. The SDF has for years been the main U.S. partner in Syria in fighting against the Islamic State group, but Turkey considers the SDF a terrorist organisation because of its association with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has waged a long-running insurgency in Turkey. A peace process is now underway. Despite the long-running U.S. support for the SDF, the Trump administration in the U.S. has also developed close ties with al-Sharaa's government and has pushed the Kurds to implement the March deal. Shams TV, a broadcaster based in Irbil — the seat of northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region — had been set to air an interview with al-Sharaa on Monday (January 12, 2026) but later announced it had been postponed for "technical" reasons, without giving a new date for broadcast.



## U.S. announces 'large-scale' strikes against IS in Syria



GNS News Agency, Feb 11

U.S. and allied forces carried out "large-scale" strikes against the Islamic State jihadist group in Syria on Saturday (January 10, 2026), the U.S. military said, the latest response to an attack last month that killed three Americans. U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees American military forces in the region, said multiple strikes "targeted ISIS throughout Syria," using an acronym for the jihadist group. CENTCOM's post on X did not give specifics on where they took place.

Grainy aerial video accompanying the post showed several separate explosions, apparently in rural areas. The strikes were part of Operation Hawkeye Strike, which was launched "in direct response to the deadly ISIS attack on U.S. and Syrian forces in Palmyra," CENTCOM said. Jordan's air force also carried out targeted air strikes against IS as part of the operation, its military said on Sunday (January 11). Watch: US launches fresh airstrikes on ISIS in Syria after deadly ambush

It said in a statement it struck "a number of targets... in several areas within Syria territory." Two U.S. soldiers and a U.S. civilian interpreter were killed on December 13 after a lone gunman — whom Washington described as an IS militant — ambushed them in Palmyra, home to UNESCO-listed ancient ruins and once controlled by the jihadist group. Syria's interior Ministry later said the gunman was a member of the security forces who had been set to be fired for extremism. "We will never forget, and never relent," U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Saturday in a post on X, replying to the CENTCOM statement. The United States and Jordan carried out a round of strikes last month in response to the Palmyra attack, with CENTCOM saying at the time that "more than 70 targets" had been hit. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor, later reported those strikes killed at least five IS members, including a cell leader. On January 3, Britain and France announced joint strikes targeting an underground facility they said IS had likely used to store weapons. The U.S. personnel targeted in Palmyra were supporting Operation Inherent Resolve, the international effort to combat IS, which seized swaths of Syrian and Iraqi territory in 2014. The jihadists were ultimately defeated by local ground forces backed by international air strikes and other support, but IS still has a presence in Syria, especially in the country's vast desert. U.S. President Donald Trump has long been skeptical of Washington's presence in Syria, ordering the withdrawal of troops during his first term but ultimately leaving American forces in the country. The Pentagon announced in April that the United States would halve the number of U.S. personnel in Syria in the following months, while U.S. envoy for Syria Tom Barrack said in June that Washington would eventually reduce its bases in the country to one.

## Can datacentres in orbit solve for AI models' soaring energy demand?



Datacentres are a growing share of global electricity consumption, and artificial intelligence (AI) is driving those power demands up. This is because AI datacentres use dense clusters of graphics processing units (GPUs) for running machine learning workloads, both when training large language models and deploying them. Since the generative AI boom shows no signs of slowing down — industry estimates show at least \$3 trillion in planned investments by 2030 — datacentres are guzzling more energy than ever, with whatever electricity sources are available. That has pushed Google Research to explore a literally outlandish prospect: launching datacentres into outer space, and running them entirely on solar energy.

Is this even possible? Google Research is mostly confident that it is. So much so that the firm's researchers have already chalked out a few of the key technical challenges they will face, and how they will solve them. To get into these questions, it is important to first lay out how an AI datacentre is different from the regular variant. Traditional datacentres have been driven, more than anything, by growing consumption of content. In markets like India, that is mainly video, since that is among the most data-intensive (by volume) use cases for the aggregated networking and storage facilities that datacentres offer. That has traditionally meant that the bandwidth that the datacentre needs within its own premises is theoretically the same as the bandwidth it is delivering to, or receiving from, the outside world. That has led to booms in things like undersea cable bandwidth, which have needed to keep pace with domestic datacentre growth (the data must, after all, come from somewhere).

AI datacentres are different. They need high levels of bandwidth not between the infrastructure they host and the users they serve, but within the datacentre itself, and with other datacentres that are situated nearby. For instance, Microsoft's AI datacentre complexes, which are called Fairwater, have petabit-per-second links between facilities. That is 10 lakh gigabits per second, a million times faster than the best consumer grade internet connection typically offered in Indian metros. That kind of densely networked architecture would therefore be important for datacentres in space. Since the majority of the bandwidth would be used in the distributed workloads across multiple satellites, the downlink bandwidth with earth-based ground stations is not nearly as important. An analogy to understand this is available closer to home: ChatGPT needs these superfast connections in its own infrastructure, but all the user needs the bandwidth for is the query they send and the response they receive. (Low earth orbit to earth bandwidth is limited because there is a limited range of frequencies where data

can be transmitted over that kind of distance, and a finite amount of bandwidth as a result of this. This is why SpaceX's Starlink satellite internet constellation can be "sold out" in certain parts of the world, since the airwaves can get choked very quickly if a few lakh people get it in a single location.)

Google's Project Suncatcher proposes a constellation like Starlink's, but instead of being an evenly spread swarm blanketing the earth, the equipment architecture would rely on densely choreographed clusters, with each satellite not more than a few kilometres from its neighbours, while following an orbit that would always maintain a line of sight with the sun, and the incredible power, with no atmosphere to dilute or obstruct it, that the setup promises. That, combined with technologies like multiplexing — which allows more data to be packed into a single radio beam — would enable the satellites to theoretically distribute their work while having enough power to run the satellites. Of course, there are many other challenges, and Google is working their way through them. One obvious issue is solar radiation, and how it might affect the tensor processing units (TPUs) over months and years of operation. Here, Google has seen some headway. "While the High Bandwidth Memory (HBM) subsystems were the most sensitive component, they only began showing irregularities after a cumulative dose of 2 krad(Si) — nearly three times the expected (shielded) five year mission dose of 750 rad(Si)," Travis Beals, a researcher at Google wrote in a post last November about Suncatcher. "No hard failures were attributable to total ionising dose up to the maximum tested dose of 15 krad(Si) on a single chip, indicating that Trillium TPUs are surprisingly radiation-hard for space applications." But datacentres have to be maintained all the time, and once equipment is in the sky, there's no cheap way of reaching outer space for troubleshooting. Another "significant engineering challenge" that Beals underlined was thermal management. On terrestrial datacentres, using liquid cooling is practical. But if the datacentres are going to be blasted with solar energy directly all day long, dissipating the heat and actually allowing the silicon components to run efficiently could cause issues.

Perhaps the biggest issue may not be around engineering, but economics. For space-based datacentres to work, the cumulative cost of researching their technology, putting clusters in space, and undertaking fresh launches to replace individual satellites that have stopped working, all of this must be competitive with the price that the firm pays to do all this work with technology that already exists on the ground. Google says that satellite launch prices would have declined to \$200 per kilogram by the mid-2030s, and that the power savings due to the solar-first design of this architecture could also lead to a compelling economic case for space-based datacentres. Time will tell if Google — or ISRO, which is also reportedly studying space-based datacentre technology — will be able to hit all these technological and economic targets while keeping pace with advancements for ground-based datacentres. Microsoft Natick, which tried underwater datacentres to make water-cooling their systems easier, ultimately abandoned this experiment, in spite of the promise it showed. But scepticism about the viability and usefulness of satellite technologies tends to not age very well. After all, few could have predicted that Starlink would be able to reach the scale and performance it boasts today — with practically the whole earth covered with perfectly serviceable internet speeds — when SpaceX launched its very first test satellites in 2019.

## Senate Republicans defeat Venezuela war powers resolution as Trump pressures GOP senators to flip



Senate Republicans voted to dismiss a war powers resolution on Wednesday (January 14, 2026) that would have limited President Donald Trump's ability to conduct further attacks on Venezuela after two GOP senators reversed course on supporting the legislation. Mr. Trump put intense pressure on five Republican senators who joined with Democrats to advance the resolution last week, and ultimately prevailed in heading off passage of the legislation. Two of the Republicans — Senators Josh Hawley of Missouri and Todd Young of Indiana — flipped under the pressure. Vice President JD Vance had to break the 50-50 deadlock in the Senate on a Republican motion to dismiss the Bill. The outcome of the high-profile vote demonstrated how Mr. Trump still has command over much of the Republican conference, yet the razor-thin vote tally also showed the growing concern on Capitol Hill over the President's aggressive foreign policy ambitions.

### What is the war powers resolution?

Under the Constitution, Congress alone has the ability to declare war. But U.S. presidents have long stretched their powers to use the might of the U.S. military around the globe. Ohio State University professor Peter Mansoor, a military historian and retired U.S. Army colonel with multiple combat tours, said that trend since World War II allows Congress to shirk responsibility for war and put all the risk on the president. In the post-Vietnam War era, lawmakers tried to take back some of their authority over wartime powers with the War Powers Resolution of 1973. It allows lawmakers to hold votes on resolutions to restrict a President from using military force in specific conflicts without congressional approval. "Politicians tend to like to evade responsibility for anything -- but then this gets you into forever wars," Mr. Mansoor said. Democrats forced the debate after U.S. troops captured Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro in a surprise nighttime raid earlier this month. "Here we have one of the most successful attacks ever and they find a way to be against it. It's pretty amazing. And it's a shame," Mr. Trump said at a speech in Michigan on Tuesday (January 13, 2026). He also hurled insults at several of the Republicans who advanced the legislation, calling Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky a "stone cold loser" and Senators Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine "disasters." Those three Republicans stuck to their support for the legislation. Mr. Trump's latest comments followed earlier phone calls with the senators, which they described as terse. The President's fury underscored how the war powers vote had taken on new political significance as Mr. Trump also threatens military action to accomplish his goal of possessing Greenland. The legislation, even if it had passed the Senate, had virtually no chance of becoming law because it would eventually need to be signed by Trump himself. But it

represented both a test of GOP loyalty to the president and a marker for how much leeway the Republican-controlled Senate is willing to give Trump to use the military abroad.

Republican leaders move to dismiss the bill. Republican Senate leaders are trying to defuse the conflict between their members and Mr. Trump as well as move on quickly to other business. On Wednesday evening, they were moving to dismiss the measure under the argument that it is irrelevant to the current situation in Venezuela. That procedure was subject to a vote. In a floor speech on Wednesday morning, Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S D, vented his frustration as he questioned whether this war powers resolution should be prioritised under the chamber's rules.

"We have no troops on the ground in Venezuela. We're not currently conducting military operations there," he said. "But Democrats are taking up this bill because their anti-Trump hysteria knows no bounds." Democratic Senator Tim Kaine, who has brought a series of war powers resolutions this year, accused Republicans of burying a debate about the merits of an ongoing campaign of attacks and threats against Venezuela. "If this cause and if this legal basis were so righteous, the administration and its supporters would not be afraid to have this debate before the public and the United States Senate," he said in a floor speech.

Mr. Hawley, who helped advance the war powers resolution last week, said that Mr. Trump's message during a phone call was that the legislation "really ties my hands." The senator said he had a follow-up phone call with Secretary of State Marco Rubio that was "really positive." Mr. Hawley said that Mr. Rubio told him on Monday "point blank, we're not going to do ground troops." The senator said he also received assurances that the Trump administration will follow constitutional requirements if it becomes necessary to deploy troops again to the South American country. "We're getting along very well with Venezuela," Mr. Trump told reporters at a ceremony for the signing of an unrelated bill on Wednesday. Trump's shifting rationale for military intervention. Mr. Trump has used a series of legal arguments for his campaign against Mr. Maduro.

As he built up a naval force in the Caribbean and destroyed vessels that were allegedly carrying drugs from Venezuela, the Trump administration tapped wartime powers under the global war on terror by designating drug cartels as terrorist organizations.

The administration has claimed the capture of Mr. Maduro himself was actually a law enforcement operation, essentially to extradite the Venezuelan President to stand trial for charges in the U.S. that were filed in 2020. In a classified briefing on Tuesday (January 13, 2026), senators reviewed the Trump administration's still undisclosed legal opinion for using the military for the operation. It was described as a lengthy document. But lawmakers, including a significant number of Republicans, have been alarmed by Trump's recent foreign policy talk. In recent weeks, he has pledged that the U.S. will "run" Venezuela for years to come, threatened military action to take possession of Greenland and told Iranians protesting their government that "help is on its way." Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Mr. Trump's recent aggression amounted to a "dangerous drift towards endless war." More than half of U.S. adults believe President Donald Trump has "gone too far" in using the U.S. military to intervene in other countries, according to a new AP-NORC poll. House Democrats have also filed a similar war powers resolution and can force a vote on it as soon as next week.

## Syrian Army, Kurdish forces exchange strikes east of Aleppo

EMS News Agency, Jan 19

Syrian government forces and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces exchanged fire on Tuesday (January 13, 2026) in a tense area of eastern Aleppo province, marking a possible escalation after days of clashes in the northern city. No casualties were immediately reported, as an impasse continues in negotiations between the central government and the SDF over merging its thousands of fighters into the national Army.

The Syrian Army earlier declared an area east of Aleppo as a "closed military zone." Eastern Aleppo province has been a tense frontline dividing areas under the Syrian government and large swaths of northeastern Syria under the SDF. In a statement, the SDF said government forces have started shelling the Deir Hafer district. The group later said government troops launched exploding drones, artillery and rockets at a village south of Deir Hafer. Syrian state television later said the SDF targeted the village of Homeima on the other side of the Deir Hafer frontline with exploding drones.

Several days of deadly clashes in Aleppo last week displaced tens of thousands of people. They ended over the weekend with the evacuation of Kurdish fighters from the contested neighbourhood of Sheikh Maqsoud. Aleppo Governor Azzam Ghareeb said Damascus now has full control of Sheikh Maqsoud and Achrafieh, where clashes took place. Syrian officials have accused the SDF of building up its forces near the towns of Maskana and Deir Hafer, about 60 kilometres (37 miles) east of Aleppo city. SANA, the state news agency, reported that the Army had declared the area a closed military zone because of "continued mobilisation" by the SDF, and accused the group of using the area as a launchpad for drone attacks in Aleppo city.

The Army statement said the armed groups should withdraw east of the Euphrates River. A drone hit the Aleppo governorate building on Saturday shortly after two Cabinet Ministers and a local official held a news conference on the developments in the city. The SDF have denied mobilising in the area or being behind the attack. The leadership in Damascus, under interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, signed a deal in March with the SDF, which controls much of the northeast, for it to merge with the Syrian Army by the end of 2025. There have been disagreements on how it would happen. Some of the factions that make up the new Syrian Army, which was formed after the fall of former President Bashar Assad in a rebel offensive in December 2024, were previously Turkey-backed insurgent groups that have a long history of clashing with Kurdish forces.

The SDF for years has been the main US partner in Syria in fighting against the Islamic State group, but Turkey considers the SDF a terrorist organisation because of its association with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has waged a long-running insurgency in Turkey. A peace process is now underway. Despite the long-running U.S. support for the SDF, the Trump administration has also developed close ties with al-Sharaa's government and has pushed the Kurds to implement the March deal. The recent developments have left the SDF and the autonomous administra-



tion that runs northeastern Syria frustrated with Washington and accusing Damascus of not implementing its end of the deal. "The American government needs to clarify its position on the Syrian government, which is committing massacres," the administration's foreign relations official, Elham Ahmad, told journalists Tuesday. She accused government forces of committing "horrible violations" and alleged that forces affiliated with IS and foreign fighters took part in the clashes. Shams TV, a broadcaster based in Irbil — the seat of northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region — had been set to air an interview with al-Sharaa on Monday but later announced it had been postponed for "technical" reasons, without giving a new date for broadcast.

## Ukrainian drones set fire to Russian oil depot after Moscow launches new hypersonic missile

A Ukrainian drone strike sparked a fire at an oil depot in Russia's southern Volgograd region, regional authorities said on Saturday (January 10, 2026). There were no immediate reports of casualties, the regional governor was quoted as saying in a Telegram post published on the channel of the local administration. The post did not specify the damage, but said that people living near the depot may have to be evacuated. Ukraine's long-range drone strikes on Russian energy sites aim to deprive Moscow of the oil export revenue it needs to pursue its full-scale invasion. Russia wants to cripple the Ukrainian power grid, seeking to deny civilians access to heat, light and running water in what Kyiv officials say is an attempt to "weaponise winter." Saturday's attack came the day after Russia bombarded Ukraine with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles overnight into Friday (January 9, 2026), according to Ukrainian officials, killing at least four people in the capital. For only the second time in the nearly four-year-old war, it used a powerful, new hypersonic missile that struck western Ukraine on Friday in a clear warning to Kyiv's NATO allies.

## India warns Apple it will proceed with antitrust case after company plays for time



India has issued a final warning to Apple that it will proceed in an antitrust case against the U.S. tech giant as the company has delayed responses to officials for over a year and undermined the investigation, a confidential order shows. Apple has said it fears it could be fined up to \$38 billion if India's competition watchdog uses its global turnover calculation for penalties, after an investigation found it had abused its position on its app store. Apple, which denies the allegations, has challenged the penalty rules in an Indian court, and the matter is pending.

While the Delhi High Court is still hearing that challenge, a confidential December 31 order from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) shows Apple privately sought to pause the entire case while the penalty-rules dispute is before the court. The CCI rejected the request. The watchdog said it asked Apple in October 2024 to file objections to the investigation's findings and provide financial details typically used to assess penalties, but the company has received "repeated extensions" since then. "The Commission is of the considered view that repeated extensions, despite unambiguous directions, undermine procedural discipline and impede the timely conclusion of proceedings," CCI noted in its order, seen by Reuters. "Such indulgence cannot be continued indefinitely," it added, giving Apple a

final warning that it will proceed in the case unilaterally if no response is received by next week. Apple did not respond to Reuters queries. A source familiar with the matter said Apple views CCI's December order as a move to preempt the ongoing court proceedings and the company was not likely to respond to it before the judges hear it next on January 27. Since 2022, Tinder-owner Match and Indian startups have been locked in an antitrust battle with Apple. Investigators in 2024 issued a report saying the U.S. smartphone company engaged in "abusive conduct" on the iOS apps market.

## Canada PM Carney announces 'preliminary' Canada-China deal to reduce tariffs



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney announced a deal with China's Xi Jinping on Friday (January 16, 2026) to reduce tariffs on each country's products after the two leaders met in Beijing. "Canada and China have reached a preliminary but landmark trade agreement to remove trade barriers and reduce, reduce tariffs," Carney told a news conference in the Chinese capital.

"By March the first, Canada expects that China will lower tariffs on Canadian canola seed. The combined rate of approximately 15 percent... this change represents a significant drop from the current combined tariff levels of 84%." Canada and China forge new strategic partnership. Earlier, Mr. Carney told Chinese President Xi Jinping that Canada and China are forging a new strategic partnership that stands to yield "historic" gains by leveraging the strengths of each. The first Canadian Prime Minister to visit China since 2017, Mr. Carney was on a mission to rebuild ties with Canada's second-largest trading partner after the United States, following months of diplomatic efforts to resolve earlier tension. "It is important to start this new strategic partnership at a time of division," Mr. Carney told Mr. Xi, calling for focus on areas that can bring "historic" gains for both, such as agriculture, agri-food, energy, and finance. "That is where I believe we can make immediate and sustained progress," he added. Canada is looking to strengthen ties with the world's second-biggest economy after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed tariffs on some of its goods and suggested the longtime U.S. ally could become the country's 51st state.

China, similarly hit by Mr. Trump's tariffs since he returned to the White House last year, is also keen to cooperate with a Group of Seven nation in a traditional sphere of U.S. influence. China to allow visa-free access for Canadian visitors. Carney China will allow Canadian visitors to enter the country visa-free, Mr. Carney said after talks with Mr. Jinping in Beijing, as the two nations aim to thaw frosty relations. "I'm very pleased to share that President Xi in our meeting today has committed to ensuring visa-free access for Canadians travelling to China," Mr. Carney said at a press conference in the Chinese capital. Canada to import 49,000 Chinese EVs at preferential tariff rates: Carney Canada will allow 49,000 Chinese electric vehicles to be imported under new, preferential tariff rates, Mr. Carney said after reaching a trade deal with Mr. Jinping in Beijing. "Canada has agreed to allow up to 49,000 Chinese electric vehicles into the Canadian market,"

# Why participatory science is crucial to tackling coconut root wilt disease



Coconut is one of the largest horticultural crops in peninsular India, and an increasing number of farmers are taking up coconut plantations due to a lack of labour availability and the intensive attention required to raise annual crops. The three States of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala together account for about 82-83 % of India's coconut production. Coconut is not only culturally interwoven but also defines the landscape of regions like Alappuzha and Pollachi, known for their pristine beauty. Now, this carefully cultivated imagery is under threat from a microscopic adversary: phytoplasma. Specifically, phytoplasma-induced root wilt disease has destroyed large tracts of traditional coconut-growing areas in these three States. Root wilt disease is a debilitating condition. It is classified as a non-fatal disease and was first identified more than a century and a half ago in Erattupetta in Kerala. More than 150 years of sustained scientific research at the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), Kayamkulam, has yet to yield a definitive cure.

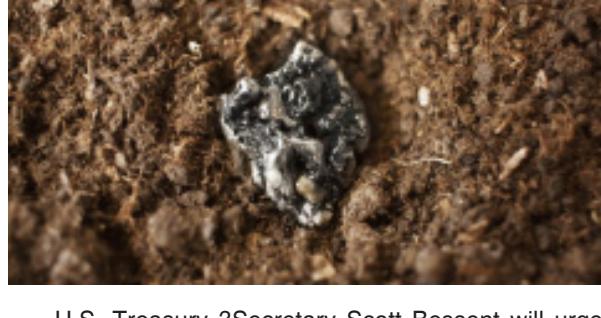
The disease spreads through insect vectors, aided by the movement of wind and uninterrupted stretches of coconut plantations. While the disease has existed for decades, its spread used to be limited. Today, its rapid expansion has caught many farmers unprepared. In fact both farmers and the scientific community concur that erratic temperatures, especially extremes, and the rise of new sucking pests, particularly whiteflies, have significantly accelerated its spread. The combined effect of abiotic stress induced by climate change and biotic stress from emerging pests has rendered coconut palms increasingly susceptible to root wilt disease. Once a few palms are infected in a region, sufficient inoculum builds up to hasten further spread. Recent assessments indicate that more than 30 lakh coconut palms have already been affected across major coconut-growing regions. In areas such as Pollachi, where farmers have prospered by adopting intercropping systems in coconut plantations with shade-loving permanent crops like cocoa and nutmeg, the situation has turned into a double disaster. Without the shade of the coconut canopy, cocoa and nutmeg trees simply succumb to thermal stress. A successful toolResearch institutions have attempted to address this plight through two broad approaches: first by developing standardised integrated cultivation practices using a judicious mix of organic and inorganic inputs, and second by developing resistant and tolerant varieties. Farmers who have religiously followed the recommended practices contend that these measures have done little to prevent the spread of the disease. Once a tree is infested, symptoms appear only after a prolonged incubation period, and often vary, since they are superimposed with those of other diseases such as leaf decay. The tree quickly becomes un-

productive, sheds all its nuts, and assumes a distorted appearance. Even if the disease is not immediately fatal, the palm continues to act as a source of pathogen inoculum. The phytoplasma challenge is not confined to coconut alone. The spread of yellow leaf disease in arecanut across parts of Karnataka serves as a parallel reminder of how vector-borne palm diseases can silently expand when early, field-based interventions are inadequate.

CPCRI Kayamkulam has released one resistant and three tolerant varieties. Institutions such as the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and the Coconut Development Board (CDB) multiply these varieties, but production has been limited to only a few thousand seedlings a year. Breeding resistant and tolerant varieties remains one of the most successful tools for managing phytoplasma, as demonstrated by the high degree of success in addressing phytoplasma-related diseases in palms across the globe, from the Caribbean to Africa. Steps can be taken to import such varieties under strict quarantine protocols for field evaluation. Participatory approach

However, a more prudent and sustainable approach would be to tap into the reservoir of genetic wealth already standing in farmers' fields within highly infested endemic zones. Coconut palms that display tolerance under high inoculum pressure and intense vector load hold the key to combating phytoplasma. A participatory approach to selection offers a credible pathway to addressing the central constraint in combating phytoplasma: identifying and breeding resistant and tolerant varieties. In highly infested regions, systematic participatory selection of coconut palms, combined with structured observation, can be undertaken with farmers playing a central role. With appropriate training, farmers can be enabled to identify potentially tolerant palms and can be instructed on the importance of careful, long-term observation and record-keeping. This would significantly reduce the burden on scientific institutions while generating richer, field-relevant datasets. Once tolerant or resistant palms are identified and validated, they can be inducted into decentralised breeding programmes, allowing multiple small, independent selection and evaluation efforts to proceed simultaneously under scientific supervision. Such an approach also enables the isolation of locally adapted varieties suited to specific agro-climatic conditions. Given the rapid expansion of root wilt disease into new frontiers, mirroring the trajectory of whitefly, which was once confined to a few pockets in western Tamil Nadu but is now a pan-India pest, time is of the essence. Farmers whose palms are selected for breeding can also benefit through royalty mechanisms envisioned under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act while being encouraged to establish nurseries to multiply planting material at scale to replace the vast number of palms being felled. The government and the scientific community must, therefore, place renewed faith in citizen science and ensure that participatory selection and participatory breeding are pursued in all earnestness to confront the phytoplasma menace threatening coconut cultivation. Addressing root wilt at this scale requires coordinated institutional action. Central agencies such as CPCRI and the CDB must work closely with the agricultural universities of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. Fragmented research efforts and parallel trials no longer suffice in the face of a fast-spreading phytoplasma threat. A shared framework for data, evaluation, and field validation is essential to translate participatory science into impact.

## U.S. to push for quicker action in reducing reliance on China for rare earths



U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent will urge Group of Seven nations and others to step up their efforts to reduce reliance on critical minerals from China when he hosts a dozen top finance officials on Monday (January 12, 2026), a senior U.S. official said. The meeting, which kicks off with a dinner on Sunday (January 11) evening, will include Finance Ministers or Cabinet Ministers from the G7 advanced economies, the European Union, Australia, India, South Korea and Mexico, said the official who was not authorised to speak publicly.

Together, the grouping accounts for 60% of global demand for critical minerals. "Urgency is the theme of the day. It's a very big undertaking. There's a lot of different angles, a lot of different countries involved and we really just need to move faster," the official said. Bessent on Friday (January 9) told Reuters that he had been pressing for a separate meeting on the issue since a G7 leaders summit in Canada in June, where he delivered a rare earths presentation to gathered heads of state from the U.S., Britain, Japan, Canada, Germany, France, Italy and the European Union. Leaders agreed to an action plan at the summit to secure their supply chains and boost their economies, but Bessent has grown frustrated about the lack of urgency demonstrated by attendees, the official said. Aside from

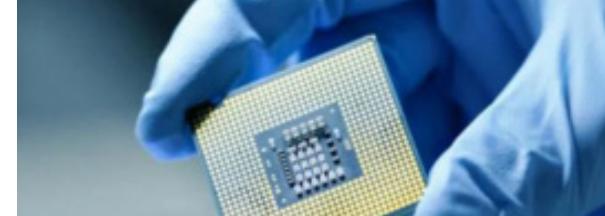
Japan, which took action after China abruptly cut off its critical minerals supplies in 2010, G7 members remain heavily dependent on critical minerals from China, which has threatened to impose strict export controls. China dominates the critical minerals supply chain, refining between 47% and 87% of copper, lithium, cobalt, graphite and rare earths, according to the International Energy Agency. These minerals are used in defense technologies, semiconductors, renewable energy components, batteries and refining processes. The U.S. is expected to issue a statement after the meeting, but no specific joint action is likely, the official added. U.S. urges others to follow lead

"The United States is in the posture of calling everyone together, showing leadership, sharing what we have in mind going forward," said the official. "We're ready to move with those who feel a similar level of urgency.. and others can join as they come to the realisation of how serious this is." The official gave no details on what further steps were planned by the Trump administration, which is pushing forward to boost domestic production and reduce reliance on China through agreements with Australia, Ukraine and other producers. The U.S. signed an agreement with Australia in October aimed at countering China's dominance in critical minerals that includes an \$8.5 billion project pipeline. The deal leverages Australia's proposed strategic reserve, which will supply metals like rare earths and lithium that are vulnerable to disruption. The official said there had been progress, but more work was needed. "It's not solved," they added. Canberra has said it has subsequently received interest from Europe, Japan, South Korea and Singapore. Monday's (January 12) meeting comes days after reports that China had begun restricting exports to Japanese companies of rare earths and powerful magnets containing them, as well as banning exports of dual-use items to the Japanese military. The meeting was planned well before that action, U.S. officials said. China was still living up to its commitments to purchase U.S. soybeans and ship critical minerals to U.S. firms.

## Foxconn-HCL semiconductor JV named India Chip Private Limited

New Delhi: Electronics manufacturing services giant Foxconn and HCL Group have named their semiconductor joint venture as India Chip Private Limited, a regulatory filing said on Wednesday. Foxconn has already infused USD 3,72,00,000, about Rs 312 crore, in the JV for its 40 per cent stake and may invest up to Rs 424 crore in the semiconductor firm.

In a supplementary explanation regarding the name of the newly established joint venture company, as announced on October 1, 2024, the Foxconn regulatory filing on Wednesday showed that the name has been firmed up as India Chip Private Limited. HCL Group had submitted the proposal to the Uttar Pradesh government in the name of Vama Sundari for seeking land allocation. The UP government's Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development



Authority (YEIDA) has allocated around 48 acres of land for the JV's outsourced semiconductor assembly and test (OSAT) for the display driver integrated circuit.

## Iran protests 'abate' after deadly crackdown; state media says 3,000 arrested



drones were flying over the city, where they'd seen no sign of protests on Thursday or Friday. Iranian-Kurdish rights group Hengaw said that there had been no protest gatherings since Sunday (January 11, 2026), but "the security environment remains highly restrictive". "Our independent sources confirm a heavy military and security presence in cities and towns where protests previously took place, as well as in several locations that did not experience major demonstrations," Norway-based Hengaw said in comments to Reuters.

Hengaw reported that a female nurse was killed by direct gunfire from government forces during protests in Karaj, west of Iran. Reuters was not able to independently verify the report. The state-affiliated Tasnim news outlet reported that rioters set fire to a local education office in Falavarjan County, in central Isfahan Province. An elderly resident of a town in Iran's northwestern region, where many Kurdish Iranians live and which has been the focus for many of the biggest flare-ups, said sporadic protests had continued, though not as intensely. Describing violence earlier in the protests, she said: "I have not seen scenes like that before." The state-owned Press TV cited Iran's police chief as saying calm had been restored across the country. A death toll reported by U.S.-based rights group HRANA has increased little since Wednesday, currently at 2,677 people, including 2,478 protesters and 163 people identified as affiliated with the government. Reuters has not been able to independently verify the HRANA death toll. An Iranian official told the news agency earlier this week that about 2,000 people had been killed. The casualty numbers dwarf the death toll from previous bouts of unrest that have been suppressed by the state.

Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the situation in Iran in separate calls on Friday (January 16, 2026) with Netanyahu and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, and said that Moscow was willing to mediate in the region, the Kremlin said. Mr. Pezeshkian told Mr. Putin that the United States and Israel had played a direct role in the unrest, Iranian state media reported. Iranian authorities have accused foreign enemies of fomenting protests and armed people they have identified as terrorists of targeting security forces and carrying out attacks. HRANA has reported that more than 19,000 people have been arrested, but the state-affiliated Tasnim news outlet said 3,000 people had been detained. Tasnim also reported what it described as the arrest of a large number of leaders of recent riots in the western province of Kermanshah, and the arrest of five people accused of vandalising a gas station and a base belonging to the Basij - a branch of the security forces often used to quell unrest - in the southeastern city of Kerman.

## Trump to attend World Economic Forum meet in Davos; strong India delegation expected, organisers say



U.S. President Donald Trump will attend the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in the Swiss ski resort town of Davos, along with his five Cabinet members, while the summit will also see a strong delegation from India, the organisers announced on Tuesday (January 13, 2026). The WEF said that at least 64 heads of government or State would be present, while six out of seven G-7 countries would

be represented by top leadership. China and Pakistan will also have big delegations attending the event. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky will also be present. WEF President and CEO Borge Brende said at an online press conference, asserting that the five-day annual meeting beginning January 18 will have a hard look at Ukraine, Gaza and Latin America, including Venezuela.

He said a big bipartisan delegation from the U.S. Congress and state governors would also attend the meeting, being held under a theme of 'a spirit of dialogue'. The world is probably facing the most complex geopolitical situation since 1945, and dialogue is not a luxury but a necessity today, he added. Mr. Brende said the WEF Annual Meeting will have a historic participation of more than 3,000 world leaders this year, including over 1,700 business leaders, half of whom are CEOs or chairpersons. The meeting will also be attended by more than 30 foreign ministers, more than 60 finance ministers and central bank governors and more than 30 trade ministers. "We also never had more technology leaders at Davos," he said while listing heads of companies like Nvidia and Microsoft, among others.

## The year gone by, the Quad's year of interregnum

The year 2025 brought about unprecedented disruption in global geopolitics. The return of President Donald Trump to the White House has resulted in a significant churn in various strategic theatres across the world. The Indo-Pacific, arguably, has evolved as the most contested terrain marking the escalating competition between China and the United States. Notably, the Quad has remained a crucial facet of Washington's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. The Quad, a group of four like-minded countries — India, Australia, Japan, and the U.S. — has evolved as a crucial forum with a robust and multifaceted agenda of delivering global good in the region. The overarching objective of the group, however, remains anchored in establishing and sustaining a rules-based order in the region, marked by the notion of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

A priority for TrumpEver since the Quad's revival in 2017, the group has evolved with critical momentum. Importantly, Mr. Trump has been one of the key architects of the 2017 revival. Given Mr. Trump's emphasis on the 'America First' outlook, which later emerged as a core doctrine guiding Washington's foreign policy, there were early suspicions on the extent of the U.S.'s interest in continuing to further cooperate with countries in the Indo-Pacific under the rubric of the Quad.

However, the initial Foreign Minister-level summits of the group, hosted by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, signalled that the Quad is indeed a priority for President Trump. However, despite its best efforts, the group was unable to convene a leader-level summit in 2025, which was scheduled to be hosted by India. While this has led to speculation over whether the group has indeed withered, the remarkable importance of the Indo-Pacific region and the Quad's role as a force for global good in it, suggests that it may still be too early to write the group off; 2025 was, however, a year of interregnum for the Quad. While the Quad was formed in 2004, in the aftermath of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the momentum of the group died following the steady withdrawal of member-countries in light of their own strategic compulsions. The group gained steam again in 2017, to set in motion a framework of cooperation among like-minded countries to establish a rules-based order, in the face of growing Chinese expansion in the region. Since its revival, the Quad has hosted six leader-level summits between 2021-2024, along with several Foreign Minister-level summits. The sixth leader-level summit was held in 2024, in Wilmington, Delaware, U.S., hosted by the U.S.,

and which also marked the farewell of U.S. President Joe Biden. That the Quad is a priority for the Trump administration was first signalled when Mr. Rubio hosted his counterparts of the group in Washington as his first major engagement, in January 2025 and again in July 2025.

The various initiatives of the group have remained active which include the Quad-at-Sea: Ship Observer Mission, which was operationalised for the first time in June 2025 to further Coast Guard-level cooperation. The Ports of the Future Partnership, an initiative to foster cooperation by way of promoting sustainable and resilient port infrastructure development across the Indo-Pacific, also witnessed its maiden meet in Mumbai, India, in October 2025. The 'Malabar' naval exercise, though not officially a part of the Quad's roster of initiatives but involving the four countries, was held in Guam to enhance maritime cooperation and interoperability among the navies of the four countries. These suggest that the group has indeed shown critical resilience even as it faced turbulence because of Washington's shifts, resulting in the failure to convene a leader-level summit in over a year.

A leader-level summit is essential. However, for the group to continue with this momentum, it is vital for the Quad to ensure that a leader-level summit is held at the earliest. Since the last leader-level summit of the group, the administrations in two countries have changed. In addition to Mr. Trump, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, too, has not attended a Quad engagement since she assumed office in October 2025. For a group such as the Quad, with no institutional anchor, leader-level summits serve as a vital platform to foster bonhomie and achieve strategic convergence on common issues. Historically, it is at the Quad leader-level summits that new initiatives have been conceptualised and announced. The U.S. Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, has said before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee in October 2025, that the group is continuing diplomatic efforts to ensure that a leader-level summit takes place in early 2026. Thus, 2025 was indeed a year that challenged the growing synergy of the Quad. However, the fact that despite not holding a leader-level summit, it has continued to operationalise its initiatives demonstrates its remarkable resilience. The Quad, indeed, continues to remain a force for good. Harsh V. Pant is Vice-President, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi. Sayantan Halder is Associate Fellow, Maritime Studies, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi.

## What India has really given on agriculture in India-US trade deal



of 100-200 parts per billion, making it unsuitable as feed ingredient for broiler chickens and dairy cattle. It can, at best, be used in feed for egg layer birds in limited quantities. The corn DDGS from the US has less than 20 parts per billion, which is the generally accepted regulatory safety threshold for aflatoxins," he told In other words, the Indian poultry, dairy and aqua industry will benefit from the increased availability of cheaper and probably better-quality DDGS from the US. That the DDGS is derived from genetically modified (GM) corn is another matter though. The US, in 2024 alone, exported some 12.2 million tonnes (mt) of DDGS valued at \$3.1 billion. This was in addition to 1.91 billion gallons of ethanol (\$4.3 billion) and 61.7 mt of corn (\$13.7 billion).

India has not opened up its market to imports of soybean, corn (maize), fuel ethanol, cotton or dairy and poultry products from the United States, going by the joint statement on an "interim" bilateral trade agreement released by the two countries. What India has agreed upon, instead, is to grant greater market access through elimination or reduction of tariffs for other American farm produce: Distiller's Dried Grains with Solubles (DDGS), soyabean oil, red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruits, wine and spirits, and "additional products".

These, on the face of it, don't represent significant threats to Indian farmers, given their limited domestic acreage or production. But it may not be as simple. To start with, the "additional products" are not specified. Then take DDGS, which is basically a byproduct of ethanol manufactured from corn and other cereal grains. After ethanol is produced from fermentation of the starch in corn or rice and separated through distillation, the wet grain mash that remains is further dried. The resultant so-called DDGS is a protein-rich material that is a relatively low-cost alternative livestock feed ingredient.

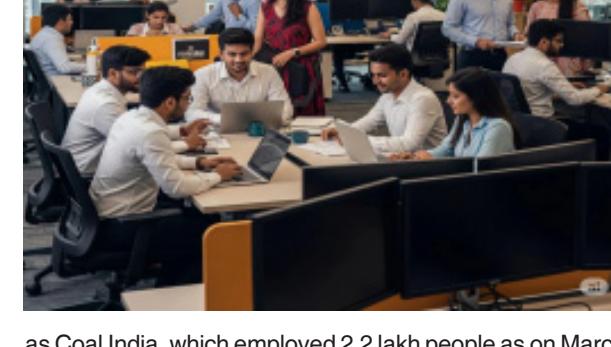
The protein source that Indian poultry, cattle and aqua feed makers normally use is the residual de-oiled cake (DOC or meal) obtained after extraction of oil from soyabean, cottonseed, groundnut, mustardseed or rice bran. These are much costlier than DDGS. Oilseed processors in India are currently selling soyabean DOC containing 46% protein at Rs 43-44 per kg. As against this, the ex-distillery price of DDGS from rice with 42% protein content is only around Rs 30/kg. It is lower, at Rs 24-24.5/kg, for corn DDGS having 27% protein content. Thus, even after adjusting for protein content, DDGS is far cheaper than soyabean meal. And with imports from the US, it could work out still cheaper. To put things into perspective, the US is the world's largest producer and exporter of corn as well as ethanol and DDGS derived from this feed grain. While India has shut itself to imports of American corn and ethanol for fuel use (i.e. blending in petrol and diesel), it has agreed to open up to DDGS from the US. Divya Kumar Gulati, chairman of CLFMA (formerly Compound Livestock Feed Manufacturers Association) of India, has welcomed the move.

"Maize DDGS from Indian distilleries has aflatoxins (produced by certain fungus moulds growing on the grain)

of 100-200 parts per billion, making it unsuitable as feed ingredient for broiler chickens and dairy cattle. It can, at best, be used in feed for egg layer birds in limited quantities. The corn DDGS from the US has less than 20 parts per billion, which is the generally accepted regulatory safety threshold for aflatoxins," he told In other words, the Indian poultry, dairy and aqua industry will benefit from the increased availability of cheaper and probably better-quality DDGS from the US. That the DDGS is derived from genetically modified (GM) corn is another matter though. The US, in 2024 alone, exported some 12.2 million tonnes (mt) of DDGS valued at \$3.1 billion. This was in addition to 1.91 billion gallons of ethanol (\$4.3 billion) and 61.7 mt of corn (\$13.7 billion).

India's livestock sector could also gain from reduced or zero duty imports of red sorghum (jowar) for animal feed. The US is the world's biggest producer and exporter of sorghum, at a projected 11.1 mt and 5.4 mt respectively for the 2025-26 marketing season. US sorghum exports in 2024 were worth over \$1.6 billion. The main loser in the bargain would be Indian soyabean farmers and processing industry, apart from local ethanol grain-based distilleries that sell DDGS from maize and rice as byproduct. Every 100 kg of soyabean that is processed yields roughly 18 kg oil and 82 kg DOC. The trade agreement with the US has allowed imports of DDGS as well as lower-duty soyabean oil. If domestic realisations on soyabean DOC and oil come down as a result, it might hurt farmers who grow the leguminous oilseed on some 13 million hectares – mainly in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. The effective import duty on crude soyabean oil is now 16.5%. India, in 2024-25 (November-October), imported 4.8 mt of soyabean oil primarily from Argentina (2.9 mt), Brazil (1.1 mt), Russia (0.3 mt) and the US (0.2 mt). That could, however, change with American soyabean oil attracting lower tariff. The US mostly exports whole soyabean. With India standing its ground on not liberalising imports of either American corn or soyabean (which are both GM) and also dairy products (which are produced from cows that are fed on internal organs, blood meal, tissues and other bovine-based formulation ingredients), one can expect more US produce to come in the form of DDGS, ethanol and sorghum. The joint statement significantly has a line on India agreeing to "address long-standing non-tariff barriers to the trade in US food and agricultural products". Whether these pertain to India's current restrictions on imports of GM crops and dairy products remains to be seen. The import concessions that India has given on other agricultural products may not impact its farmers much. India has an import duty of 100% on walnuts, Rs 35/kg on in-shell and Rs 100/kg on shelled almonds, and 10% on pistachios. Removing these will not cause great harm, given that India isn't a major producer of dry fruit. India is, on the other hand, the biggest market for American tree nuts. The US exported an estimated \$10 billion worth of tree nuts in 2025. India's share in that was \$1.5 billion. That number could further go up with the reduction, if not elimination, of import duties.

## Top I-T firms earmark Labour Code costs, less than 3% of payroll



India's biggest companies set aside more than Rs 13,000 crore in the October-December 2025 quarter to account for the impact of the new Labour Codes, according to data compiled by The Indian Express. These provisions were 3 per cent or lower as a percentage of last financial year's employee costs for major IT companies and private banks; for airline carrier IndiGo, it was 13 per cent. The data shows that the 41 Nifty 50 companies that have so far announced their latest financial results provided Rs 13,307 crore in the reporting quarter for the first nine months of 2025-26. These 41 companies' consolidated profit after tax amounted to nearly Rs 1.75 lakh crore.

The Nifty 50 is the flagship index of the National Stock Exchange and is made up of 50 of the largest Indian companies listed on the exchange. Notified by the Government in November 2025 — more than five years after the Parliament's clearance — the four Labour Codes comprise the Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Code on Social Security, 2020, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.

These four codes, which consolidate 29 existing labour laws, widen the social security net for all workers, including gig workers, set the floor for the sum of basic pay, dearness allowance, and retaining allowance at 50 per cent of total remuneration, and make employees eligible for gratuity after one year of service, among other changes. As such, these exceptional and one-off provisions are to take care of these additional employee benefits. Top I-T firms earmark Labour Code costs, less than 3% of payroll

The data shows that a third of the Rs 13,307 crore was provisioned by three IT companies: Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, and HCL Technologies. This is because these companies employ more people than others. Some companies from other sectors have made similar-sized provisions, including the likes of infrastructure major Larsen & Toubro, which set aside Rs 1,344 crore, net of taxes, and IndiGo (Rs 969 crore). IndiGo's one-off provision was nearly double its quarter consolidated net profit of Rs 550 crore.

Others have not. For instance, Axis Bank — India's third-largest private bank with a staff of more than 1 lakh — provided just shy of Rs 33 crore in October-December 2025 on a consolidated basis towards gratuity, primarily due to changes in the definition of wage. "...divergent to industry trend, we have been accruing for social security expenses from year 2020. And consequently, we've had only an Rs 25 crore rupee catch-up provision to make under the social security code versus the larger market, both manufacturing and financial services," Puneet Sharma, Chief Financial Officer of Axis Bank, told reporters last month while referring to the bank's standalone financial results. Axis Bank's private sector peers HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, and Kotak Mahindra Bank set aside Rs 1,037 crore, Rs 215 crore, and Rs 128 crore, respectively, during October-December 2025.

Meanwhile, five Nifty 50 companies — Reliance Industries, public sector enterprises State Bank of India (SBI), NTPC, Power Grid Corporation of India, and Eternal (formerly Zomato) — made no additional provisions at all, with most of them saying the incremental impact of the new Labour Codes is "not material". Eternal, which said there was no material impact of the Labour Codes provisions "currently in force" on its financials, also said that the financial impact, if any, "of the remaining provisions will be assessed upon notification of the final rules and their effective dates". The total Labour Codes provisioning by Nifty 50 companies will likely further increase as more and more companies announce their results. A few companies with large workforces are yet to release their quarterly results, such

## Cybersecurity breaches top risk for India Inc: FICCI-EY survey

New Delhi: About 51 per cent of India Inc rank cybersecurity breaches as the top risk to organisational performance, a survey showed on Sunday. This is followed closely by changing customer demands and expectations at 49 per cent, while 48 per cent point to geopolitical events as a key risk factor, according to the FICCI-EY 'Risk Survey'. The report draws on inputs from senior leaders across sectors, on factors affecting pricing, supply chains, talent strategies and technology investments, making risk management central to business strategy.

"In a business environment shaped by volatility, the ability to anticipate, absorb and adapt to risk is emerging as a defining capability for sustained growth. The report indicates that organisations are moving away from treating risk as episodic and are instead embedding it into strategic decision-making, governance structures and long-term planning," said Rajeev Sharma, Chair, FICCI Committee on Corporate Security and Disaster Risk Reduction.

Technology risk is now tightly linked to operational continuity. The survey shows that 61 per cent of respondents feel that rapid technological change and digital disruption are affecting their competitive position, while an equal proportion (61 per cent) identify cyber-attacks and data breaches as major financial and reputational threats. More than half, 57 per cent, report potential data theft and insider fraud as significant risks, and 47 per cent acknowledge difficulty in addressing increasingly sophisticated cyber threats, said the report. Artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as a dual risk area, where both under-adoption and weak governance are sources of concern. The survey indicates that 60 per cent of respondents believe inadequate adoption of emerging technologies, including AI, can adversely impact operational effectiveness. At the same time, 54 per cent feel AI-related risks, including ethical and governance issues, are not being effectively managed. Sudhakar Rajendran, Risk Consulting Leader, EY India said, "Organisations are navigating a phase where multiple risks are converging rather than occurring in isolation".

## Tariff relief as India, US finalise framework for interim trade pact



Washington/ New Delhi: India and the US on Saturday announced they have reached a framework for an interim trade agreement under which both sides will reduce import duties on a number of goods to boost two-way trade. While the US will reduce tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent from the present 50 per cent, India will eliminate or cut down import duties on all US industrial goods and a wide range of American food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains, red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits. According to a joint statement issued by both sides, India has expressed its intention to purchase USD 500 billion of US energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products and coking coal over the next five years. "The US and India are pleased to announce that they have reached a framework for an Interim Agreement regarding reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade," the statement said. Further, through an executive order, US President Donald Trump has removed the 25 per cent tariffs, or additional import duty, that it imposed on India in August last year for purchasing Russian oil, citing that the country has undertaken "significant steps" and New Delhi has committed to stopping directly or indirectly importing oil from Moscow.

"Effective with respect to goods entered for consumption, or withdrawn from the warehouse for consumption, on or after 12.01 am eastern standard time on February 7, 2026, products of India imported into the United States shall no longer be subject to the additional ad valorem rate of duty of 25 per cent imposed pursuant to Executive Order 14329," the order said. On the development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the interim trade pact will strengthen 'Make in India' by opening up new opportunities for farmers and entrepreneurs, and create jobs for women and youngsters.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the interim pact will open a USD 30 trillion market for Indian exporters, especially MSMEs, farmers and fishermen, as the US duties on Indian goods will come down to 18 per cent from 50 per cent earlier. In August last year, the US imposed 25 per cent reciprocal tariffs and an additional 25 per cent levy on India for its purchase of Russian oil, hitting Indian exporters hard as America is their largest export destination. The reduction in tariffs will help boost exports of India's labour-intensive sectors such as textiles and apparel, leather and footwear, plastic and rubber, organic chemicals, home decor, artisanal products and certain machinery. Additionally, tariffs will go down to zero on a wide range of goods, including generic pharmaceuticals, gems and diamonds, and aircraft parts, thereby further enhancing India's export competitiveness and Make in India.

India will also get exemptions under section 232 on aircraft parts, tariff rate quota on auto parts and negotiated outcomes on generic pharmaceuticals, leading to tangible export gains in these sectors. "At the same time, the agreement reflects India's commitment to safeguarding farmers' interests and sustaining rural livelihoods by completely pro-

tecting sensitive agricultural and dairy products, including maize, wheat, rice, soya, poultry, milk, cheese, ethanol (fuel), tobacco, certain vegetables, meat, etc," Goyal said.

In the pact, while import duties are likely to be eliminated by India in certain areas for the US on the day the agreement comes into force, in others they may be phased out over time. In some sectors, duties will be reduced, while in others, quota-based concessions will be provided.

The United States Trade Representative has (USTR) said that US President Trump is expanding American farmers and producers' access to one of the largest economies in the world under a trade deal with India. "President Trump is expanding American farmers and producers' access to one of the largest economies in the world, with India committing to eliminate or lower tariffs for all US industrial goods and a wide array of agricultural products; address long-standing non-tariff barriers to trade; buy more American goods and services and purchase over USD 500 billion of US products," the USTR said in another post.

Hailing the agreement, US Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer said President Donald Trump's dealmaking is unlocking one of the largest economies in the world for American workers and producers. The joint statement also said that the two countries will "promptly" implement this framework and work towards finalising the interim agreement with a view to concluding a mutually beneficial Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA). In February last year, the two nations entered into negotiations for the first phase of the BTA. This framework will now be converted into a legal pact, which is expected to be signed by mid-March, following which India will start cutting down duties on specified American goods. After the successful conclusion of the interim pact, tariffs will go down to zero on a wide range of Indian goods, including generic pharmaceuticals, gems and diamonds, and certain aircraft and aircraft parts.

"Similarly, consistent with the US national security requirements, India will receive a preferential tariff rate quota for automotive parts subject to the tariff imposed to eliminate threats to national security," the statement said.

The statement added that New Delhi has agreed to address long-standing barriers to the trade in US medical devices, eliminate restrictive import licensing procedures that delay market access for, or impose quantitative restrictions on American Information and Communication Technology goods. "Recognising the importance of working together to resolve long-standing concerns, India also agrees to address long-standing non-tariff barriers to the trade in US food and agricultural products," the statement said. India and the US will also significantly increase trade in technology products, including Graphics Processing Units and other goods used in data centres, and expand joint technology cooperation.

To enhance ease of compliance with applicable technical regulations, the two countries plan to discuss their respective standards and conformity assessment procedures for mutually agreed sectors. During 2021-25, the US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in bilateral trade. In 2024-25, the bilateral trade touched USD 186 billion (USD 86.5 billion exports and USD 45.3 billion imports). With America, India had a trade surplus — or the difference between imports and exports — of USD 41 billion in 2024-25. It was USD 35.32 billion in 2023-24 and USD 27.7 billion in 2022-23. Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) Chairman A Sakthivel said the tariff eliminations and enhanced market access arising from this agreement will greatly strengthen the global competitiveness of the Indian textiles and apparel sector, firmly establishing India as the most reliable and trusted sourcing hub worldwide.

## Not a magic pill: Why vitamin D is a valuable (but not instant) tool for muscle growth



as Coal India, which employed 2.2 lakh people as on March 31, 2025. However, with provisions made by public sector companies either negligible or fairly small compared to private ones, it is possible that Coal India may not do so either. For instance, SBI, said that it "continues to comply with the major provisions", with fellow public sector lender Punjab National Bank — a non-Nifty 50 company — saying last month that it was "already implementing all those clauses which the labour code has provided and absolutely nil impact".

Vitamin D is often celebrated for its role in bone health and immunity, but experts suggest it could also play a role in muscle growth and strength. The question gaining traction — especially among fitness enthusiasts — is whether vitamin D can help build muscle faster. The answer isn't black and white, but science does support its potential benefits, said Dr Vishal Shinde, consultant orthopaedics and joint replacement, Wockhardt Hospitals, Mumbai Central. Vitamin D functions like a hormone in the body and has receptors in muscle tissue. "It plays a crucial role in muscle contraction, protein synthesis, and overall function.

Several studies have shown that individuals with adequate vitamin D levels tend to have better muscle strength, performance, and recovery rates than those who are deficient," said Dr Shinde.

For individuals with low vitamin D levels, supplementing with the nutrient may help improve muscle mass and strength over time, particularly in older adults or those with limited sun exposure, as noted by Dr. Shinde. "A deficiency can lead to muscle weakness, fatigue, and slower recovery, which in turn can hinder your fitness progress," said Dr Shinde. Dr Anup Khatri, senior consultant in orthopaedics at Glenelagles Hospital, Parel, Mumbai, concurred and stated that it can help the body absorb calcium more efficiently, which is essential for strong bones and muscles. "Vitamin D also supports your muscle functions by helping the muscles contract properly. Some studies have reported that individuals with low vitamin D levels are more likely to experience muscle weakness and fatigue more easily. This is why ensuring that your body has sufficient levels of vitamin D can help improve your energy levels and overall strength. This can help you perform better in exercises, which could further help in building muscles," said Dr Khatri.

However, this doesn't mean taking high doses will magically bulk you up. "It's more about enabling your muscles to perform at their best when paired with regular training and proper nutrition," said Dr Shinde. Several factors collectively contribute to muscle gain. Focus more on adopting a healthier lifestyle that includes eating well-balanced foods, avoiding processed or junk foods, exercising regularly, and also taking enough rest, said Dr Khatri. Note

that excessive vitamin D intake can be harmful to the body. The key is to maintain a healthy balance, as noted by Dr Khatri.

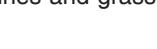
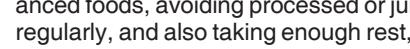
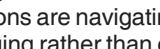
Getting your vitamin D levels checked can be helpful. Do not take vitamin D supplements without consulting your doctor. While vitamin D supports muscle health, it does not make a difference if you are deficient. Natural sources include sunlight, fatty fish, egg yolks, and fortified foods. If you're deficient, your doctor might suggest a supplement to bring levels up to the optimal range, said Dr Shinde. So, while vitamin D alone won't turn you into a bodybuilder, maintaining healthy levels can support muscle growth and enhance performance, experts urge. Think of it as a foundational nutrient — not a shortcut, but a valuable ally in your fitness journey, said Dr Shinde.

## Humans as guests: 5 unique islands ruled by animals

While most islands are shaped by human history, tourism, and development, a few around the world tell a very different story. Here, animals outnumber people, dominate daily life, and often shape local culture itself. From friendly felines to free-roaming mammals, these islands feel less like destinations and more like shared habitats — where humans are simply guests. Aoshima is one of Japan's most famous "cat islands," where felines dramatically outnumber residents. Originally brought in to control rodents on fishing boats, the cats multiplied while the human population steadily declined. Today, visitors come not for shops or attractions, but to witness cats lounging on docks, rooftops, and streets — completely unfazed by human attention. Once a site for secret chemical weapons production, Okunoshima has been reclaimed by hundreds of friendly wild rabbits. Free from natural predators, the rabbits roam openly and often approach visitors. The island has no cars, making it a quiet, surreal place where the rabbits have become its most powerful and charming presence.

3. Pig Beach, Bahamas — The island of swimming pigs

On an uninhabited island in the Exumas lives a colony of wild pigs that have learned to swim. Their origins are unclear, but today they are the undisputed stars of the island. The pigs paddle out to boats, lounge along the shore, and have turned Pig Beach into one of the Bahamas' most unexpected attractions. 4. Sable Island, Canada — Home of the Wild Horses Sable Island is a remote sandbar in the Atlantic Ocean, home to hundreds of wild horses. Protected by law, the horses roam freely across dunes and grasslands, untouched by domestication.



## Why Jana Gana Mana was sang by parents of USA cricketers ahead of match vs India



I do speak Malayalam at home, but I am Australian in everything because I grew up in an Australian environment," James told .In the last few years, Australia has embraced its multiculturalism, with a report in The Sydney Morning Herald showing that participation in the country's cricket by players with South Asian backgrounds has doubled to 20 per cent in the past five years. Indeed, apart from Khawaja, Gurinder Sandhu and Tanveer Sangha have worn the famous yellow jersey.

Such integration had set in a couple of decades earlier in New Zealand. Apart from the four players in the U-19 squad, two of the mainstays in the senior team are sons of migrants who arrived as early as the turn of the century. "Not just cricketers, there are a lot of coaches from India in the New Zealand set-up," says Wellington-based Debu Bainik, who is from Assam and has coached, among others, national New Zealand cricketer Will Young. Behind New Zealand batting star Rachin Ravindra's emergence was Sriram Krishnamurthy, who mentored him during his time with the Wellington Firebirds. England's U-19 squad has two cricketers with Pakistani links. Farhan Ahmed is the younger brother of England international Rehan Ahmed. Ali Farooq is from Loughborough Town, where South Asians constitute 15.7 per cent of the population. The England and Wales Cricket Board, on its part, has launched a South Asian Communities Action Plan, through which the governing body is engaging with these local communities via workshops and proactive schemes. The players and parents, irrespective of roots and nationalities, share similar stories of sacrifices and setbacks, tears and tension. James's parents are registered nurses who relocated to Sydney from West Bengal's Kharagpur when he was only a few months old. "Their timings were really odd — they had night shifts and sometimes worked two or three shifts successively. In between all this, they had to drive me to the academy for training and then pick me up again," he says. In a Cricket Australia video, his teammate Aryan Sharma speaks about the sacrifices his parents made. "My dad visited Australia to attend his brother's wedding in 2000 as a visitor, then moved here in 2005. My parents always used to tell me that moving from one country to another was hard. It was initially difficult to adapt to the Australian lifestyle," he says. But both Aryan and James insist that they are "strictly Australians".

New Zealand all-rounder Snehit Reddy, meanwhile, loves the "tongue-burning" biryani from his father's home state of Andhra Pradesh and adores the Telugu movie star Junior NTR. He was only one year old when his parents shifted to Hamilton and set up a cafe there. Every weekend, his father, Krishna, took him along to his club cricket games, and gradually Snehit too got hooked — living up to the stereotype that sport is a rite passed down generations. If not the father, it would be an elder brother, as it was for the USA's gifted all-rounder Utkarsh Srivastava. For James, it was a friend who moved to Sydney when he was six or seven. One way or another, cricket binds South Asia with the world, and the world with South Asia.

John James, the Australian U-19 all-rounder whose parents migrated from Kerala to New South Wales, says he has always felt a sense of belonging — be it in school, with his mates in the New South Wales youth team, or when he ferried drinks for the Test players during the New Year's Test in Sydney last year. His accent is that of a local speaker. "I feel very Australian, having been brought up here.

## 'Never experienced this before': Bangladesh players' body head says getting death threats

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

Bangladesh's Cricketers' Welfare Association (CWAB) president Mohammad Mithun has said that he has received death threats for taking a stand for the players after they were targeted with derogatory comments by a top Board official. In an interview to 'Cricbuzz', Mithun reiterated that he wants the national team to play next month's T20 World Cup but not with any security worries. Bangladesh are demanding that their four preliminary World Cup games be moved from India to Sri Lanka on account of security issues.

The players in the country boycotted the sport after Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) director Najmul Islam said that they would not be compensated if the team is withdrawn from the mega-event should the ICC refuse to relocate its matches. He also said that the players have achieved little to justify a payout. "I've never had an experience like this. It's the first time in my life. I don't remember ever being involved in controversial talk. It's going over my head — when have I ever spoken against the country?" Mithun said. "I don't know how to take this or describe it as it happens with me for the first time. I haven't used any word that goes against the country; I only spoke for the interest of cricket and the players. There is no personal issue here. Since I'm the president of an organization, if I don't talk about players' rights, what's the point of me being in this position? No one is above the country," he added. Mithun said he hasn't yet formally informed the BCB about the threats but has come to know that even some players have received similar messages. "I haven't informed the board. To be honest, I am not picking up calls from unknown numbers on my mobile. But I can't stop messages or voice notes on WhatsApp. I was asked about this there. It's not just me; my number is available to people because



it goes to the press on behalf of CWAB. "That's why I receive more (calls and messages). But I've heard from other players too that they have received threats, different ways and types of threats. I haven't talked to the board about this yet," he said. "I don't even know how to take help from law enforcement because I have never gone to a police station for any legal matter in my life." He then touched on the burning issue of whether Bangladesh should travel to India for the World Cup. Mithun said he wants the team to play the big event but not with a security threat hanging on the players. "We definitely want player safety and security. We never want anyone to go and play under a life threat. We don't want that. But at the same time, we want the player to play in the World Cup because a World Cup is a World Cup." I believe the board and the Government will take a decision keeping the players' welfare in mind," he said. Bangladesh's refusal to travel to India was preceded by the removal of pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the IPL on BCCI's instructions amid attacks on Hindus here. Though the Indian Board did not specifically cite that as the reason, the Bangladesh government and Board expressed their anger at the decision.

## Steve Smith smashes 32 runs in an over – highest in Big Bash League history- enroute to century

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

Steve Smith broke a Big Bash League record on his way to a scintillating century for the Sydney Sixers in a match against Sydney Thunder. The Australia international slammed bowler Ryan Hadley for 32 runs, which included 4 back to back sixes, in an over- the highest in BBL history in a 189-run chase. The over in question was the 12th one in the Sixers' innings as Smith picked apart Hadley from the first ball itself. He started with a huge six over the deep backward square-leg and then followed it up with another monster over the long-on boundary. There was no respite for the bowler as Smith smashed the third ball for another six over the deep backward square-leg and then flicked the next ball over the deep square-leg fence. The fifth ball was a no ball which Smith took for a four before ending the over playing a wide and 2 runs with the final score in the over standing at 32 runs. Smith went to 88 in this over before completing his ton in the 14th over in an innings peppered with a total of 5 fours and 9 sixes.

"Yeah it was a nice wicket, obviously chasing 190 had to get off to a nice start. Babar and I had a really nice partnership there that set up the platform. And then got to the Surge and it was go time. So, yeah, fortunate enough to hit a few over the fence on the Surge and get us in front of the race. Top of the bounce, flick behind square. Probably 110.



Yeah, it felt like it was a bit shorter this side. Maybe a bit of wind going that way as well. And just felt the seamers were probably the right match-up at that stage. I thought they would come and bowl into the wicket. I was just gonna try and launch a few and yeah, happened to hit a few in the middle," Smith said after the match. "Yeah, so we spoke at the 10-over mark and they said, take the Surge straight away. I was like, no, give it one over. I want to hit to the short boundary and I don't want to screw up the first over. And I looked to try and get 30 off that over. I think we got 32. So it's a good result. I'm not sure Babar was too happy with me knocking back that single though," he added.

## 'Selfless act': FC Goa players, staff agree to salary cut ahead of truncated Indian Super League season



GNS News Agency, Feb 11

FC goa ISL The AIFF Super Cup champions said they were "deeply humbled" by the gesture and expressed gratitude for the unity and commitment shown by the group. "These moments remind us that this club is more than results on the pitch. It is about people, belief, and standing together when it matters most," FC Goa said. Apart from Jhingan, FC Goa's squad also includes India internationals Udanta Singh and Boris Singh.

Earlier this month, Bengaluru FC owner Parth Jindal had urged players to "make sacrifices" due to the financial burden of participating in the delayed ISL, warning that the club could otherwise "shut shop for good." While he did not specify the nature of the sacrifices, it was widely understood to mean possible salary reductions. Bengaluru FC's squad features former India captain Sunil Chhetri and goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu. The appeals came shortly after Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya confirmed that the delayed 2025–26 ISL season will kick off on February 14, with all 14 clubs participating.

The season had been thrown into disarray after Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL), the AIFF's former commercial partner, terminated the Master Rights Agreement on December 8 following disagreements over its renewal. A subsequent AIFF tender to appoint a new commercial partner failed to attract bidders. Following government intervention and negotiations, all 14 clubs agreed to take part in a truncated season featuring 91 matches on a home-and-away basis, with each team playing 13 games.

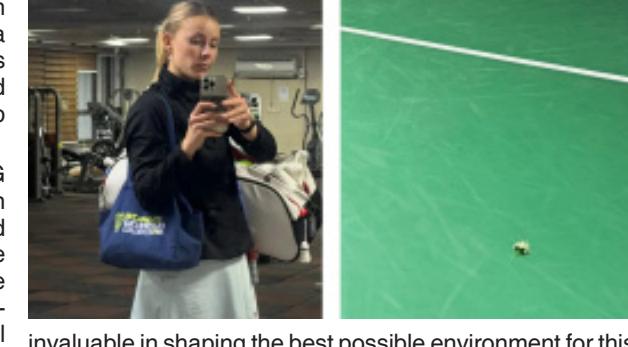
## Danish shuttler Mia Blichfeldt on India Open conditions: 'Find it very difficult to see how a World Championship could be held here'

GNS News Agency, Feb 11

Three days after her initial criticism of the India Open Super 750 badminton tournament, Danish shuttler Mia Blichfeldt took to social media to reiterate how conditions 'are simply unacceptable and highly unprofessional' and added it is 'very difficult to see how a World Championship could be held here.'

The 2026 edition of India Open has been held at the IG Indoor Stadium in New Delhi, shifting to a bigger venue within the same complex where the tournament used to be held at, the KD Jadhav Indoor hall. The India Open is seen as the test event for BWF World Championships scheduled to be held in August this year. On day one of the tournament, after her first-round win, Blichfeldt was one of the first to call out unhealthy conditions in New Delhi, and in the subsequent days there have been multiple incidents that have marred the event, like a monkey sighting in the stands, bird droppings on court halting play and the air pollution in the city affecting players. "The past few days in India have been tough — tougher than I honestly expected. I had mentally prepared myself for 'the worst' once again, but the conditions surrounding us are simply unacceptable and highly unprofessional," Blichfeldt posted on Instagram on Thursday. Indira Gandhi Sports Complex, the venue for Indian Open badminton tournament. Indira Gandhi Sports Complex, the venue for Indian Open badminton tournament.

"We are here to perform and to stay focused on our preparations, both on and off the court. Unfortunately, under these circumstances, it becomes extremely difficult to focus solely on competing and delivering our best performance. Everyone is stressed and frustrated by the conditions we are being met with at a World Tour Super 750 event. At first, you try to laugh off but in the end, it is neither funny nor fair to the players or anyone participating in this event." Since Blichfeldt's original comments, the organisers have been in damage control mode, with the Badminton Association of India and Badminton World Federation issuing multiple statements in response to the continuous criticism. Most recently, on Thursday, the BWF acknowledged issues regarding 'general cleanliness, hygiene and animal control'. However, the BWF also reiterated that the IG Stadium is fit to host the World Championships in August. The BAI has also said that improvements will be made in time for the marquee event in August, working with the BWF to meet their requirements. "The Badminton World Federation (BWF) has engaged with players and teams during India Open 2026 to review conditions at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex in New Delhi," the governing body said in a statement. "The feedback received — both positive and constructive — is



invaluable in shaping the best possible environment for this tournament and future championships. We also acknowledge the comments shared by players and the subsequent media coverage."

"Managing factors related largely to seasonal conditions, such as the haze and cold weather affecting the air quality and temperature inside the venue has posed challenges this week. However, our assessments confirm that the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex represents a significant upgrade from KD Jadhav Stadium, offering improved infrastructure. While some areas of implementation, including general cleanliness and hygiene plus animal control have required attention, the Badminton Association of India (BAI) has acted promptly to address these concerns. Players have also noted the positive enhancements to the playing surface and flooring, gymnasium, and medical facilities." World number 20 shuttler Mia Blichfeldt is not happy with the venue for the India Open tournament which will also host the BWF World Championships in August 2026. (Photo: BWF/Badminton Photo) World number 20 shuttler Mia Blichfeldt is not happy with the venue for the India Open tournament which will also host the BWF World Championships in August 2026. (Photo: BWF/Badminton Photo) Blichfeldt, who had criticised the tournament last year too, added that she was glad to see the attention on the issues she has highlighted. Her Instagram post included images of bird droppings on ground, hazy conditions in the arena among other things. But the world No 20 shuttler still questioned whether the World Championships can be hosted here. "I am glad that this issue is finally receiving the attention it deserves and I truly hope for better conditions for us players in the future if we are to continue competing in India. Sadly, under the current circumstances, I find it very difficult to see how a World Championship could be held here. I hope @bwf.official will do more to ensure proper conditions and better protection for the players in the future."

## 'A chapter of life that has to end' – How Carlos Alcaraz described the surprise split with coach Juan Carlos Ferrero

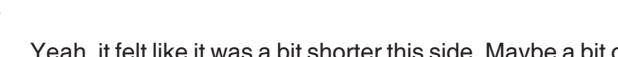
Carlos Alcaraz Juan Carlos Ferrero split Spain's Carlos Alcaraz, right, poses with his coach Juan Carlos Ferrero after winning the final match of the French Tennis Open against Italy's Jannik Sinner at the Roland-Garros stadium in Paris, Sunday, June 8, 2025.

World No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz split with longtime coach Juan Carlos Ferrero took the tennis world by surprise. Neither of them has been too forthcoming on the reasons for the separation — even though the older man had hinted at some contract issues — but in his first comments on the separation, the 22-year-old described the development as "a chapter of life that has to end." Ferrero, himself a former top-ranked player in the world and a Grand Slam champion, had guided Alcaraz since he was 15, and played a pivotal role in him winning six major titles. There was speculation that the former French Open champion didn't want to end the relationship, but Alcaraz said on Friday that "closed this chapter in mutual" last month. The Spaniard is in Melbourne for the Australian Open, which starts on Sunday, where he will try to complete a career Grand Slam, becoming the youngest man in history to accomplish the feat. "We both are still friends, good relationship. But we just decided like this. I'm really grateful for the seven years I've been with Juan Carlos. I learned a lot. It is probably thanks to him I'm the player that I am right now," Alcaraz said. The strength of their relationship can be gauged from the fact that Ferrero once described the youngster as his "fourth child." "After the split, Ferrero had hinted at certain issues" but said that he always believed they could be worked out. "Perhaps they could have been resolved if we had sat down to talk, but in the end, we didn't, and we decided not to continue," Ferrero told Spanish sport newspaper Marca. "It's



Ferrero, himself a former top-ranked player in the world and a Grand Slam champion, had guided Alcaraz since he was 15, and played a pivotal role in him winning six major titles.

clear that it's been a radical change for everyone. Adapting isn't easy. For me, obviously, it's not a pleasant time at all." Ferrero is the only player missing from Alcaraz's coaching team from last season and the player said his training routine remains unchanged. "I have the same team that I had last year. Just one member missing. But the rest of the team, everyone is the same," he added. Alcaraz added that parting ways with Ferrero was a decision taken after extensive deliberations with his close-knit support group. "It was internal, it was ours. It is something we decided as a team. Being such a professional and united group, there is not a single move that we do not discuss and talk about. So, it was an internal decision and in the end, it was carried out that way."



Yeah, it felt like it was a bit shorter this side. Maybe a bit of wind going that way as well. And just felt the seamers were probably the right match-up at that stage. I thought they would come and bowl into the wicket. I was just gonna try and launch a few and yeah, happened to hit a few in the middle," Smith said after the match. "Yeah, so we spoke at the 10-over mark and they said, take the Surge straight away. I was like, no, give it one over. I want to hit to the short boundary and I don't want to screw up the first over. And I looked to try and get 30 off that over. I think we got 32. So it's a good result. I'm not sure Babar was too happy with me knocking back that single though," he added.

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## 'Chhaava is divisive', accepts AR Rahman but says scoring the film was an 'honour': 'Use of words like Subhanallah in negative scenes was cringe'



Vicky Kaushal-starrer Chhaava was the highest-grossing film of 2025 for several months, until Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar dethroned it in December. The film emerged as a major box office success, but it was also widely called out for being divisive due to its portrayal of the conflict between Maratha warrior-king Sambhaji Maharaj and Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Now, maestro A. R. Rahman, who composed the music for the film, has shared his thoughts on the same and admitted that the film was indeed divisive. The blockbuster reception of the film was followed by riots in Nagpur, Maharashtra, which as per Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis were caused by people 'showing their anger at Aurangzeb'. Speaking to BBC Asian Net-

work, AR Rahman spoke about working in a film industry that is becoming increasingly divisive by the day. "That's the reason God is giving more power to people like us so that we can replace the bad with good by word, action, art," he said. When asked if he has become more conscious about picking his projects and avoiding films that are divisive, he said, "Some films are made with a bad intention. I try to avoid those movies." However, Rahman was countered and asked about his statement when he had earlier declared that he was proud of Chhaava's soundtrack despite it being a divisive film. Responding to the same, he said, "It is a divisive film. I think it cashed in on divisiveness, but I think the core of it is to show bravery. I had asked the director, 'Why did he need me for this film?' but he said that we need only you for this. It is an enjoyable film, but definitely people are smarter than that. Do you think people are going to get influenced by movies? They have something called internal conscience, which knows what the truth is, and what manipulation is." Rahman also admitted that he is honoured to give music for a film that is based on the life of a great Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj. "Chhaava is the most celebrated character. It is like the blood of every Maratha. Once the film finishes, you see the girl saying the beautiful poetry. It's very moving. I'm so honoured to have scored that full movie, which has the pulse and soul of every Maratha." Rahman was also asked about the characters in the film saying 'Subhanallah' and 'Alhamdulillah' when something bad is happening in the film. Responding to the same, he said, "That is such a cliché, it is cringe. I have great respect for people. They are not that foolish to get influenced by false information. I have great faith in humanity. People have a conscience, heart, love and compassion."

## 'Anti-supersition' Namita Thapar makes Shark Tank deal with pitcher selling 'spiritual beads, rudraksh': 'Do numberi ka kaam'



Shark Tank India 5: Shark Tank India is currently in the middle of its fifth season and the latest episode of the show saw a 'spiritual wearables brand' where the founder claimed that he was selling 'real' products, but his definition of 'real' had him getting his products tested in labs selected by his company, and issuing a certificate for himself. The pitcher, Ritoban Chakrabarti from Mohali, came with his brand Japam and asked for a valuation of Rs 150 crore, which wasn't questioned much, and he eventually scored a deal with two of the sharks, even as one judge questioned his claims of monetising faith-based products. Astrologer predicted 'do numbri ka kaam' for him; now mints Rs 60 crore in his introduction, Ritoban said that in his childhood, an astrologer had predicted that he would do "do numbri ka kaam" which he later understood as being an entrepreneur. He shared that his business mainly comprises selling 'rudraksh', spiritual beads and other stones, and he was expecting to close the financial year on a revenue of around Rs 60 crore. He was seeking Rs 1.5 crore from the shark in exchange for 1 percent, Namita Thapar, Varun Alagh, Viraj Bahl, Kunal Bahl and Vineeta Singh were the sharks on the panel.

Namita asked him about the difference between spirituality and superstition as his products skirt around both these subjects and he admitted that "fear and spirituality are very interconnected." He insisted that people should practice whatever encourages them and claimed that since the market selling spiritual beads and other such merchandise was quite unorganised, he was here to promote the real thing: 'asliyat ko badhava dena'. As Vineeta unboxed his products and questioned the authenticity certificate, he said that he selects the labs and centers to properly certify his products and then issues a certificate for his own products. None of the sharks delved too deep in this process. Viraj shared that he wears a black thread on his wrist which came from a temple and it holds significant meaning for him. He underlines that this thread was free but it works for him anyway. He questioned why Ritoban was commercialising something so pure. Ritoban gave a clever answer and skirted around the subject as he said, "The question about 'what's real' wasn't being answered, and this was not being answered for decades. There is a reason why you go on pilgrimages and donate money there." He insisted that this was a faith-based product, but could not explain why his products were more valid than anyone else's. He was also very direct in saying that he wants to build a billion dollar enterprise through his mass premium products. In a bid to do this, he has been sending 12,000-13,000 free products every month in the hopes that he will convert these users into paying customers. Speaking about the ethics of this business, Kunal said that the interpretation of ethics could be done differently for different people, but Ritoban insisted that Japam was a combination of ethics and business. Talking about newer customers, he shared that he plans on getting the younger audience by making better looking zodiac sign bands, and once they become a part of the ecosystem, he would try and sell them other products as well.

Viraj was the first to get out of the negotiations as he said that this was "against my belief system". "I am very spiritual and I can't profit from anything which makes people believe they can do well or get healthy if they spend money," he said. Vineeta and Kunal also got out of the negotiations saying that Ritoban actually did not need their money as he had a profitable business with enough cash. Namita claimed that she was anti-supersition, yet she proceeded to present an offer by saying, "There are a lot of superstitions in India and a real player needs to emerge here." Varun and Namita

presented a joint offer, but Ritoban asked them to pitch as he wanted to hear what they would bring to the table. In a rare scene, both sharks spoke at length about their strengths and how they could help the brand. The deal was ultimately locked at Rs 1.5 crore for 1 percent, with 1x royalty, thus valuing the business at Rs 150 crore.

Namita Thapar vs Kunal Bahl: Namita claimed that she was anti-supersition, yet she proceeded to present an offer by saying, "There are a lot of superstitions in India and a real player needs to emerge here." Varun and Namita presented a joint offer, but Ritoban asked them to pitch as he wanted to hear what they would bring to the table. In a rare scene, both sharks spoke at length about their strengths and how they could help the brand. Since their deal included royalty which would eventually lead them to getting all of their investment back, Ritoban questioned, "Then what have you put on the table?" Kunal, who was out of the negotiations, jumped in saying, "Good answer. I was thinking you are so commercially savvy. How have you not realised this?" Namita was visibly irked by this and told him, "Tu toh bahar hai na.. Yeh toh bahar hai ma, yeh kyu baat kar rahe hain? (You are out.. He is out, why is he talking?)" She then addressed the pitcher and gave him a new offer which reduced the equity by 0.5 percent, with the same royalty aspect. Kunal jumped in again and said, "Zero risk for the sharks." Namita again clapped back saying, "You don't listen to those who are out. We are putting in our money. Listen to us." The deal was ultimately locked at Rs 1.5 crore for 1 percent, with 1x royalty, thus valuing the business at Rs 150 crore.

## Vijay Sethupathi's film with Puri Jagannadh gets titled 'Slumdog - 33 Temple Road'



Jagannadh shared the news with a post on his X handle on the occasion of Sethupathi's 48th birthday. It featured the film's poster with the actor standing in the middle and holding a sword covered in blood.

New Delhi: Filmmaker Puri Jagannadh on Friday said his upcoming film with Vijay Sethupathi has been titled "Slumdog - 33 Temple Road".

Jagannadh shared the news with a post on his X handle on the occasion of Sethupathi's 48th birthday. It featured the film's poster with the actor standing in the middle and holding a sword covered in blood. The film is produced by Jagannadh alongside Charmme Kaur and JB Narayan Rao Kondrolla. It is set to release in Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Kannada and Malayalam languages. Sethupathi's latest work is "Thalaivan Thalaivii", which released in July 2025. Directed by Pandiraj, it also starred Roshini Haripriyan in a pivotal role.

## Sharon Stone introduces 'newest member of the family'



Mumbai: Hollywood star Sharon Stone has welcomed a new member into her family, a puppy. The 67-year-old took

to Instagram, where she shared a string of pictures and clips from her experience at the 9th Annual Astra Film Awards. In the shared glimpses, the 'Basic Instinct' star wore a gold sleeveless turtleneck and a fringed skirt with a thigh-high slit.

She paired it with cheetah-print stockings and a fringed tan jacket. The actress was holding a tiny puppy with spots all over, including a big brown spot over one eye, as she posed for the shutterbugs at the event. In one image, the star is seen holding two cute puppies. "In case you forgot, now you know (feat. our newest member of the family).", Sharon wrote as the caption. The actress' latest release is 'Nobody 2'. The film is a 2025 American action thriller directed by Tim Tahjantio. It is a sequel to Nobody. Bob Odenkirk, Connie Nielsen, RZA, Colin Salmon, Gage Munroe, Paisley Cadorath, and Christopher Lloyd reprise their roles from the first film, while John Ortiz, Colin Hank, and Sharon Stone play new characters. The film follows a workaholic assassin, Hutch Mansell, who takes his family on a much-needed vacation to the small tourist town of Plummerville.

However, he soon finds himself in the crosshairs of a corrupt theme-park operator, a shady sheriff and a blood-thirsty crime boss. Stone is known for primarily playing femmes fatales and women of mystery on film and television. She became one of the most popular sex symbols of the 1990s. She has won several honours, including a Primetime Emmy Award and a Golden Globe Award, and has received a nomination for an Academy Award. She made her film debut as an extra in Stardust Memories and played her first speaking part in the horror film Deadly Blessing in 1981. She had a breakthrough with her part in Paul Verhoeven's science fiction film Total Recall, before rising to international recognition with Basic Instinct.

## Amitabh Bachchan says, learning never stops, but outsourcing is the way forward



Mumbai: Megastar Amitabh Bachchan reflected on learning, time, and the rapidly changing nature of work, saying that while every day brings a new lesson, the pace of innovation today often makes it difficult to keep up as one grows older. Taking to his blog, Big B shared his thought that there is often a sense of regret that certain things could not have been learned years ago. "Each day is a learning.. and the regret is that what needs to be learnt should have been learnt many many years ago.. the regret is more because what is being learnt now did not exist then.. and now the desire and effort and energy to learn diminishes – with time and age.."

The star observed that inventions and new systems evolve so rapidly that by the time one begins to understand them, time has already moved on. "The speed of inven-

tions and fresh new systems is so rapid that, by the time you are beginning to learn it, time has passed (sic)." Drawing from recent meetings, he said the key takeaway was to get the basics right and then rely on the best and most skilled recent talents to carry the work forward.

He added: "So the take away today from several meetings is to get the basics in place and then hire the best recent talents and experts to carry out the job.. and job done (sic)." • "If you are unaware or not qualified to accomplish a given job .. no issue .. you accept it .. then hire it out to experts of choice and get it done .. the job accepted .. hired out .. and done .. rather than NOT take up a job, because you do NOT know it, but take it and get it done through a hiring process .. yes you employ or deploy the talent , at a cost , but better to do that than not accept the job in the first place because you are not qualified for it .." Calling it a slightly complicated process, Bachchan said clarity eventually comes with time. He concluded by identifying the right term for this approach, outsourcing, where experts handle the work for a fee, while one retains control of the larger project. A bit complicated all this .. but in time it all falls into place .. ahhh .. got the right expression and word that I was struggling with .. its called OUTSOURCING .. or you OUTSOURCE .. the expert or the knowledge do the work at a fee .. you maintain the job .. but outsourced to the more proficient .. the larger percentage of the commercial remains with you .. "The cost of outsourcing , being the commercial consideration that you are deployed with ..(sic)" "YES .. finally understood .. in my time .. if you did not know the job, you regretted and did not or could not do it .. but now you take up the job, and get it done through OUTSOURCING (sic)." Expressing relief at finally finding the right word, the veteran actor added that modern tools like ChatGPT make finding such answers quicker and easier than ever before. He concluded: "Oh boy what a relief to have got the term right .. and guess what .. put up the issue on ChatGPT, and within a few seconds the response was before you .. BAADUMBAAA !!! (sic).

## 'Ikkis and Dhurandhar should co-exist in a democracy': Ikkis writers on facing trolls, working with Dharmendra

It takes a rare kind of courage to champion a film that speaks in the idiom of war to argue for peace. It takes equal resolve, in a world increasingly afraid of moral stance, to answer bigotry with empathy. And it takes a particular strength to extend a hug that repairs more than a bullet ever could unmake. That is what Sriram Raghavan, along with longtime collaborators Pooja Ladha Surti and Arijit Biswas, have accomplished with their recent release, Ikkis. The film, Dharmendra's swan song, chronicles the life of Arun Khetarpal, youngest recipient of the Param Vir Chakra, and is set against the Battle of Basantar during the 1971 India-Pakistan War. Perhaps unsurprisingly, despite glowing word of mouth, the film and its writers have faced sustained online trolling for daring to tread this path. In an exclusive conversation with SCREEEN, Surti and Biswas reflect on the creative decisions behind the film. While they choose not to comment on the controversial disclaimer that appears in the closing moments, they speak candidly about their process, Dharmendra's instinctive improvisations, the writing of key scenes, and the comparisons with Dhurandhar. (The disclaimer says 'our neighbouring country is not trustworthy at all. Pakistan's armies, both during war and in times of peace, have behaved very cruelly and inhumanely with our soldiers and citizens'. It also says that the humane behaviour of Pakistani Brigadier KM Sisar (played by Jaideep Ahlawat) is an exception).

All your films open with a quote. For Ikkis, you choose lines by Kaifi Azmi. Why?

Surti: So, we were looking for a good quote throughout the making of the movie, and we kept saying, "We must get a good quote, we must get a good quote." This one was always at the back of our minds, but since it was from an earlier war film (Haqeeqat), Sriram kept saying, "Let's find another quote." But we just couldn't come up with an alternative. And this one is, of course, gorgeous, only a poet like Kaifi Azmi can express such ideas so succinctly and beautifully. Biswas: Just to add, in all our other films, we have quoted from an outside source. In Badlapur, it starts with an

African proverb; in Agent Vinod, we quoted The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. But with Ikkis, we wanted to look within, and Kaifi Azmi really suited our milieu. Ikkis is, of course, Sriram's first foray into the war genre. How was the writing process different from your previous collaborations?

Biswas: Even when Andhadhun was happening, this story was something Sriram had discussed with Dinesh Vijan. It got delayed because of COVID and other factors. I have a day job, so I couldn't travel much, but Pooja and Sriram made trips to NDA in 2019 to meet Arun's batchmates and tankmen for research. As for the writing process, we always keep turning out versions of scenes, like say, "What can be Arun's introduction? What can be this or that?" Everything is tossed and turned repeatedly. A lot of back and forth happens. And a lot also depended on the shooting schedule, say, when we were filming with Dharam Ji, whether it's on set or somewhere else. We treated action as placeholders in the script; the actual scenes evolved depending on available days, extras, and logistics. So, in some ways, it was a fluid script. Surti: But we did have a formal script before shooting because we needed army permissions and approvals; logistics for a war film demanded it. That said, our previous scripts, like Badlapur and Andhadhun, were also fluid, organic in nature. For instance, after casting Dharam Ji in Johnny Gaddar, many elements came from him personally. Similarly, with Nawaz in Badlapur or Tabu in Andhadhun, the actors brought parts of themselves to the script. Sriram likes this openness; the writing is flexible enough for actors to interpret and add their own touch. This time, though, given the scale and official requirements, it was a more formal script.

Ikkis Sriram Raghavan started working on Ikkis right after Andhadhun.

Ikkis feels like two films in one: Arun (Agastya Nanda) fighting a full-scale war, and his father Madan Lal (Dharmendra) revisiting the same battlefield years later. The two narratives often seem at odds, almost like an antithesis. How did you approach this at the scripting level?