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Tiger hunt intensifies in Siddipet, villagers relocate livestock

Chowdaram (Siddipet): The forest department has initiated efforts to tranquilize the wandering tiger that has been spreading fear in villages of Siddipet district for the past few days. The local veterinary doctors, along with special 'ResQ' from Pune, set up an ambush at Shingaram village outskirts on Thursday night. A cage with bait was set up and teams sat all night in the vicinity waiting for the tiger. However, the tiger did not turn up. It moved west towards Chowdaram village during the night. The villagers noticed the pugmarks of the tiger in the morning and informed the forest officials. The teams then headed to the Chowdaram village and set up a cage trap in a reserve forest where the movement is being tracked.

Suspended constable's wife wins ward; BRS bags Cheriyal

Siddipet: Kamalapuram Gitanjali, wife of suspended constable Ramesh, overcame odds and won as a ward member from Cheriyal Municipality. Ramesh, who was working as constable at the Komuravally police station, was suspended after his wife filed her nomination as a Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) candidate from the second ward, following allegations that he had campaigned in support of her.

However, Gitanjali and Ramesh refuted the allegations and accused the ruling Congress of forcing Siddipet Police Commissioner to make the decision based on false information.

Seva Teerth, Kartavya Bhawan are important milestone in India's journey towards Viksit Bharat, PM Modi says



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday (February 13, 2026) said the new buildings housing the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and Central Secretariat mark are an important milestone in India's journey towards 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India) and they reflect the government's commitment to citizen-centric governance and national progress. Inaugurating the new PMO, named Seva Teerth, and two buildings of the Central Secretariat, called Kartavya Bhawan 1 and 2, Mr. Modi also said that the towers have been built to fulfil the aspirations of the people of India. "Seva Teerth, Kartavya Bhawan 1 and 2 mark an important milestone in India's journey towards Viksit Bharat. These reflect our commitment to citizen-centric governance and national progress," he said at an event attended by central ministers, senior bureaucrats and other officials of the central government.

The prime minister said the historic structures such as the South Block and North Block, which till now house important ministries like defence, home and finance besides the PMO, were built to embody the ideals of the British Empire but the Seva Teerth and Kartavya Bhawan have been constructed to realise the aspirations of the people of the nation. "The decisions made here will serve as the foun-

dation for advancing the ambitions of 140 crore citizens, rather than reflecting the will of a monarch. With this spirit, I dedicate Seva Teerth and Kartavya Bhawan to the people of the country," he said. Mr. Modi said that after Independence, many important decisions shaping the nation's future were made and key policies were developed within buildings such as the South Block and North Block. However, it is important to remember that these structures were originally built as symbols of the British, he said.

He said India's capital moved from Kolkata to buildings on Raisina Hill that were built according to the wishes of the British royalty. As the nation moves towards a Viksit Bharat, it is vital that India sheds every trace of colonial mindset, he said. The prime minister said that on the journey towards a developed India, it is absolutely essential that India moves forward, liberated from the mentality of slavery. "It is unfortunate that even after Independence, symbols of slavery have continued to be carried here," he said. Mr. Modi said today, everyone is witnessing the creation of a new history and this day, February 13, is becoming a witness to a new beginning in India's journey of development. "The scriptures have accorded great importance to Vijaya Ekadashi. On this day, any resolve with which one moves forward is sure to bring victory. Today, we are all entering the Seva Teerth and Kartavya Bhawan with the resolve to build a developed India. The divine blessing to be victorious in our goal is with us," he said. PM Modi reiterated that the Race Course Road, where the prime minister's residence is located, was renamed Lok Kalyan Marg and this was not only a change of name but it was also an effort to transform the mindset of power into a spirit of service. "The initiative to rename is not merely a change of words; behind all these efforts lies the same ideological thread—the independent identity of independent India. A mark free from the shackles of slavery," he said. On the occasion, the prime minister also released a commemorative postage stamp and a coin on which the new building, Seva Teerth, is inscribed.

BRS accuses Congress of kidnapping an elected party corporator in Kothagudem



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Kothagudem: Former MLA Vanama Venkateswara Rao alleged that Congress party has kidnapped an elected BRS corporator Guguloth Rambabu of 32nd division of

Kothagudem Municipal Corporation.

The incident was said to have taken place when the corporator was at the former MLA's residence at old Paloncha to discuss the future course of action of the party following the election results announced on Friday. Venkateswara Rao along with corporator's wife Nagamani and BRS cadres staged a dharna during late evening hours at the residence of Rambabu demanding his immediate release. If Rambabu was not released forthwith the BRS would stage serious protests across the district, he warned. The ruling Congress party was engaging in unethical acts to gain support of the people in Kothagudem Municipal Corporation. It was not right to kidnap the corporator who got elected with the voters' blessings, he noted. BRS MP Vaddiraju Ravichandra stated that Congress party with the help of the police took away the corporator forcibly as it required support of a few more corporators to win the mayor post.

Fatal crash involving car, bike and truck claims seven lives near Hoskote



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Bengaluru: In a tragic incident, seven people were killed in a road accident early Friday morning near M. Sathyavara village in Hoskote taluk of Karnataka's Bengaluru Rural district. The accident occurred on the Hoskote-Dabaspete National Highway and involved a car, a motorcycle and an XUV car.

According to preliminary police reports, the car, travelling from Kolar towards Devanahalli, first collided with a bike which was moving ahead of it. The driver allegedly lost control of the vehicle, which then rammed into a carter truck, resulting in a fatal chain collision. Six occupants of the car and the bike rider died on the spot. The impact of the crash was so severe that the car was completely mangled. All six deceased in the car are said to be residents of Kothanur in Bengaluru. IGP (Central) Labhu Ram, who visited the spot, stated, "Seven persons were killed in a series of road acci-

dent. We have cleared the vehicle and shifted the bodies to the hospital. Among the dead, the bodies of six persons—travelling on a bike and an XUV—have been identified. We will contact their family and relatives and complete the next procedures. The efforts are on to identify another deceased person." "The investigation is on to find out whether the car driver was driving the vehicle in an inebriated state. We can't say anything in this regard," he stated. After the crash, the truck and the bike crossed the median and fell onto the opposite side of the road, while the mangled XUV came to a halt about 500 metres away from the spot where they had fallen.

BRS sweeps Gajwel and Toopran municipalities in KCR's constituency

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Siddipet: The Bharat Rashtra Samithi won both municipalities in the Gajwel constituency despite the ruling Congress party allegedly going all out to lure voters with multiple offers, including money and liquor.

Gajwel, the headquarters of the constituency represented in the Assembly by former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao, was secured by the BRS. The party won 11 of the 20 wards, while the Congress and BJP managed to secure seven and one wards respectively. An independent candidate won the remaining ward.

BRS dominates civic polls in erstwhile Medak, secures 11 out of 19 municipalities



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Sangareddy: The BRS emerged victorious in 11 of the 19 municipalities in the erstwhile Medak district during the municipal elections. The party secured thumping majorities in Cheriyal, Dubbik, Gajwel, Toopran, Gaddapotharam and Gummadidala municipalities. It is also set to form municipal bodies in Zaheerabad, Medak, Indresham, Isnapur and Jinnaram, where it emerged as the single largest party. With the support of Independents and smaller parties, the BRS is expected to elect its chair-

persons and vice-chairpersons in these municipalities.

Meanwhile, the Congress won Sangareddy, Sadasivapet, Andole-Jogipet, Narayankhed, Ramayampet and Husnabad municipalities. As no party secured a majority of wards in Narsapur and Kohir, both municipalities are likely to remain hung. In a press statement issued after the party's victory in the municipal elections on Friday, former minister T Harish Rao said they would form bodies in 11 municipalities. He added that efforts were underway to form the body in another municipality with the support of Independents. Except for Narayankhed, Andole-Jogipet and Husnabad, which were won by the Congress, Harish Rao had addressed election campaigns in the remaining municipalities. He led the party from the front, guiding leaders at the local level. A major disappointment for the BRS was its loss in Sangareddy and Sadasivapet, where multiple rebels are said to have cost the party dearly. Harish Rao said the party's victory would boost the morale of its cadre. He added that the results indicated serious opposition to the ruling party among voters. Despite the Congress making all-out efforts to lure voters, he said, the BRS managed to win the majority of municipalities. Rao congratulated the winners and hailed the efforts of party leaders and workers. The former minister said the party would stand by them in both victory and defeat.

BRS wins in 700 wards signal public anger against Congress, says Harish Rao



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Hyderabad: BRS Legislator Party deputy leader T Harish Rao termed the party's victory in over 700 municipal wards as an indication of growing public dissatisfaction against the Congress government in Telangana. He called the results a clear warning to the Revanth Reddy government, which derailed development and stalled welfare

schemes for the last two years. Congratulating newly elected BRS corporators and councillors, Harish Rao said the party secured victories despite misuse of official machinery, money power and threats by the ruling Congress.

He also lauded party leaders, cadre and social media volunteers for campaigning against the Congress government's undemocratic and anti-people policies. The senior BRS MLA said the entire government machinery, including the Chief Minister and the Ministers, was deployed during the elections but could not prevent BRS from registering significant gains. "Winning over 700 wards is not a coincidence. It shows rising people's opposition to Congress rule," he said. Harish Rao accused the State government of failing to implement its six guarantees and 420 election promises. He said the recent panchayat and municipal election results have declared the BRS to be the principal opposition force and the only party capable of challenging the Congress in future elections. Stating that the results would boost morale within the party, he said the BRS would continue to hold the Congress government accountable on people's issues, forcing it to implement its election promises.

Hung verdict in six municipalities in erstwhile Adilabad



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Adilabad: Results of elections to 10 municipalities and a single corporation of erstwhile Adilabad district presented a typical picture, almost dealing a blow to the ruling Congress which had predicted that it would be able to deliver a stand-out performance. Six municipalities namely Asifabad, Kagaznagar, Bhainsa, Adilabad and Khanapur are hung with no single party achieving an absolute majority, while the ruling Congress was confined to four civic bodies and BRS-CPI bagged the Kyathanpalli municipality. Independents, BJP and AIMIM are set to play a decisive role in choosing the chairpersons of the five civic bodies. Both the Congress and BRS secured 14 wards each in the 34-member Bellampalli municipality. Five Independents won from Bellampalli, helping them to emerge as kingmakers here. The BRS won nine wards, while Congress registered victory from seven wards of the 20-member newly created Asifabad civic body. Independents clinched four wards here placing them in a decisive position. Congress leaders allegedly tried to abduct an independent candidate Vinod Kumar who won from Ward 1, using an auto-rickshaw. However, BRS cadres prevented them from taking away Vinod Kumar, resulting in tension. They alleged the Congress was poaching independents to get the civic body and cover up its poor show. The BRS won 11 wards of the 30-member Kagaznagar municipality, while the Congress had to be content with nine wards. The BJP won five wards, while independents and AIMIM emerged victorious from four wards and a single ward here. This has given scope to build a coalition to win the civic body. The Congress won 11 wards, while the BRS secured six wards

of 49-member Adilabad municipality, one of the major civic bodies in erstwhile Adilabad district. However, the BJP emerged as the single largest force with 21 wards while independents bagged four wards. The BJP and BRS won four wards each in the 12-member Khanapur municipality. Congress stood at second place with three wards. This has resulted in a hung verdict in the two civic bodies. Meanwhile, AIMIM failed to reach the mandatory majority with 12 wards in the 26-member Bhainsa municipality, forcing it to rely on independents who won from seven wards to win the governing body. BJP became the second largest force with six wards, while Congress was restricted to a single ward.

KTR dismisses Congress 'landslide win' narrative, says public discontent evident

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Hyderabad: After giving a tough fight in the municipal polls to both the ruling Congress, BRS working president KT Rama Rao declared that the party was open to aligning with like-minded secular forces to safeguard Telangana's interests. He dismissed the manufactured narrative of a landslide victory for Congress, stating that the election verdict reflected growing public discontent against the ruling Congress. Addressing the media at Telangana Bhavan on Friday, Rama Rao said the Congress had secured only about 60 per cent of the urban local bodies, which was far from the 'one-sided victory' or 'clean sweep' that was being projected by certain sections of the media. Of the 123 urban local bodies including 116 municipalities and seven municipal corporations, he pointed out that the BRS secured around 16 directly and around 30 civic bodies including Jangaon, Mahabubabad, Gadwal and Wardhannapet among others, had seen hung verdicts. "Effectively, the Congress secured less than 80 urban local bodies, which is around 60 per cent. Unless the ruling party wins 80 percent seats, it cannot claim a landslide," he said, recalling that in 2020, the TRS (now BRS) had won 122 out of 130 civic bodies, which was in every sense of the word, a landslide victory and one-sided clean sweep, unlike what was being attributed to the Congress now.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

On India and its
demand for pulses

India manages its prodigious demand for pulses using a mix of import policy, price stabilisation and conditional MSP procurement. Imports are the most sensitive because a single central decision can immediately lower household spending when supply is tight, at the expense of hurting farmers, and knowing that markets cannot always absorb 'extra' supply. So, when the U.S. said that its trade deal with India obliged India to purchase pulses from American suppliers, it implied that the government had agreed to committing imports against farmers' interests — a politically fraught stance in India since the 2020-21 farm law protests and which might see a revival now. India's pulse output has hovered around 2.5 crore tonnes in recent years while demand is estimated to be three crore tonnes; imports fill the gap. Pulses account for roughly a quarter of non-cereal protein intake and support five crore farmers and their families. In the absence of a reliable MSP regime as for rice and wheat, however, farmers face organised neglect due to weak procurement mechanisms, the risks of rain-fed cultivation, and yields lower than international competitors. In 2019-24, government procurement under the Price Support Scheme fluctuated between 2.9% and 12.4% of production. Many States also have inadequate procurement centres, forcing farmers to sell to private traders regardless of the official MSP. As a result, farmers are incentivised to underinvest in pulses, leading to a vicious cycle.

India recently announced ambitious initiatives to solve this problem, an example being the October 2025 self-sufficiency Mission, with a ?11,440 crore outlay, targeting 310 lakh hectares of cultivation and 350 lakh tonnes of production by 2030-31. But farmers remain sceptical since older promises have yet to materialise.

'Basti Bata' with Electricity Officials in Venkat Reddy Nagar Division – Resolving Public Issues is the Goal:
Akarapu Arun Patel



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 13 (Indian Chronicle):"Under the leadership of Uppal Constituency Youth Congress President Akarapu Arun Patel, a "Basti Bata" (community outreach) program was conducted on Friday in Venkat Reddy Nagar Division, covering Venkat Reddy Nagar, Srinivasapuram, Madhuranager, and Vasavi Nagar colonies. "In view of the recent fire accident in the area, Arun Patel, along with electricity department officials, visited the colonies and inspected the situation. During the visit, he directly interacted with residents to understand the electricity-related issues they are facing. Residents raised several key demands, including: installation of new electric poles where required; replacement of damaged and hazardous cables; upgrading connections from single-phase to three-phase supply as per demand. All these issues were brought to the notice of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Parameshwar Reddy. "After observing the difficulties faced by the colony residents, Arun Patel assured the public that all the necessary works would be completed within a week." Electricity Department ADE Ravinder, Ramanthapur Electricity Department AE Lavanya, other Congress leaders, and local residents participated in the program.

**Self-Government Day Was
Celebrated At Zilla Parishad School**

"Feb13.indian chronicle.medak."Self-Government Day was celebrated at Zilla Parishad High School Veldurthi today. In this special day the principal are Ys. Reshwant, Collector R. Lipsika, f RJD as A. Haswita, Mandal Education Officer J. Srilekha, D. e. O. as Yan. Ruchita and teachers Sushmita, Akshaya, Pallavi, Sai Pradeep, Vijnasai and other teachers participated. Venkataswamy Narasimha Reddy, Charles, Jayasudha, Padmaja, Amulya, Radhika, school teachers participated.

Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Meets HYDRA Commissioner Ranganath, Seeks Funds for Development of Ramanthapur Chinna Cheruvu



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 13 (Indian Chronicle):"Bandari Lakshma Reddy, MLA of Uppal, met HYDRA Commissioner Ranganath on Friday and submitted a representation seeking sanction of funds for the development of Chinna Cheruvu located at Indiranagar in Ramanthapur Division. "The MLA requested allocation of funds for desilting the lake, removal of garbage surrounding the water body, installation of fencing, beautification works, and development of a walking track for the public. Responding positively, Commissioner Ranganath assured that necessary steps would be taken to arrange funds at the earliest. MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy expressed special thanks to the Commissioner for sanctioning ?19 crore for the beautification of the Ramanthapur Main Road Lake. BRS leaders Gantham Nageshwar Rao, Sooram Shankar, Chand Pasha, Apple Srinu, Maruthi, Prem, Srinivas and others were present during the meeting.

Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) Installs Fogging Machine to Curb Mosquito Menace in Beerappagadda Ward



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 13 (Indian Chronicle):"In response to the growing mosquito problem troubling residents of Beerappagadda Division, local youth leader Irshad Khan (popularly known as Uppal Khan) has arranged a fogging machine at his own expense to address the issue. The initiative, undertaken with a focus on safeguarding public health, received widespread appreciation from local residents. "The fogging machine was formally inaugurated by Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge, Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, who attended the event as the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, he appreciated Irshad Khan for proactively identifying public issues and taking responsibility to resolve them. He ex-

pressed hope that Irshad Khan would continue to undertake more welfare initiatives for the benefit of the people in the future. "Several local leaders and residents, including Pawan Goud, Dattu, Jayamma, Anita, Anusha, Goramma, Sharath, Azeem, Junaid, Yaseen, Altaf, Aamer, Faheem, Afzal, Mohsin, Asif, Kittu, Shashi, and Sai, participated in the program. A large number of ward residents also attended, making the event a success. "On the occasion, Irshad Khan stated that the health and well-being of Beerappagadda ward residents is his top priority. He assured that continuous measures would be taken to prevent mosquito-borne diseases and promised to organize more fogging drives if necessary.

Congress party wins big in Aswaraopet Municipality elections.

"Aswaraopet, Feb 13: In the wake of the achievement, Aswaraopet MLA Jare Adinarayana thanked everyone who worked tirelessly for the victory of the 22 ward councilor candidates who contested on behalf of the party. The MLA spoke at a special meeting organized after the results of the Aswaraopet Municipality elections were announced. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the victory of the 22 councilor candidates who contested on behalf of the Congress party was not a simple matter but was a testament to the collective efforts, perseverance, and trust of the party ranks and the people. "He said that 22 ward in-charges in each ward worked in coordination and went door to door to explain the party policies and services of the candidates to the people, and the victory was possible only because of their hard work. He said that the approach of working day and night in campaign programs, raising the problems of the people, and giving assurances of solutions has increased the trust of the people. "The MLA praised the Congress party's top leaders, senior leaders, and mandal-level leaders for coordinating campaign strategies and further increasing the party's strength in each ward. He said that the village sarpanches and sub-sarpanches played a key role in mobilizing strong support for the party in their respective villages. "He also said that the leaders of SC, ST, BC, and minority sections worked comprehensively for the victory of the Congress party candidates by creating awareness among the social groups. He appreciated the youth leaders, social media state, and mandal in-charges for their special efforts in attracting the youth and spreading the party's message widely to the people. "The MLA said that it is commendable that the village branch presidents, women leaders, activists, and fans are working hard for the party's victory, leaving aside their personal work. He reminded them



that the teams formed at each booth level have worked hard to sensitize the voters and increase the polling percentage. "The MLA said that this victory is a testament to the people's trust in the Congress party and that this is a new chapter in the development of the municipality. They promised to give priority to issues like drinking water, drainage systems, CC roads, street lights, sanitation management, parks, and colony development in Aswaraopet Municipality. "They made it clear that their main goal is to provide transparent administration accessible to the people and to resolve problems in every ward quickly. They said that they will work hard to fulfill every promise made during the elections. "Finally, MLA Jare Adinarayana said that this victory is not the work of a single leader... it is the result of the sweat of every worker. With the cooperation and unity of all of you, we will take Aswaraopet forward on the path of development. He said that he sincerely thanks everyone who stood by the Congress party. "A large number of party leaders, workers, and ward in-charges participated in this meeting and expressed their gratitude to the MLA.

Former Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Inspects 1 Crore Bridge Works Over Irrigation Nala in Azmath Nagar---Appreciates contractor for speedy execution

"Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, February 13 (Indian Chronicle):"In Azmath Nagar Colony of Chilkanagar Division, the construction of a bridge over the irrigation nala is underway at a cost of ?1 crore. Former Corporator of Chilkanagar Division and GHMC Standing Committee Member, Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj, inspected the ongoing works along with GHMC officials and local residents. "Speaking on the occasion, Geetha Praveen stated that the bridge construction is progressing at a rapid pace. She explained that the bridge is being constructed in a planned manner so that it is completed before the 1000 mm dia trunk line works, which are being undertaken on Chilkanagar Main Road at a cost of ?6 crores. She added that the bridge will serve as an alternative route for residents of Chilkanagar Division, ensuring smooth connectivity from Chilkanagar and Boduppal towards Secunderabad without any disruption during the trunk line works. All necessary measures are being taken to complete the bridge at the earliest, she assured. Former Corporator Geetha Praveen appreciated the contractor and GHMC officials for



executing the works swiftly. The program was attended by BRS Party State Leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, Azmath Nagar Colony President Atishesh Rathod, Vishat Enclave President Amarender Reddy, colony members Gopal Rao, Sunil, Prakash, Poornachander, leaders Muddam Srinivas, Balakrishna Goud, Gopi Nandan, Shyam, and others.

Candidate going door to door.



"ASWARAOUPETA, Feb 13: While all the candidates who won the 14th ward of Aswaraopeta are holding victory rallies, this candidate is not holding any victory rallies... He is not bursting any crackers... He is not taking any procession to praise the people... Every voter who voted for him goes home and thanks him... But she is not a simple person... She is a famous doctor in the village... She is Dr. Bhukya Udaya Jyoti. She won from Ward 14 BRS at the last minute. While all the candidates are holding victory rallies and victory rallies after winning, this one is going door to door thanking the people who voted for her. She is going ahead after seeking the blessings of the elders in that house... In the past, before winning, she came for votes, but after winning, many are getting into the habit of coming home and greeting everyone..."

Tribal Youth Donates Land Meant for His House to Build Shiva Temple



"Eight Years of Selfless Service Inspire Devotees in Bhadradi Kothagudem" "Kranthikumar Dasari | Pinapaka Constancy | February 13 | Indian chronicle : In a rare story of devotion and selflessness, a tribal youth from Chinnarajupeta village in Pinapaka mandal of Bhadradi Kothagudem district has dedicated the small piece of land given to him for building his own house to Lord Shiva. The land, gifted by his mother-in-law to help him construct a home, was instead used to build a small Shiva temple that has now become a spiritual centre for villagers and pilgrims. Located along the Manuguru-Eturnagaram National Highway, the temple stands as a symbol of sacrifice and faith. The youth, identified as Payam Somayya, chose to put community welfare above personal needs. "If I build a house for myself, it will serve only one family. But a temple for Lord Shiva serves the entire village," he said, reflecting his deep spiritual conviction. After constructing the temple, Somayya has continued to serve it with unwavering dedication for the past eight years. Every day, he cleans the premises, performs regular rituals, and organises special abhishekams during Mahashivaratri and other auspicious occasions. Despite leading a modest life financially, his commitment to spiritual service has earned him respect and admiration in the region. Due to its strategic location along the highway, the temple has also become a resting and prayer point for devotees undertaking the Godavari Parikrama. Pilgrims often stop here to seek blessings, rest briefly, and continue their journey with a sense of spiritual peace. Over time, the small shrine has emerged as a place of solace for travellers and devotees alike. In an era often marked by material pursuits, Somayya's gesture sends out a powerful message to society — that true devotion goes beyond rituals and extends to selfless sacrifice for the greater good. His life stands as a reminder that faith, when combined with service, can create lasting impact on the community.



30 Crore Sanctioned for Restoration of HMT Lake in High Court Colony: Former Corporator Bannala Geetha“



KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 13 (Indian Chronicle):“The long-pending beautification and restoration works of Uppal Pedda Cheruvu (HMT Lake) located near High Court Colony and adjacent to Chilkanagar Division have received a major boost with the sanction of ?30 crore funds.“The funds were allocated through the efforts of Uppal MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy for the comprehensive development and beautification of the lake. Former Corporator and GHMC Standing Committee Member Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj stated that the persistent efforts of the MLA have finally yielded results, fulfilling a long-standing demand of the people of Chilkanagar Division.“She recalled that during the tenure of the late former MLA Bandari Rajireddy, significant efforts were made to secure a proper road connecting HMT Nagar and High Court Colony areas along the

lake. She said that today, under the leadership of MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy, the lake beautification project is being taken up in a comprehensive manner, which is highly commendable. Geetha expressed confidence that the lake restoration would permanently resolve the mosquito menace affecting residents of Chilkanagar and Beerappa Gadda divisions. As part of the works, the lake will soon be completely dewatered and desilted up to three feet depth before commencing full-scale beautification activities. On Friday, BRS State Leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, along with Uppal MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy and Chilkanagar Division leaders, met HYDRAA Commissioner Ranganath to thank him for sanctioning ?30 crore for the restoration of Uppal Pedda Cheruvu (HMT Lake). The Commissioner was felicitated with a shawl as a mark of gratitude.

Thanks to the people of Ramayampet, gajawada Nagaraj Lavanya“



“Feb13. indian chronicle.medak”“Gajawada Nagaraj Lavanya couple who won a big victory in Ramayampet town of Medak district thanked the people of Ramayampet town, on the occasion of Congress party’s big victory in Ramayampet municipal elections, Gajawada couple will work as servants of the people, the town’s infrastructure, electric lights decoration, drainage system, drinking water problem, greenery cleanliness, double bedroom house, immediate measures for those who don’t get pensions. He expressed his gratitude to local MLA Mynampally Rohit and Ramayampet town election in-charge Chitkul Mypal Reddy who stood behind us and led us forward in the municipal elections, saying that we will always work with the public welfare in mind.

Today nalacheruvu ramesh goud was conducted motivation clasess to the ssc students



“Feb13. indian chronicle.medak.”“Nalacheruvu Ramesh Yeldurthi is a good role model for the tenth standard students.“He studied hard and grew up in life with persistence. Emphasis on education, discipline and good values ??make him stand out. The philosophy of moving forward without backing down no matter what the difficulties are, is an ideal for the students. That’s why the students of class 10 should take him as a role model, study hard and achieve their goals, said Zilla Parishad High School Principal B. Sambabah. Ramesh Garu said that as the tenth class exams are nearing, they should not be under pressure and should not get nervous and write the exams. After that, prizes were given to the students. Narasimha Reddy, Charles, Amulya, Jayasudha, Padmaja and other teachers participated in this program.

Banks Committed to Economic Growth: RBI AGM Ramulu



strengthening the financial condition of families.“TGB Regional Manager Girimoji Nayak encouraged people to cultivate savings habits to achieve financial growth. He urged them to make effective use of government schemes available through banks and cautioned them not to share personal information with unknown persons.“District Project Manager Gnaneshwar stated that timely repayment of loans by women Self-Help Group members would enhance their eligibility for higher credit in the future.“Counselors from the Financial Literacy Centre explained financial literacy concepts, unclaimed deposits, social security schemes, digital payments, and cyber fraud awareness. They also conducted interactive game-based activities to promote savings awareness.“Among those present were LBO Office Officer Papaya, TGB Ankoli Branch Manager Srinivas, APM officials, Financial Literacy Centre counsellors Kamalakar, Bhoomanna, Satyanarayana, village elders Hanumanth Rao, Meera Bai, Rambai, Bhageerth Bai, and a large number of Self-Help Group members.

Congress wins municipality with MLA's support

Kondapalli Saritha in race for chairperson post“Yellandu, February 13 (Indian Chronicle):“There are 24 wards in the municipality.“The Congress 19, BRS 3.. The Independents 2“The Congress won the assembly elections. The BJP won 19 out of 24 seats in the municipal corporation elections. The local community took over. The victory of the Congress was the result of the hard work of the MLAs. All parties worked together to ensure the victory of their candidates. Former municipal chairman Dammalapati Venkateswarlu presided over the function. At present, Kondapalli Ganesh’s wife Saritha and two others are in the race for the post of municipal chairperson. Due to the efforts of the MLA, the Congress took over the municipality. Winners lit candles and burst crackers.

Contractors Meet Commissioner Vinay Krishna Reddy

“Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, February 13:“On the occasion of his appointment as Commissioner of the Medchal–Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation (MMC), Mr. Vinay Krishna Reddy was courteously met and felicitated by the zonal contractors of LB Nagar, Uppal, and Malkajgiri. The contractors extended their warm congratulations and presented him with a bouquet as a mark of respect and goodwill.“During the meeting, the representatives conveyed their best wishes and expressed confidence in his leadership and administrative capabilities. They briefed the Commissioner on various civic and infrastructure-related issues concerning their respective zones and discussed the need for timely execution of ongoing development works.“Prominent members who attended the program included Malkajgiri President S. Bhaskar Reddy, LB Nagar President Shivakumar, SC/ST President Rajasekhar, Uppal President Mallesha, Kapra President Sangisheety Ravindra Sagar, Patnam Srisailam, along with several senior contractors.“The contractors assured their full cooperation to the municipal administration and emphasized the importance of coordinated efforts between officials and contractors to accelerate urban development works. They expressed their commitment to maintaining quality standards, ensuring transparency, and completing projects within stipulated timelines for the overall progress and beautification of



the city.“The Commissioner appreciated their gesture and assured that the administration would work in close coordination with all stakeholders to strengthen civic infrastructure and improve public services across the corporation limits.

Keesaragutta Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy Brahmotsavams Inaugurated“



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 13, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“The annual Brahmotsavams of Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy Temple at Keesaragutta in Keesara Mandal of Medchal constituency commenced on Friday, February 13, 2026. The festivities will continue until February 18, 2026. The celebrations began on the auspicious occasion of Magha Bahula Ekadashi with Ganapati

Puja performed in the morning, marking the formal inauguration of the temple festival. Earlier, special rituals and prayers were conducted to the presiding deity at the temple. As part of the Keesaragutta Jatara, a series of cultural programs and sports competitions were organized, drawing large participation and entertaining devotees. The Brahmotsavams are expected to witness significant footfall from devotees across the region during the six-day celebrations.

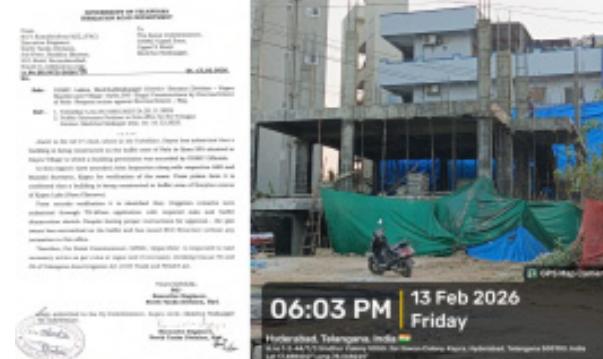
Tight Security Marks Smooth Counting in Three Municipalities



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 13, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“The counting of votes for the 2026 Municipal Elections in Medchal–Malkajgiri district was conducted smoothly under tight security arrangements in three municipalities on Thursday. District Collector Manu Choudhary supervised the counting process along with General Observer Nirmal Kanti Wesley at the designated centres. Counting for Aliabad Municipality was held at Sri T. Chaitanya High School, Mazidpur. The counting for Muduchinthalapally Municipality took place at Telangana Minority Residential School, Jaggamguda, while Yellampet Municipality votes were counted at Bible College. In the presence of political party representatives, strong rooms were opened and ballot boxes were shifted to the respective count-

ing halls. The process began with the counting of postal ballots, followed by regular ballot papers. Counting supervisors and assistants carried out ward-wise counting in the presence of contesting candidates and their agents. The entire process was conducted under CCTV surveillance and tight security to ensure peaceful completion without any untoward incidents. In Aliabad Municipality, Congress won 8 seats, BRS secured 7 seats, BJP won 3 seats, BSP secured 1 seat, and one Independent candidate was elected. In Muduchinthalapally Municipality, BRS won 14 seats, Congress secured 9 seats, and BJP won 1 seat. In Yellampet Municipality, BRS secured 12 seats, Congress won 8 seats, and BJP secured 4 seats. Certificates of election were issued to the winning candidates by the respective Returning Officers.

G+4 Building in Nala Buffer Zone Ready for Third Slab; Officials Yet to Act



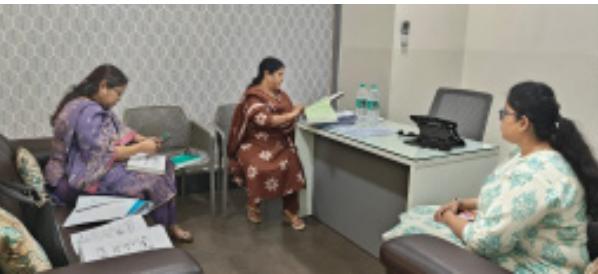
ders or directions granted in the matter. Subsequently, on February 3, 2026, the Irrigation Department addressed letters to the Uppal Zonal Office and the Kapra Deputy Commissioner’s office, advising them to take necessary action since the construction falls within the buffer zone. Despite this, no visible action has been taken so far. When contacted, zonal officials reportedly shifted responsibility to the circle-level authorities, while circle officials stated that they are examining the issue and would conduct a site visit soon. Meanwhile, construction activity at the site continues without interruption. The situation has raised questions about enforcement of buffer zone regulations and accountability of civic authorities. Concerns are being voiced over whether nala buffer zones are being adequately protected. It has been stated that the matter, along with all relevant details, will be brought before the High Court in Writ Petition No. 168 of 2026 in the coming days.

R&D Cell director removed at JNTU Hyderabad

Hyderabad: The Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU) – Hyderabad on Friday removed Dr A Chennakesava Reddy from the position of Research and Development (R&D) Cell director and sent him back to his parent department.



Medchal-Malkajgiri Health Officials Conduct Surprise Inspections at Private Hospitals



"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 13, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):" In Medchal-Malkajgiri district, inspection drives were conducted today under the supervision of District Medical and Health Officer Dr. Umagouri. The inspection team included Programme Officer Dr. Pawan, Vasantha, Deputy DEMO, and section staff. The team inspected Prasad Hospital, Pragathi Nagar, and its unit at Road No. 4. During the inspection, all departments were thoroughly examined, including the services being provided, maintenance of records, licenses and certifications, sanitation standards, maternity services, scanning services,

and operation theatre facilities. The quality of medical care provided to patients, adherence to safety standards, and implementation of government regulations were also reviewed. It was stated that notices will be issued for any violations found. If the deficiencies are not rectified, action will be taken as per the relevant laws. In a parallel inspection, another team led by Programme Officer Dr. Geetha conducted extensive inspections at Sreekara Hospital, Vijaya Hospital, and Ramaraj Hospitals. The inspections focused on service standards, compliance with statutory requirements, and overall patient care systems. Further action will be initiated based on the findings of the inspection teams.

35 Crore Sanctioned for Kapra Lake Development



Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 13, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):" 35 crore has been sanctioned for the development and beautification of Kapra Lake in Uppal constituency. Following the approval, Bandari Lakshma Reddy met A.V. Ranganath, Commissioner of HYDRA, to express appreciation for the allocation of funds. Speaking on the occasion, Lakshma Reddy stated that Kapra Lake is not only a vital resource for local residents but also plays a key role in environmental conservation. He said that restoration of the lake would help improve groundwater levels and enhance greenery in the surrounding areas, contributing to a healthier environment. As part of the development plan, works will include beautification of the lake surroundings, construction of walking tracks, development of green spaces, and provision of parking facilities. The initiative aims to transform the Kapra area into a model urban ecological zone. Bairi Naveen Goud, President of BRS Kapra Division, also participated in the program and thanked the authorities on behalf of Kapra residents. He urged officials to expedite the works and make the lake accessible to the public at the earliest.

-Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Thanks HYDRA Commissioner" NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR),

BSP Expresses Happiness Over Victory in Aliabad Municipality

"Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, February 13: The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) expressed happiness over its victory in Aliabad Municipality. Senior BSP leaders from Delhi had earlier conducted extensive election campaigning in the Medchal Assembly constituency to ensure the success of the party candidates contesting in Aliabad Municipality. As part of the campaign, a padayatra was organized in support of the BSP candidates. Goode Venkatesh, who contested from Ward No. 18, secured victory in the results announced on Friday. Party leaders and activists celebrated the win by bursting firecrackers and distributing sweets. The programme was conducted under the leadership of District President Banoth Ravinder Naik. Prominent leaders who participated in the campaign included BSP Central Coordinator Suresh Arya, State Vice President Sri Ramakrishna, State Secretary Sheelam Anita Reddy, District Vice President Erravalli Mallesh, Uppal In-charge Konda Apparao, Uppal President Mindrala Narsingarao, District Leader Koppu Rajayya, District General Secretary Sukka Dayanand, Malkajgiri In-charge Gautham Raj, Medchal General Secretary Birru



Yakaswamy, District Leader Ilakanth, Jawaharnagar Prabhakar, and PMC Srinivas, along with several party activists.

Section 163 Imposed in Muduchintalapally Municipality Ahead of Indirect Municipal Elections



strict action under the Model Code of Conduct. In all cases of MCC violations, immediate notices will be issued to the concerned candidates or political parties. Further action will be taken in accordance with the declarations submitted by the candidates and the applicable election laws. The prohibitory orders will come into force from 5:00 AM on February 14, 2026, and remain in effect until 5:00 PM on February 16, 2026. Any person found violating these orders will be liable for prosecution under the relevant provisions of law.

Maha Shivaratri jatara relocated to Bheemeshwara temple, three-day fair from February 14

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 13, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):" Following the notification issued by the State Election Commission for the conduct of indirect elections to the posts of Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of Municipalities across the State, scheduled for February 16, 2026, the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) will remain in force until the completion of the election process. To prevent the formation of camps, unauthorized gatherings, and violations of the MCC during the intervening period, prohibitory orders have been imposed under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). CH Sridhar, IPS, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Malkajgiri Zone, has prohibited the assembly of five or more persons in any public or private place without prior intimation to the competent authority within the limits of Muduchintalapally Municipality under Shamirpet Police Station, Malkajgiri. Authorities stated that any gathering in violation of these orders will attract

With the victory of the three-month flag in six municipalities..



. Bhuvanagiri MP..Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, MLAs Beerla Ailaiah, Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy expressed happiness"(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 13):- There are six municipalities as part of the Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district municipalities. As part of this, the names of the winners in the counting held on Friday in Bhuvanagiri, Aleru, Yadagirigutta, Choutuppal, Pochampally, and Motkur are as follows. The names of the winners of the 35 councilor candidates in Bhuvanagiri Town Municipality are as follows.. *In Bhuvanagiri Municipality...Congress 22, BJP 4, BRS 4, Independent candidates 5,"The names of those who won are as follows.1. Ele Bhuvaneswari-BRS,2 Polisetty Anil, Congress"3. Pal Tiya Venkatesh- Congress,4. Aruna Poorna Chander -Swasanta candidate,5. -Tummala Nagesh..BJP Yasmin,6. Jangiti Vinod Kumar -Congress,7 Kukkadoogu Padma Somaiya-Congress 8. Tahira Bablu -Independent,9. Bontala Narasingh Rao..Congress"10 Bingi Naresh -Congress,11 Ganji Srivani Ganesh Reddy, Congress,12 Thotakuri Vijayalakshmi Venkatesham Congress,13 Gurrala Santosh Srinivas Congress,14 Tummetti Pandu- Independent candidate,15 Ganepaka Nazyia Rahima Jangaia.. Congress-16. Bojana Sharada.. BJP,17 Chenna Swathi Mahesh - BRS,18

Pasham Amar Nath.. Independent candidate,19 Bandaru Swarnalatha- BJP,20 Pachalla Jaganmohan.. Congress,21 Ongeti Sucharita Bhaskar Reddy- BJP,22 Joligam Vignesh Congress,23 Barre Pujita Jangir Congress,24 Challagurugula Raghu Babu..Congress,25 Benda Swarupa Lal Raj, Congress,26 Chimala Just BRS,27 Buranodeen Congress,28. Sudha Gani Saritha Congress,29. Pothamsetty Manjula Venkatesh Congress,30. MD Layak Ahmed.. Congress,31. Tapasuma Congress,32. Barre Sanghavi Independent Candidate,33. Nakoti Nagesh TRS,34. Saragada Rajyalakshmi Amar..Congress,35. Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar..won as a Congress party candidate... Aleru Municipality has 21 wards.. 12... Congress 7, BRS 3, BJP 2,"Choutuppal Municipality has 20 wards, out of which 12 are Congress, 3 BJP, 3 BRS, 1 CPM, 1 independent candidate, "Yadagirigutta has 12 wards* 8 are Congress, 2 BJP, 1, CPI, 1 independent candidate, Pochampally has 13 wards... Congress 6, BRS 6, BJP 1, "Motkuru... out of 12, 8 are Congress, 3 BRS, 1 independent candidate. In any case, as the Congress Party won six municipalities in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, Bhuvanagiri MLA Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, government-rejecting MLA Beerla Ailaiah, and Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy thanked the people of the respective municipalities.

Section 163 (144) of the Indian Civil Security Code (BNSS) will be in force in the district till the 16th of this month:- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Election Officer, Collector Hanumantha Rao"



"(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 13):" In view of the conduct of Chairperson/Vice Chairperson and Indirect Elections in Bhuvanagiri, Aleru, Yadagirigutta, Pochampally, Choutuppal, Motkuru Municipalities in the district, Section 163 (144) of the Indian Civil Security Code (BNSS) will be in force in the district till the 16th of this month, District Election Officer, Collector Hanumantha Rao said. The Election Code of Conduct (MCC) issued by the Telangana State Election Commission will continue to be strictly implemented in the district, peacefully, fearlessly, It was revealed that Section 163 is being implemented as a precautionary measure to ensure transparency. It was clarified that no more than three people should gather in any public or private place without prior permission from the concerned authorities. He said that organizing unauthorized meetings, camps, rallies, demonstrations, and forming groups in violation of the election code of conduct is completely prohibited. He warned that cases will be registered immediately against those who violate the election code of conduct in the district and legal action will be taken. He also said that organizing demonstrations and rallies without prior permission through pri-

vate vehicles, tour vehicles or other means will be considered a violation of the rules. The District Election Officer appealed to the people and politicians to respect the election rules and cooperate.

Congress Secures Decisive Victory in Manthani Municipality.



"P. S. ASHOKAN. "KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. "Wins 11 of 13 Wards; One Seat Each to Independent and BRS" Manthani Municipality has been emphatically captured by the Indian National Congress, marking a significant political triumph in the recent municipal elections."Out of the total 13 wards, the Congress party secured a commanding majority by winning 11 wards. Meanwhile, one ward was won by an Independent candidate and another by the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS)."Ward-wise Results - Congress Victories" The following Congress candidates registered impressive victories:"Ward 1: Karrli Lingayya - majority of 221 votes" "Ward 2: Nookala Kamal - majority of 212 votes" "Ward 4: Erukala Sravanti - majority of 164 votes" "Ward 5: Musukula Sahender Reddy - majority of 53 votes" "Ward 7: Jambo Smt. Sammaya - majority of 63 votes" "Ward 8: Naredla Vijayalakshmi - majority of 362 votes" "Ward 9: Marupaka Niharika - majority of 327 votes" "Ward 10: Pentari Raju - majority of 396 votes" "Ward 12: Vodhala Srinivas - majority of 270 votes" "Ward 13: Ellanki Yamshi - majority of 264 votes" "Other Results" "Ward 3: BRS candidate Machidi Raju Goud won with a majority of 44 votes." "Ward 6: Independent candidate Potharaveni Kranti emerged victorious with a substantial majority of 474 votes." "From the very commencement of the counting process, the Congress party maintained a

clear and consistent lead, with its victory becoming increasingly evident as rounds progressed." Notably, the significant margin secured by Independent candidate Potharaveni Kranti stood out as one of the highlights of the election." Following the announcement of the results, Congress leaders and supporters celebrated the sweeping mandate by organizing a grand and jubilant victory rally, marking a historic political moment in Manthani Municipality.

Hung Verdict in Kagaznagar Municipal Polls

"Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 13, "The counting process for the Kagaznagar Municipal elections was conducted peacefully on Friday. All necessary arrangements were made at the Old Bala Vidya Mandir High School for counting votes across 30 municipal wards." The first round of counting commenced in the morning, followed by the second round in the afternoon. As the ward-wise results were declared, no party secured a clear majority, leading to a hung verdict." Out of the total 30 wards in Kagaznagar Municipality, the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) won 11 councilor seats. The ruling Indian National Congress (Congress) secured 9 seats. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 5 seats, while the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimine (AIMIM) secured 1 ward. Independent candidates emerged victorious in the remaining 4 wards." With no party reaching the magic figure required for a majority, efforts have begun to secure the Municipal Chairman's post. Leaders from both the BRS and Congress have intensified attempts to garner the support of independent councillors." The demand for independent members has increased significantly, as parties move swiftly to consolidate support and safeguard their elected representatives." With the Municipal Chairman election scheduled for the 16th of this month, political activity has intensified, and parties are strategizing carefully to gain the upper hand.

Govt's Sabarmati Ashram revamp project runs into resistance by one family



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

On the 55 acres of land where workers are busy restoring rows of neat cottages with terracotta-tiled roofs as part of the Rs 1,200 crore Sabarmati Ashram Redevelopment Project, one cottage on the north-west corner stands untouched. Clothes hang on a line, a scooter is parked outside, the walls are stained with water leakage, the lime plaster has peeled off at places exposing the bricks, and the roof tiles are run down or broken. But the family of the late Mohanbhai Rathod is holding out on the government's rehabilitation plan and resisting moving out, unlike the other 250-odd families which once lived on the premises. The Dalit family, comprising Rathod's wife, children and other relatives, occupy the house – located near a statue of Babasaheb Ambedkar – as tenants.

The redevelopment of the Ashram, set up by Mahatma Gandhi on the banks of the Sabarmati river in Ahmedabad, is being implemented jointly by the Central and state governments, under the Mahatma Gandhi Sabarmati Ashram Memorial Trust. Its masterplan was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March 2024, and the state government hopes to finish the project by 2027. Three properties located on the Ashram premises – A, B and C – however, have been in litigation before the Small Causes Court in Ahmedabad. Property B comprises the residential area where the Rathods are now the lone residents, while Properties A and C are plots of land measuring together 6,000 sq yards.

The Rathods claim that all the three properties were

Suspended TMC MLA Humayun Kabir holds 22 km 'Babri Yatra' day after mosque replica construction begins

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Pointing out that the final voters' list following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is due to be published on February 28, Kabir alleged that while most names deleted have been those of Hindus, Muslims were being singled out and harassed through repeated hearings. Pointing out that the final voters' list following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is due to be published on February 28, Kabir alleged that while most names deleted have been those of Hindus, Muslims were being singled out and harassed through repeated hearings. (File Photo) A day after suspended Trinamool Congress (TMC) MLA Humayun Kabir commenced construction of a Babri Masjid replica at Beldanga in West Bengal's Murshidabad, the Janata Unnayan Party chairman on Thursday led a rally from Palashi to the site of the proposed mosque. Initially, Kabir's 'Babri Yatra' was to begin from Palashi in Nadia district and travel 265 kilometres to Itahar in North Dinajpur district, with 100 vehicles carrying six people each. The yatra, however, was cancelled due to the ongoing state board higher secondary or Class 12 examinations.

Kabir had said that the Malda police had asked him to postpone the rally. Instead, he led a smaller one on Thursday, covering 22 km from Palashi Monument to Beldanga. The rally began with a bike procession up to Rejinagar, followed by a foot march to Beldanga. A local police official said that Kabir did not have police permission for the rally. Defending the construction of the mosque, Kabir told the media, "If one builds a Durga Angana, Jagannath temple in Digha, or a Kali temple, then that is legal, and if we Muslims build a mosque, then that is illegal. If a child is born in my house, I will decide what name to give—Barabar or Saddarn—this freedom I have from the Constitution of this country. I will not take any advice from [US President] Donald

Mumbai Suburban rail network: Harbour Line AC locals carry 6.40 lakh passengers in just 16 days

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Mumbai Suburban railway network, Mumbai Suburban Railway Update: The newly introduced AC local train services on the Harbour line of the Mumbai Suburban railway network have received an overwhelming response from passengers. In a statement, the Central Railway (CR) zone said that 6.40 lakh passengers have travelled by AC locals in just 16 days. "A whopping 6.40 lakh passengers have travelled by AC locals in just 16 days, from their introduction on 26th January to 10th February 2026, registering an impressive average of 40,017 passengers per day," it said. Central Railway earns Rs 2.38 cr from sale of AC local tickets in 16 days. The zonal railway also recorded earnings of Rs 2.38 crore from the sale of AC local tickets, averaging Rs 14.90 lakh per day. This includes Rs 1.79 crore from season tickets and Rs 59 lakhs from journey tickets. "The overwhelming response reflects commuters' growing preference to upgrade from conventional Non-AC First and Second Class travel to the enhanced comfort and convenience of AC local services," it said. Currently, the Central Railway operates 94 AC local services, of which 14 services were introduced on the Harbour Line on 26th January 2026.

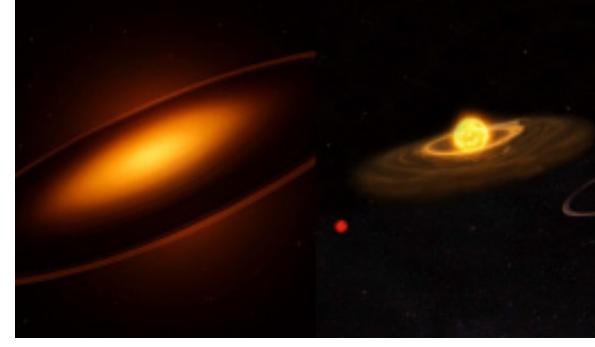
Central Railway intensifies ticket checking drives. The Mumbai Division of Central Railway has been conducting frequent special ticket checking drives in AC locals and at stations to curb irregular travel and ensure the safety and comfort of bona fide passengers. "These special checks help detect and penalise passengers travelling without proper tickets and act as a strong deterrent against ticketless travel," the zonal railway said in a statement.

Central Railway recovers Rs 2.50 lakh penalty from irregular travel in Harbour Line AC locals. It further said that ticket checking teams of Mumbai Division detected and penalised 810 cases of irregular travel in Harbour Line AC locals and recovered Rs. 2.50 lakhs as penalty during the period from January 26 to February 10, 2026. The ticket

checking teams of Central Railway also detected 1.01 lakh cases of passengers travelling without ticket or without proper ticket in AC locals (both Main Line and Harbour Line) and recovered Rs. 3.22 crores as penalty during the financial year 2025-26 (up to February 10, 2026). Anish Mondal is a journalist with over nine years of experience covering the railways and roadways. Currently a member of the Indianexpress.com editorial team, Anish specializes in high-impact sectors. Professional Journey Anish began his career at the public broadcaster Rajya Sabha Television (now Sansad TV), where he developed a foundational understanding of legislative processes and national governance. In 2018, he transitioned to digital financial journalism at FinancialExpress.com, spending nearly six years refining his expertise in market trends and corporate reporting. Before joining in 2025, he served as a key contributor at ETNowNews.com. Education & Expertise Anish's

rate security arrangements will be in place. We are urging candidates not to fall prey to fake promises made by touts, or even by any police personnel. If a candidate comes across malpractice, we appeal to them to contact the conducting authorities or the Anti Corruption Bureau. The recruitment process is being conducted in a phased manner, where a particular number of candidates will be asked to appear for the exam on a designated date, time, and location. The candidates are being informed about their slots via websites and messages.

Astronomers discover giant ring system causing rare 9-month dimming of a star



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Star-eclipse-Pune Artistic impression of the 'eclipse' due to the newly found Brown dwarf with massive rings (foreground) forming an opaque 'saucer' through which some light from the star ASASSN-24fw (background) shines. A red dwarf star was also discovered in the neighbourhood during the research (left). Artistic impression of ASASSN-24fw after the eclipse is over, where the star is seen shining unobstructed - with its own remnants from possible planetary collisions along with its companion red dwarf star and the dark 'saucer'.

Stellar eclipses are extremely rare and typically last a few days to a few weeks. An international team of astronomers, including Pune-based Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, reported a rare, enigmatic 200-day dimming of a star, ASASSN-24fw, a bit more massive than the Sun and about twice as big. The star, about 3,000 light-years away from Earth, faded steadily for nine months between late 2024 and mid-2025, reaching about 97 per cent of its normal brightness before returning to normal. "Such 'stellar eclipse' events are rare, and this dimming continued for nearly 200 days, making it one of the longest ever observed," Dr Sarang Shah, a post-doctoral researcher at IUCAA, told

The study published in the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society (Feb 12) was carried out by an international team of astronomers, including Dr Shah and Dr Jonathan Marshall, an independent researcher affiliated with Academia Sinica, Taiwan. Some of the observations were contributed by Prof Ashish Mahabal, California Institute of Technology, USA (also adjunct faculty at IUCAA). What was also significant is the unexpected discoveries that the dimming of the Star had led to. "It is known that the star itself is stable and not prone to sudden changes.

SAD bets on Sukhbir Badal, shifts to early poll mode with 40 'Punjab Bachao' rallies

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

With Sukhbir Singh Badal as its sole political face, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) has moved into early campaign mode, announcing a schedule of 40 rallies across Punjab between February 17 and April 13—nearly a year ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections. The campaign will kick off on February 17 from the Qadian area of Gurdaspur district. Announcing the programme, SAD spokesperson Daljeet Singh Cheema released the party's campaign poster prominently featuring party president Badal. The poster carries the slogan "Punjab bachao...2027 vich Sukhbir Singh Badal liyao...Punjab di tarakhi murhi shuru karao (Save Punjab...bring Sukhbir Singh Badal in 2027...restart Punjab's progress)". "Till March 30, we will organise 30 rallies, and by Baisakhi (April 13), we will complete 40. These rallies will be addressed by Sukhbir Singh Badal and the entire senior leadership," he added. Cheema said the rallies would focus on what the party describes as Punjab's pressing crises under the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, apart from issues related to the state's right over Chandigarh, the issue of its waters, issues related to farming, etc.

"During these rallies, we will highlight the issues Punjab is facing...unemployment among youth, law and order issues, the drugs problem, and lack of development works. In addition, we will tell the masses about the various projects completed during the tenure of the Akali Dal government, which strengthened the base of the state," he said. Adding a cultural touch to the campaign, the party has also released a new song by Saiz Bajwa this week, with the lyrics "Shiromani Akali Dal panth di pachhan jitt pakki es vaar, gal poori karde (Shiromani Akali Dal is the true identity of the Panth; victory is assured this time, they will fulfil the promises)". The song positions SAD as a political and Panthic force, attempting to reconnect emotionally with its traditional support base. The early outreach, however, also draws comparisons with the party's recent past. On February 1, 2024, the SAD had launched a 'Punjab Bachao Yatra', covering multiple parliamentary constituencies through Feb-

This rules out internal stellar activity as the cause of the strange dimming. A detailed analysis of various observations shows that it was caused by a large companion object moving across our line of sight to the star, blocking its light for an extended period," Dr Shah said. He explained that various models made by their group show that the most likely explanation for the dimming is a brown dwarf – an object heavier than a planet but lighter than a star – surrounded by a vast and dense ring system. "It is orbiting the star at a farther distance with the ring," he said, adding that long-lasting dimming events like this are exceptionally uncommon as they require very perfect line-ups. "The dimming began gradually because the outer parts of the rings are thin, and only became obvious when the denser regions passed in front of the star," he added. This star previously dimmed in 1981 and 1937. "We know this because of the Digital Access to a Sky Century@Harvard (DASCH) survey data by Harvard. It is a project scanning nearly 500000 Harvard Observatory's Photographic plates from 1885-199413 to create a century-long digital archive from astronomy," Dr Shah said. All Sky Automated Survey for Supernovae Ohio State University operates all Sky Automated Survey for Supernovae (ASAS-SN) and surveys the sky for stellar brightening/dimming phenomena regularly. They use a set of telescopes and observe the sky regularly from Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory in Chile, Haleakalā Observatory in Hawaii, USA, McDonald Observatory, Texas, USA and South African Astronomical Observatory, South Africa. The Asteroid Terrestrial-Impact Last Alert System (ATLAS) is operated by the Institute of Astronomy, University of Hawaii. ATLAS specialises in detecting hazardous asteroids or comets, while ASAS-SN specialises in finding sudden brightening and dimming or any star in the local Milky Way. "If they discover any anomalous behaviour of any star, they issue an alert. In the case of ASASSN-24fw, the star was first noticed to undergo rapid dimming by ASAS-SN. This event occurred in 2024. Hence the name ASASSN-24FW (fw is the catalogued name in their database). So now this star will always be identified using this name," Dr Shah said. "This means ASASSN-24fw was eclipsed by something every 43 years. This also tells us how important it is to preserve old data," he reflected. He also added that the discovery provides an important opportunity to better understand sub-stellar companions like brown dwarfs, massive ring systems, and how such structures form and evolve around stars. Future observations would be conducted to study this system in detail using large telescopes.



ruary and March before formally entering the poll campaign for the Lok Sabha polls held in June 2024. That yatra, too, was accompanied by a song—a protest anthem titled "Uth jaag Punjabio...Punjab bachao lo (Wake up Punjab... save Punjab)". The video of the 2024 song prominently featured visuals of protests against the AAP government and projected Badal as the tallest leader of the party. Despite the aggressive outreach and emotional pitch, the electoral outcome proved sobering for SAD. The party managed to win only the Bathinda Lok Sabha seat and forfeited its security deposit in 10 of the state's 13 parliamentary constituencies.

This time, however, SAD appears keen to recalibrate its strategy. Unlike the Lok Sabha-focused mobilisation of 2024, the current rally series is aimed squarely at the 2027 Assembly elections. Party insiders say the leadership is drawing confidence from its performance in the Zila Parishad and Block Samiti elections held in December last year, where SAD fared significantly better, and they are viewing it as a comeback. The decision to project Sukhbir Badal alone as the face of the campaign also marks a shift from collective leadership optics to a more presidential-style approach. "Whether this early start and sharper focus can translate into sustained momentum remains to be seen. For now, SAD has signalled that it is back on the road—and determined to make noise well ahead of 2027," said a senior SAD leader.

Pune police to use RFID tags, CCTV to track candidates in massive recruitment drive

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

To prevent malpractices and lapses, the Pune city police will use radio frequency identification (RFID) technology during the physical examination to be conducted as part of a recruitment drive beginning on February 16, officials have said. As many as 1.85 lakh candidates have applied for 1,633 vacancies. The recruitment drive will be held at the Shivajinagar Police Headquarters Ground and the State Reserve Police Force Group 2 Ground at Ramteklodi in Pune. Among the vacancies are those of police constables, police drivers, police bandsmen, and prison guards. The physical examination for the recruitment drive will include height and chest measurement, 1,600-m and 100-m runs, and the shot put. For female candidates, instead of a 1,600-m run, there will be an 800-m run. The physical exam carries 100 marks, with 50 marks required to qualify for further process.

Explaining the process, Additional Commissioner of Police (Administration) Sanjay Patil said, "Each of the candidates will be given two RFID tags. The second tag is to be used if the first one malfunctions. These tags will be worn by candidates on the chest. For the 1,600-m run, which will be run in four laps of 400 m, the sensor will detect the candidate completing the lap four times and automatically clock his timing. For a 100-m run, two sensors at the start and finish points will calculate the timing. This will be coupled with full CCTV recording of the laps. Thus, if any candidate has doubts about the result, it can be verified."

Patil added, "All the officers and personnel who are part of the recruitment process have been prohibited from using cell phones and making any outside contact. Elabo-



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24-year-old Durgapur nurse found dead outside 12-storey high-rise, police launch probe

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

A nurse of a private hospital in West Bengal's Durgapur was found dead outside a 12-storey residential building on Wednesday evening. The body of the deceased, identified as Mandira Pal, 24, a native of Bishnupur in Bankura district, was found by other nursing staff inmates outside the boundary wall of the lodging facility at Kanksa around 10 pm when she did not turn up to board the hospital bus around 7.30 pm.

On being alerted, the Kanksa police reached the spot soon and sent the body for a post-mortem examination. The police said that it remains unclear whether she jumped from the building or fell accidentally, or whether any foul play was involved. According to her colleagues, Pal, who had night duty, failed to report when the bus arrived to pick up staff members at the rented accommodation facility, prompting them to undertake a search for the missing person. The building is located opposite a private BEd college in the Gopalpur area. According to police, preliminary investigation suggested it to be a case of suicide, but said the final decision would be taken after the post-mortem. The police and the private hospital where she worked are yet to issue their official statements on the death of the nurse. Family members have also refused to comment on the issue. The



incident has sparked serious concerns about the safety arrangements in the high-rise residential building. According to sources, the rooftop door of the building often remained open, and there was inadequate surveillance. The police said they would question her colleagues to know if they had noticed anything unusual in her behaviour, and also her family members, regarding any stress issues that the young woman could have been going through. The mysterious death of the nurse has triggered serious questions about the safety, security, and accountability of staff accommodations provided by private hospitals in West Bengal.

After Nagar road, a double-decker flyover with a metro route to come up along Solapur road



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Pune Metro has started the administrative process for its second phase, where it proposes to build two stretches connecting Hadapsar to Loni Kalbhor and Saswad Railway Station at a cost of Rs 5,794 crore. The infrastructure will have a lower level for vehicular traffic and an upper level for metro rail operations. "Pune Metro has sought a proposal for a detailed design consultancy for the 10 elevated stations of Line 4B, from Hadapsar to Loni Kalbhor, and Line 4C, from Hadapsar to Saswad," said Chandrashekhar Tambe, a spokesperson for the metro.

In November last year, the Maharashtra Government's infrastructure committee gave the go-ahead to develop the elevated metro stretches from Hadapsar to Loni Kalbhor and from Hadapsar to Saswad Road Railway Station. The stations will have provisions for potential links to other transportation systems, parking facilities, and footbridges besides safeguards against noise and air pollution. Line 4B will be 11.102 km long and have 10 elevated stations with a double-decker flyover at the first level and a metro alignment at the second. The stations are at Hadapsar Phata, Hadapsar Bus Depot, Akashwani-Hadapsar, Laxmi Colony, Stad Farm, Manjari Phata, Draksha Baug, Toll Naka, Wak Vasti, and Loni Kalbhor. Line 4C will be 5.573 km long and have two stations with a double-decker flyover at the first level and a

metro alignment at the second, along with two other stations. The stations will be at Hadapsar Gliding Club, Fursungi IT Park, Sulabh Garden, and Saswad Road Railway Station. "The metro routes will ease road traffic on the Pune-Solapur road and discourage people from using private vehicles to commute in Pune city. It will ensure safe and faster commuting," the late deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar said last year as he had pushed for a double-decker flyover along with the metro route. The two stretches will provide connectivity to and from Hadapsar, Phursungi, Loni Kalbhor and Saswad, which is witnessing rapid urbanisation, he had said, adding that it would help reduce air pollution and travel time.

The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) received the detailed project report for the two stretches in 2023 and approved the proposal in February last year. It was then sent to the state government for approval. The proposal requires the Union Government's nod for implementation. The two new stretches will fall under the proposed route from Khadakwasla to Kharadi via Hadapsar, to be developed in the second phase. As the double-decker flyover is to be developed along with the metro route, the opinion of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), the Maharashtra State Infrastructure Development Corporation, and the Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority was sought to finalise the route. Pune Metro's first phase—from Vanaz to Ramwadi and PCMC to Swargate—is operational. It has undertaken work to extend the routes from Swargate to Katraj and from PCMC to Akurdi. The Union Government has approved the proposal to extend the metro from Vanaz to Chandni Chowk and from Ramwadi to Vithalwadi. The second phase will see the development of the route from Khadakwasla to Kharadi and from Nal Stop to Manikbaug, for which the Centre has granted approval. Last week, work started on the extension of the metro route from Ramwadi, along with a 4.7-km flyover at the first level and an elevated metro rail at the top level. Maharashtra Metro Rail Corporation Limited, or Maha-Metro, is the implementing agency for the Pune metro rail project.

Sena (UBT) bags its only mayor post in Parbhani Municipal Corporation as Iqbal Syed wins

The result makes Parbhani the only municipal corporation where the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena has secured the Mayor's post. The result makes Parbhani the only municipal corporation where the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena has secured the Mayor's post. Shiv Sena (UBT) candidate Iqbal Syed was elected the Mayor of the Parbhani Municipal Corporation on Thursday, after he defeated the BJP's Tirumala Khilare by 13 votes in the 65-member House.

Syed secured 39 votes against Khilare's 26, crossing the majority mark of 33 with the support of the alliance partner, the Congress. The result makes Parbhani the only municipal corporation where the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena has secured the Mayor's post. The election was closely watched amid speculation of possible cross-voting. However, the Sena (UBT)-Congress alliance, which contested the civic polls together, held firm during the voting.

In the municipal elections, the Sena (UBT) emerged as the largest party with 25 seats. Congress and BJP won

12 seats each, while the Ajit Pawar-led NCP secured 11. The remaining seats went to smaller parties and an Independent. The Sena (UBT)-Congress combine had a tally of 37 in the House, comfortably above the halfway mark. As many as 14 nominations were initially filed for the mayor's post, but 12 were withdrawn, resulting in a direct contest between Syed and Khilare. Meanwhile, BJP leader Navnath Ban criticised the Sena (UBT) for its choice of candidate. "During elections, they speak about Marathi pride, but when they got the opportunity to appoint their only mayor, they chose a Muslim candidate," Ban said. He further alleged that the party was "pushing Aurangzeb's agenda", remarks that are likely to intensify political sparring in the district.

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It's a farewell budget of Yogi government and BJP from UP: Samajwadi Party



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Flagging low expenditure in the previous budget and calling it a result of the Uttar Pradesh government's incompetence and failure, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday termed the state budget a "farewell budget" of the Yogi Adityanath government and the BJP after the 2027 Assembly elections. Addressing a press conference in Lucknow after the state government presented the budget in the Assembly, Yadav said, "It is a farewell budget with which the farewell of BJP is assured from the state. The government is claiming it to be over Rs 9 lakh crore budget as the biggest in the state. But if the size and the expenditure is compared the government has failed to spend even 50 per cent on average. In the agriculture sector, only 50 per cent was spent."

Claiming that the budget is big only in size and is not pro-poor, he said the BJP was projecting the size of the budget — Rs 9 lakh crore — as a major achievement. "It is common that every budget is bigger than the previous one. The real question is how much of it is actually spent," he

said. "Only 36 per cent was spent in the rural development sector, 60 per cent in animal husbandry, about 58 per cent in health, 53 per cent in women welfare, 62 per cent was spent in basic education. This is a failure of the government and governance," the SP leader said. If there is a failure to spend in important departments, it means that those sitting in the government are "incompetent", he claimed. "Our Chief Minister knows only this much. If we have to achieve the target of a 1-trillion dollar economy our growth rate should be 30 per cent. There is no clear strategy or vision for handling unemployment," said Akhilesh, alleging that the BJP government had forgotten its own manifesto even in its last budget. "If the outlay is so large, why is the government unable to spend it? This shows a failure of governance," he said.

Congress Legislature Party Leader Aradhana Mishra also questioned low expenditure in the previous state budget, claiming that more than 40 per cent funds remain unspent in most of the departments. Calling it a surplus revenue budget is a false statement, she said. On the 2026-27 budget presented in the state Assembly, she said, "It is neither a futuristic budget, nor a surplus revenue budget. This budget is misleading as 40 percent of the previous budget allocations have been surrendered by the departments," said Mishra. Congress State President Ajay Rai on the other hand said, "This budget is full of false figures and hollow claims. Like its previous budget, even this budget has also brought nothing but disappointment for the general public as the government has failed to meet its own promises. The budget neither has anything concrete for women, youth, nor farmers or labourers and has just played with their sentiments."

As West Bengal Class 12 exams begin, a warning for students: Carrying a phone will cancel your whole year

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

The higher secondary (Class 12) examinations began Thursday across 2103 centres across West Bengal and are set to continue until February 27. The West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education (WBCHSE) has asked schools hosting exam centres to suspend all classes in the secondary section during this period. As many as 7,10,811 candidates from 6,837 schools will be appearing for the examination, including 3,95,079 girls and 3,15,732 boys. According to WBCHSE, 6,35,864 candidates will sit for Semester 4 tests from 10 am to 12 noon, 59,452 for the Semester 3 supplementary examination from 1 pm to 2.15 pm, and about 15,495 under the old annual system from 10 am to 1.15 pm.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wished the students appearing for the examinations on X. "Heartfelt best wishes to all Higher Secondary examinees. May everyone's coming days be filled with success." WBCHSE has also made it clear that mobile phones, calculators, and all electronic devices are banned for Semester 4 and Semester 3 candidates. Only candidates appearing under the old annual system may use approved calculators. Those candidates found with electronic devices will have their entire examination for the year cancelled. Students will be frisked with handheld metal detectors before being permitted to enter the venues. According to WBCHSE president Chiranjib Bhattacharya, most papers for Semester 4 will feature double options, unlike Semester 3, when all questions were compulsory. Each paper will include at least two questions where one answer is required and four questions where two answers are needed. Students should read the questions carefully and choose the options that best suit them to maximise their marks, he advised.

According to official guidelines, Semester 3 supplementary candidates will use OMR sheets for their exams, while Semester 4 candidates will receive blank answer scripts containing 12 leaves. Those following the old sys



tem will be given scripts with eight leaves. The question papers for Semester 4 and the OMR sheets for the Semester 3 supplementary examination will be distributed 10 minutes before the start of the tests.

Students concerned about lack of time for preparationStudents taking Semester 4 exams have expressed concerns about the limited preparation time and the incomplete syllabus. Dipali Das, one of the students, said, "It is very difficult to complete the syllabus in five months. We received our study materials in January, and now we are facing exams in February, while the syllabus is extensive." Arko Mukherjee, another student, said, "Chemistry is a vast syllabus; thus, time is required, but for the fourth semester, we did not get any time at all." Parents also echoed the same view. Some said that with the model books not being available on time and the exams being advanced, it was difficult for the students to prepare, and there was a lot of pressure. Speaking to the media, WBCHSE president Bhattacharya, during a visit to schools where the examinations have begun, said, "Yes, this time the examinations have been rescheduled earlier due to the elections. However, study materials for Semester 4 have been provided on time, although there was a slight delay in the distribution of books for Semester 3."

Gram Nyayalayas impractical, will explore options to discontinue them: Mann



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Wednesday termed the Gram Nyayalaya system as impractical and contrary to the interests of the legal fraternity and said his government will explore all options to discontinue it. "The Punjab government will constitute a committee of legal luminaries to explore all the aspects in this regard. I will also raise this issue at the appropriate platforms with the Union Government," Mann said. Interacting with the representatives of 65 Bar associations, he said the issue was one of institutional integrity and public trust and asserted that the rule of law and ethical standards in the judiciary must remain paramount. He reiterated that his government would not stone unturned to protect the interests of lawyers.

The Centre has been actively pushing for the establishment of Gram Nyayalayas (village courts), under the Gram Nyayalaya Act, 2008, to ensure affordable, speedy, and localised justice for the rural population. The initiative is aimed at making justice available at the doorstep, particularly for the rural poor. Punjab already has courts within a 20-km radius across the state, making the Gram Nyayalaya concept "not practically applicable". He also said that lawyers were opposed to the move as it caused them inconvenience, and assured that the "the state government is firmly committed to secure the interests of the legal fraternity and no stone will be left unturned for this noble cause." The Bar associations have always played a key role in strengthening the legal system and protecting constitutional values such as justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, Mann said. Emphasising the importance of the legal sys

tem, Mann noted, "The rule of law is the foundation on which a modern democratic society is founded. A legal system committed to values, integrity and excellence in judiciary is an extremely important component and ingredient of a vibrant and just society, which we seek. Lawyers and jurists are instrumental in ensuring justice and protection of one's fundamental rights". Highlighting the importance of public trust, the chief minister said lawyers and political leaders share a similar responsibility in upholding the rule of law. He further noted, "Justice is costly these days, just like other things," and mooted the idea that lawyers should establish NGOs to provide free legal aid to marginalised and deprived sections of society. "Cases may be lost or won, but rule of law should always prevail," he added.

Man duped of Rs 2.03 crore in AI-based stock trading fraud

Hyderabad: A man from the city was allegedly cheated of over Rs 2.03 crore by cyber fraudsters who lured him with promises of high returns through artificial intelligence-based stock trading. The man from Mehdiyapatnam came into contact with unidentified persons on social media who claimed to represent an investment firm offering stock market guidance. They allegedly told him that their AI-driven trading system generated substantial profits for investors and shared fabricated performance reports to gain his trust.

Believing the claims, the victim downloaded a mobile application suggested by the fraudsters and began transferring money in phases between December 12 and January 8. The app also displayed inflated virtual profits, encouraging him to invest more. Subsequently, when he attempted to withdraw the returns, the fraudsters allegedly demanded additional charges under various pretexts. In a bid to secure the promised payout, the victim even mortgaged one of his properties and transferred more funds. In total, he is said to have transferred Rs 2.03 crore. However, he was ultimately denied access to any withdrawal.

Imran Khan is left with only 15% vision in right eye, says lawyer



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Pakistan's jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan has told a court-appointed lawyer that authorities at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail repeatedly ignored his complaints about deteriorating eyesight and that he is now left with only "15% vision" in his right eye. Advocate Salman Safdar, appointed as amicus curiae by the Pakistani Supreme Court, visited Mr. Khan at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail and filed a detailed report about his living conditions and health on February 10. In the report, seen by The Hindu, Mr. Safdar wrote that he personally observed that Mr. Khan, 73, "appeared visibly perturbed and deeply distressed by the loss of vision and the absence of timely and specialised medical intervention".

Flagging the "gravity" of Mr. Khan's condition, Mr. Safdar wrote that it is "imperative that the seriousness of the condition be independently ascertained without delay". He recommended that Mr. Khan, founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, "be examined at the earliest by a team of expert ophthalmologists". Following Mr. Safdar's report, the Supreme Court on Thursday (February 12, 2026) ordered Pakistani authorities to set up a medical board to examine Mr. Khan's eye, and allow him to speak with his children, local media reported. Mr. Khan, who was arrested in August 2023, was initially kept in the district jail

Attock, and then moved to Adiala in October where he has remained in solitary confinement. During the meeting with the lawyer, the cricketer-turned politician said he experienced "rapid and substantial" loss of vision from October last year, which he repeatedly reported to jail authorities. But his concern was "neither taken seriously nor addressed", Mr. Khan said.

He added that he "subsequently suffered a sudden and complete loss of vision in his right eye", following which an ophthalmologist from PIMS hospital, Islamabad, Dr. Muhammad Arif, was called to examine him. According to a medical condition report prepared by Dr. Rana Imran Sikandar of PIMS, which is also seen by The Hindu, Mr. Khan was diagnosed with "right central retinal vein occlusion" (a clot that blocks the main vein carrying blood away from the retina, a serious condition which causes sudden or gradual vision loss). Earlier this month, he was administered an "anti-VEGF intravitreal injection" (which injects medication directly into the eye's vitreous gel) in an operation theatre, stated the report. "Despite the treatment administered, including an injection", Mr. Khan told the amicus curiae, he has been left with only 15% vision in his right eye. "Throughout the interview, his eyes were watery, and he repeatedly used a tissue to wipe them, reflecting physical discomfort," wrote Mr. Safdar in his report.

Last week, jail authorities had said that Mr. Khan was briefly taken from prison to a hospital in Islamabad for an eye procedure, sparking concerns among his family and supporters. The PTI complained that they were not informed in advance and alleged that the former Prime Minister was being denied proper medical care. Then the Supreme Court appointed Mr. Safdar as a "friend of the court" to visit Mr. Khan and file a report. The PTI, Mr. Khan's party, welcomed the Supreme Court decision to appoint a medical board to examine him. "The Supreme Court's order for a complete eye check-up of Imran Khan vindicates the party's longstanding concerns about his deteriorating health and denial of timely, independent medical care in custody," the party said in a statement.

India-U.S. interim trade deal: Amendments in the White House factsheet reflect shared understandings, MEA says

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday said that the recent amendments made in the White House factsheet on the framework for the India-U.S. interim trade agreement reflect the "shared understandings contained in the joint statement" by the two countries. The statement comes after the Trump administration, on Wednesday (February 11, 2026), backtracked on changes it made to the India-U.S. joint statement, removing references to 'pulses', 'buying agricultural products', 'digital service tax' and Indian 'commitments' on investing \$500 billion.

Responding to a question on the matter in the weekly media briefing, MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: "As you are aware, the India-U.S. Joint Statement on the framework for an Interim Agreement on reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade was issued on February 7, 2026. The joint statement is the framework and remains the basis of our mutual understanding in the matter. The amendments in the U.S. fact sheet reflect the shared understandings contained in the joint statement." "Both sides will now work towards implementing this framework and finalising the interim agreement," he added. The references, which



were not in the original joint statement, had led to questions being raised with the Opposition seeking a clarification from the government on its position. Officials had categorically said that sensitive agricultural items were not included in the deal and that India had "intended" but not given a binding commitment to investing \$500 billion in American products over a period of five years. The U.S. did not issue any statement before amending the two documents available online.

U.S. Congress votes to slap back Donald Trump's Canada tariffs

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

The House has voted to slap back President Donald Trump's tariffs on Canada, a rare if largely symbolic rebuke of the White House agenda as Republicans have confronted the President over the signature policy. The resolution seeks to end the national emergency Mr. Trump declared to impose the tariffs, though actually undoing the policy would require support from Mr. Trump himself, which is highly unlikely. The resolution next goes to the Senate.

Mr. Trump believes in the power of tariffs to force U.S. trade partners to the negotiating table. But lawmakers are facing unrest back home from businesses caught in the trade wars and constituents navigating pocketbook issues and high prices. "Today's vote is simple, very simple: Will you vote to lower the cost of living for the American family or will you keep prices high out of loyalty to one person — Donald J. Trump?" said Rep. Gregory Meeks of New York, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, who authored the resolution. The high-stakes moment provides a snapshot of the House's unease with the president's direction, especially ahead of the midterm elections as economic issues resonate among voters. The Senate has already voted to reject Trump's tariffs on Canada and other countries in a show of displeasure. But both chambers would have to approve the tariff rollbacks and send the resolution to Trump for the president's signature — or veto. Mr. Trump recently threatened to impose a 100% tariff on goods imported from Canada over that country's proposed China trade deal, intensifying a feud with the long-time U.S. ally and Prime Minister Mark Carney. House Speaker Mike Johnson tried to prevent this showdown.

Johnson insisted lawmakers wait for a pending Supreme Court ruling in a lawsuit about the tariffs. He engineered a complicated rules change to prevent floor action. But Johnson's strategy collapsed on late Tuesday (February 10, 2026), as Republicans peeled off during a procedural vote to ensure the Democratic measure was able to advance. "The President's trade policies have been of great benefit," Johnson, R-La., had said. "And I think the sentiment is that we allow a little more runway for this to be worked out between the executive branch and the judicial branch." On late Tuesday evening (February 10, 2026), Johnson could be seen speaking to holdout Republican lawmakers as the GOP leadership team struggled to shore up support during a lengthy procedural vote, but the numbers lined up against him. "We're disappointed in what the people have done," Kevin Hassett, the director of the White House's National Economic Council, told reporters at the White



House on Wednesday morning (February 11, 2026). "The president will make sure they don't repeal his tariffs." The resolution put forward by Mr. Meeks would terminate the national emergency that Mr. Trump declared a year ago as one of his executive orders. The administration claimed illicit drug flow from Canada constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat that allows the president to slap on tariffs on imported goods outside the terms of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade agreement. The Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Rep. Brian Mast of Florida, said the drug flow of fentanyl into the U.S. is a dire national emergency and the policy must be left in place.

"Let's be clear again about what this resolution is and what it's not. It's not a debate about tariffs. You can talk about those, but that's not really what it is," Mast said. "This is Democrats trying to ignore that there is a fentanyl crisis." Experts say fentanyl produced by cartels in Mexico is largely smuggled into the U.S. from land crossings in California and Arizona. Fentanyl is also made in Canada and smuggled into the U.S., but to a much lesser extent. Ahead of voting, some rank-and-file Republican lawmakers expressed unease over the choices ahead as Democrats — and a few renegade Republicans — impressed on their colleagues the need to flex their power as the legislative branch rather than ceding so much power to the president to take authority over trade and tariff policy. Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., said he was unpersuaded by Johnson's call to wait until the Supreme Court makes its decision about the legality of Trump's tariffs. "Why doesn't the Congress stand on its own two feet and say that we're an independent branch?" Mr. Bacon said. "We should defend our authorities. I hope the Supreme Court does, but if we don't do it, shame on us." Mr. Bacon, who is retiring rather than facing re-election, also argued that tariffs are bad economic policy. Other Republicans said they were still making up their minds after Johnson's gambit — which would have paused the calendar days to prevent the measure from coming forward — was turned back.

Centre ignored voices of workers, farmers while making decisions concerning their future: Rahul



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

With trade unions observing a day-long strike against the Centre's policies, the Congress on Thursday (February 12, 2026) expressed support for them, and Rahul Gandhi alleged that the government ignored the voices of workers and farmers while making decisions concerning their future. Mr. Gandhi wondered whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi will listen to them now or if there is a "grip" on him too strong.

Bharat Bandh: Follow the live updates from February 12, 2026. Employees and workers associated with a joint forum of central trade unions observed a day-long strike on Thursday to show their "resistance to anti-worker, anti-farmer and anti-national pro-corporate policies of the central government". The forum has claimed that 30 crore workers are being mobilised for a "general strike" to protest against the new labour code, among other issues.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said all the country's trade unions, farmers, and workers are on the streets against the Modi government's trade deal, labour laws and the "snatching away of MGNREGA". "We stand firmly against the anti-people TRAP DEAL, which has mortgaged the future of millions of toiling farmers, workers, and labourers. Succumbing to foreign pressure, the Modi government has tampered with the lives of crores of citizens of the country," he alleged. Taking a swipe at Prime Minister Modi, Mr. Kharge said those who chanted "Abki baar Trump sarkaar" have harmed India's national interest, and the big-

gest opposition to this comes from our workers, small traders, and the common people." From the streets to Parliament, our struggle will continue," Mr. Kharge added. Mr. Gandhi alleged that the government ignored the voices of workers and farmers while making decisions concerning their future and asked whether Prime Minister Modi will listen to them now or if there is a "grip" on him too strong.

Mr. Gandhi's attack on the government came a day after he alleged that the India-U.S. interim trade deal was a "wholesale surrender", with India's energy security handed over to America and farmers' interests compromised. In a post on X in Hindi, Mr. Gandhi said, "Today, lakhs of workers and farmers across the country are on the streets to raise their voices for their rights." He said that the workers fear that the four labour codes will weaken their rights. Farmers fear that the trade agreement (with the US) will harm their livelihoods. And weakening or eliminating MNREGA could take away the last source of support for villages," the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha said.

"Will Modiji listen now? Or is there a 'grip' on him that is too strong? I stand firmly with the issues and struggles of workers and farmers," Mr. Gandhi said. Speaking with reporters in the Parliament House complex, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also expressed support for the workers and farmers, saying whatever the government is doing is completely wrong. "They are betraying the farmers. The kind of trade deal they have signed will result in sufferings for farmers. We are supporting the labour unions in their strike today," she said. In a no-holds-barred attack on the Modi government, Rahul Gandhi, while participating in the debate on the Union Budget in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday (February 11, 2026), claimed that Indian interests had been "surrendered" under the trade deal to protect the BJP's financial architecture. Slamming the Indo-U.S. deal, Mr. Gandhi drew an analogy of how, in martial arts, after securing a grip, the next step is a chokehold, and then the opponent taps to give up. Mr. Gandhi underlined the need to protect the country's people, data, food supply and energy system. He said that if an INDIA bloc government negotiated the trade agreement with the U.S., it would have told President Donald Trump that he must treat India equally.

India to receive same garment benefits as Bangladesh under U.S. trade pact: Goyal



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

India will get concessional duty access for garments made using American yarn and cotton under its trade agreement with the U.S., similar to the benefits currently provided to Bangladesh. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said The United States will reduce reciprocal tariffs on Bangladeshi goods to 19%, but garments attract zero duty only if made with U.S. cotton and man-made fibres. A Bangladeshi garment now faces a 31% levy (12% for most favoured nation plus 19% reciprocal), and if it uses U.S. fibres, then duty falls to 12%.

"Bangladesh ko jo Mila hai, wo Bharat ko bhi milne wala hai final agreement me (Whatever Bangladesh has got, India will also get the same in the final agreement)," Mr. Goyal told reporters in Delhi. If an Indian company procures yarn forward and cotton forward from the U.S., manufactures garments, and re-exports to the U.S., those garments will also receive duty-free access in America, just like Bangladeshi firms, he pointed out. That is there in that U.S.-Bangladesh agreement, and "it will be in our agreement also", he said, adding that it will not have any impact on Indian cotton farmers. The U.S. has limited cotton production, its exports are only \$5 million, and for India, the target is \$50 billion, the minister said. India and the U.S. have finalised a framework for the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement. It is likely to be implemented in March. These remarks are important, as Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, on Wednesday (February 11, 2026), alleged that the India-U.S. interim trade deal was a "wholesale surrender", with India's energy security handed over to America

and farmers' interests compromised.

Meanwhile, addressing a Medtech, innovation and startup event here, Mr. Goyal said the free trade agreements finalised by India will provide huge market access at concessional duties to the domestic medical devices industry. In some free trade agreements (FTAs), certain Indian medical devices would also get duty concessions, he added. "We are opening developed markets through the nine FTAs, which cover 38 countries with rich people and high per capita incomes," the minister said. He suggested looking for a site to set up in states like Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to establish a medtech zone just like AMTZ in Andhra Pradesh. Mr. Goyal added that the National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC) can look at reserving 50-100 acres for medical device units in the country.

NDA leaders to file 'breach of privilege' notice against Rahul for 'unsubstantiated' remarks on Puri



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Accusing Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi of making "unsubstantiated allegations" against Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri without giving prior notice, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday (February 11, 2026) said the ruling alliance members will file a notice against Mr. Gandhi for "breach of privilege". "We will file the necessary notice with the Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition did not make any useful substantive contribution to the Budget discussion but only made some wild allegations," Mr. Rijiju said, soon after Mr. Gandhi's speech got over. The Parliamentary Affairs Minister said the notice will be placed before the Chair seeking authentication of the LoP's assertions. While Mr. Gandhi promised to authenticate what he had spoken, Mr. Rijiju said, "I know he cannot authenticate them because he lied. He lied in the House." Addressing a press conference later at the BJP headquarters, Mr. Puri said he took over as India's Ambassador to the United Nations in New York in 2009 and remained there for eight years. "There are references to possibly three or four meetings (with Jeffrey Epstein) in eight years," he said, adding that during that time he was a member of the International Peace Institute (IPI).

"I was Secretary-General of the Independent Commission on Multilateralism (ICM)... the chair of this commission was a former Prime Minister of Australia. My boss at IPI, Terje Rødt-Larsen, was someone who knew the infamous Epstein. As part of an IPI and ICM delegation, I met Epstein on a few occasions – three or at most four times," he said. About an email dated November 13, 2014, released as part of Epstein Files, Mr. Puri said it was exchanged as his contacts introduced him to Reid Hoffman, the founder of LinkedIn. Then as a private citizen, he wrote to Mr. Hoffman about the immense opportunities India presented in the internet-based economic activity.

"Newly elected Prime Minister Modi's focus to revive the Indian economy includes an audaciously ambitious plan to expand rural internet coverage to 25,000 villages by 2017 from the existing 1,130... another major focus of the Modi government is the Make in India campaign," he said, referring to the email.

Stressing that his interaction was minimal, he quoted an email exchange between Larsen and Jeffrey Epstein

dated December 25, 2015, in which Epstein referred to Mr. Puri as "two-faced". "What does it mean? The man (being referred to) is not okay..." said Mr. Puri. In that email exchange, Larsen had written to Epstein: "Have you heard the saying: when you meet an Indian and a snake, kill the Indian first?" The Union Minister said: "Rahul ji should have read this. When Priyanka ji and others spoke about my name in the Epstein Files, thousands of memes were made. People said big world leaders were caught up in this. Meanwhile, I was talking about Digital India and my country, Bharat. So, I want to thank them for mentioning my name." "The Epstein files are about wrongdoing and criminal offences. They contain charges that he had an island where he took people to indulge their sexual fantasies, including charges of paedophilia, and there are victims. Those victims have brought cases against people in authority. My interaction had nothing to do with that," added Mr. Puri. The Union Minister alleged that in the Central Hall of the old Parliament building on November 26, 2025, when Mr. Gandhi had "winked" at him saying his name was in "interesting places", he had sent to the Congress leader a note sharing all the details.

Budget gives science missions big numbers but core funding gaps persist



The Union Budget 2026-27 presented science as an instrument of growth, with large numbers on biopharma, semiconductors, carbon capture, and research-linked industrial finance on paper. However, expert reactions to this budget point to a more fragile reality. As the state attempts to move from adopting technologies to creating them, by building mission-linked platforms in biopharma, semiconductors, critical materials, and climate, it seems that the limiting factor isn't the ambition of schemes but what the government actually delivers — including reliable and timely funds, autonomy for research institutions, and the transparency and performance of large finance vehicles for innovation.

In 2023-24, allocation for the Department of Biotechnology was revised down from ₹2,683.86 crore (BE) to ₹1,607.32 crore (RE), and actual spending fell further to ₹1,467.34 crore. Likewise for the Department of Science and Technology, from ₹7,931.05 crore (BE) to ₹4,891.78 crore (RE) and actuals of ₹4,002.67 crore. Even in 2024-25, when the Department of Biotechnology's RE of ₹2,460.13 crore exceeded its BE, the Department of Science and Technology experienced a sizeable cut from ₹8,029.01 crore (BE) to ₹5,661.45 crore (RE).

Against this backdrop, L.S. Shashidhara, director of the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru, framed the biopharma outlay as welcome but incomplete. He pointed to "significant funding shortfalls following major changes introduced in 2024-25 to the fund-flow system" and to delays in the transition from the Science and Engineering Research Board to the Anusandhan National Research Foundation. (To read the comments of Dr. Shashidhara and other experts quoted in this article in full, click here.)

According to him, some of the under-spending in recent years may have been less about lack of intent and more about administrative disruption. The budget, he said, has at least avoided "punishing" science departments for that disruption by cutting overall allocations. The biggest allocation this year was for a new programme called 'Biopharma SHAKTI', of ₹10,000 crore over five years. Department of Biotechnology secretary Rajesh Gokhale said it will address non-communicable diseases and scale indigenous development and manufacturing of biologics and biosimilars. He linked it explicitly to the earlier DBT-National Biopharma Mission. Dr. Gokhale also said the next set of ambitions would include cell and gene therapy missions, biomanufacturing hubs and biofoundries, and "Moolankur" hubs that integrate AI with biology.

Big-ticket infraThe technical case for such a push is obvious. India has real competencies in vaccines, diagnostics, and biotechnology. The issue is whether the outlay will broaden the base or only thicken the top layer of applied programmes. Dr. Shashidhara expressed caution related to this: if Biopharma SHAKTI is administered primarily through the Department of Pharmaceuticals, as planned, it could privilege downstream manufacturing goals while neglecting the upstream life-science ecosystem that produces the tools and ideas.

So he asked that the Department of Pharmaceuticals "actively engage the broader life sciences community" in design and implementation. He also said longstanding pre-

vention programmes and the routine issuance of small- and medium-sized grants could deliver high social returns — but only if agencies and the Finance Ministry's Expenditure Division fix the problem of "smooth and timely fund flow". A similar tension appears in the budget's embrace of big-ticket infrastructure linked to 'missions'. N. Kalaiselvi, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) director-general N. Kalaiselvi read the budget as "a strong and reassuring affirmation" of science as an engine of growth and self-reliance.

She highlighted sustained support to the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and the CSIR and welcomed mission-mode initiatives such as Biopharma SHAKTI, India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, the new carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS) mission, and expanded support for electronic components manufacturing, and critical minerals. IIT-Madras Institute Professor T. Pradeep also welcomed the way the budget embedded research "across multiple mission-mode initiatives" and said platforms and infrastructure that span multiple sectors, such as clinical trial networks and industry-linked training centres, could improve India's translational capacity and "full-stack" capabilities. His proviso, however, was that the budget "largely presents policy perspectives". He also said he expected "various missions/ministries to allocate sector-specific funding" in the coming years.

This has in fact been a recurring problem in India's research ecosystem: the government often proclaims science as a foundation for missions but often defers the stable, long-term financing required for that foundation to future plans. Raman Research Institute director Tarun Souradeep remarked favourably on the budget's support for major national observational facilities and recalled the various spin-off technologies these facilities have produced, including CCD imaging and instruments for high-frequency communications.

'Globally fashionable script' However, National Institute of Advanced Studies adjunct professor C.P. Rajendran articulated a counterpoint: that while the Finance Ministry's proposal to upgrade four astronomy facilities, including the National Large Solar Telescope and the National Large Optical Infrared Telescope, at ₹3,500 crore could strengthen the field, the support for the Indian Institute of Astrophysics has stagnated while a set of autonomous institutes including the Institute has received only ₹1,623 crore. More broadly, Dr. Rajendran said the budget followed a "globally fashionable script" that privileges applied sectors such as space applications and semiconductors while continuing to underfund basic research. He added that India's gross expenditure on R&D has hovered around 0.64-0.7% of GDP for years, which when adjusted for inflation amounts to cuts in real terms. He also said the state's hope that private capital will carry domestic R&D hasn't materialised at the required scale.

While Dr. Shashidhara welcomed the ₹20,000 crore for the Research, Development and Innovation Fund, Dr. Rajendran recalled that a promise in the 2024-25 budget to deploy ₹1 lakh crore over seven years has been followed by only ₹3,000 crore disbursed so far. Likewise, Panjab University vice-chancellor Renu Vig lauded the budget's emphasis on "university townships" as a move towards integrated industry in education but she also argued that the Centre shouldn't bypass legacy State universities in favour of new enclaves. Instead, she suggested a "thematic cluster" where "a legacy State university leads in the basic sciences, humanities, and regional innovation, while technical institutes provide the necessary toolsets." This kind of multidisciplinarity is the core of the National Education Policy 2020 and it is already in the DNA of legacy institutions. These universities educate more than 80% of our students and have built the nation's intellectual foundation over decades; they are a national asset that must be nurtured to ensure the success of India's new educational map," Dr. Vig added.

The approaching AI surge, its global consequences



If there is a single technology that promises to unravel the present and usher in a new era, the bet would be on Artificial Intelligence (AI). At the very least, AI is set to effect a transformation that is comparable to any previous revolution, not excluding the Industrial Revolution. Impressive Large Language Models (LLMs) are already rolling out faster than one would have imagined possible. Rivalry between the United States and China in this area has become intense and the success of recent Chinese models is having a catalytic effect on the AI industry as a whole. This is, however, only the beginning. All this has special relevance to a world which Canadian Prime Minister, Mark Carney, described in his address to the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos (in January this year), as follows: "... We are in the midst of a rupture, not a transition... great powers have begun using economic integration as weapons, tariffs as leverage, financial infrastructure as coercion, supply chains as vulnerabilities to be exploited". Mr. Carney did not, however, touch on potentially the greatest disruptor of all, viz., AI, or refer to the baneful/beneficial influence of AI which is already beginning to impact today's world. When he talked of great power rivalry, and that countries in between have a choice, there was no mention of AI and what impact it would have on today's world, and more so in the future.

Face the realityWorld leaders must, however, wake up to this new reality, and come to terms with a phenomenon in which Open AI is beginning to consume the world. There is little realisation that the transformation that is taking place is almost certain to turn the world upside down. When Mr. Carney stated that 'we are in the midst of a rupture and not a transition', he did not have in mind — and probably realised even less — that it is the advent of AI, rather than other aspects, that is likely to herald the collapse of the international order as we know it.

Few leaders currently understand the extent of the threat posed by AI to the world as we know it. Some industry leaders such as Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella have pointed out that AI was already being used as tools of diplomacy and state-craft, and that nations require to build resilience and sovereign stacks. AI did figure in discussions at the WEF, but the contents of the debate hardly mirrored the dangers arising from unchecked AI. A great deal of the debate turned on how countries were placed to exploit this new phenomenon, with Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw taking time off to rebut the presumption that India was a secondary AI power. Industry leaders, no doubt, increasingly see AI as a strategic enabler, given that digital transformation is helping to reshape competitiveness across different sectors — from fintech to health care. Additionally, there is some realisation that AI's potential extends to other sectors as well. The judicial fraternity, for one, however, believes that there is a need to be more cautious about the use of AI in court proceedings, and that excessive reliance on AI in court rooms could lead to misjudgment. They point to the dangers of 'hallucinations' which could lead to improper citations and fabricated judgments.

Marching ahead across domainsAll this, however, is but a precursor to what the real potential and danger posed by AI in the world of tomorrow are. As AI proliferates globally, it is already becoming evident that few technologies have the potential to exert the same degree of influence in terms of enhancing information flows, surveillance capabilities, revolutionising of communications, empowering analytical frameworks and the military-industrial segment. No other area of technology seems to have such a profound impact on existing civilisational networks.

In this sense, AI portends a breaching of certain limits that had existed since the Second World War and the over-

weening threat posed by technology and its utilisation in different domains. What is noteworthy is that AI operates at granular levels — and that the technology itself is undergoing a phased transition. In its present form, AI is already enabling the replication of speech and language, vision and reasoning, but what is little realised is that it is set to achieve new and dangerous heights of capabilities. This is specially so in regard to military and defence applications, for as AI becomes increasingly militarised, warfare itself is bound to — and is already undergoing — a paradigm shift from man to unmanned platforms, and from dependence on human-controlled systems to autonomous ones, that are capable of making their own decisions. Even as AI is set to become all pervasive, its transformative impact on warfare, especially in the area of the evolution of weapon systems, is what is most worrisome. AI has made possible the deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles that are capable of autonomous flight. AI-driven cyber weapons and uncrewed ground vehicles equipped with intelligent navigation and targeting capabilities are already a reality. Both represent a paradigm shift in redefining combat, and employing operations across multiple systems without direct human intervention. As of today, AI offers unprecedented opportunities for the enhanced automation of operational decisions in areas of conflict, and of transforming battlefield dynamics.

Already, the portrayal of Ukrainian soldiers wearing night vision goggles, riding 'Quad bikes' to protect the capital city of Kiev, and launching 'jerry-rigged drones' equipped with small explosives, has become the defining image of future conflicts. Ukraine's success in checking and keeping at bay the mighty Russian Army in the first wave of Russia's attacks on Ukraine, employing the latest AI technology, marks the most fundamental change in tactics of warfare since the advent of tanks at the end of the First World War. Ukraine's response has demonstrated the value of 'coming age technology', and how their skilful use could undermine conventional military capabilities. It is the hugely asymmetric impact that AI commands, that is both its strength and its danger portent. Though this is not being openly mentioned or touted, the reality is that it represents a colossal transfer of power from the traditional military to others, who have the capacity to develop and utilise AI devices. The real danger is that AI could very soon eclipse the smartest individuals, and nobody can or will know, when they become autonomous, and totally out of human control.

The dystopian impact of a powerful set of technologies which are not under the control of a human body or entity, and of self-sustaining technology, portrays a doomsday scenario. The beginnings of this are already evident, and are set to escalate enormously to the next levels of the concentration of power. There are unlimited possibilities in the doomsday scenario of autonomous drone swarms unleashing attacks on crowds, killing hundreds, if not, thousands. Both the military and security establishments would seek to equip themselves with such devices in a few years. AI would then be well set to become the greatest force amplifier in history. Its impact could range from wars and accidents, to random terror groups, to counter-revolutionary forces, and the like. The blunt truth is that nobody knows when, if how, AI might overtake or eclipse humans, and become an autonomous force for good or evil. It is also becoming evident that, apart from the battlefield, AI is now becoming an instrument of immense value in different spheres of human activity including diplomacy and intelligence. In that sense, it is no longer merely a tool. Concerns that technologies such as AI would outpace institutions meant to govern them are real, but the most spectacular demonstration of AI is as yet on the battlefield — as seen across western Europe and West Asia. In both sectors, space, cyber and electronic warfare capacities have been woven together to completely transform the nature of warfare itself. The obiter dictum — given that AI enables rapid data processing and predictive analysis, and also provides opportunities for a variety of options, including crisis response, conflict prevention, and conflict resolution — is that humankind must develop a set of checks and balances to prevent AI from 'running away with the bit in its mouth'. Scientists, political leaders and others must come together to understand the implications of runaway AI technologies and decide how to keep them under control and in a manner that they benefit, rather than become a threat to, humankind.

A poem on St. Thomas Mount



This is my third consecutive article for this column that features a book of some kind, and I apologise for the monotony. However, it was too tough to resist writing about this poem. H.D. Love's *Vestiges of Old Madras* never ceases to amaze, and educate. Each reading throws up some nugget, as it did last week. This was a poem titled St. Thomas's Mount. It was written around 1769 or thereabouts for it mentions the attacks on the place by Hyder Ali in 1767 and the cyclone of 1768. The poem was published anonymously in 1774 in England and ascribed to "A Gentleman from India". The preface, anonymous, is dated Jan 1, 1773, and written at Fort St. George. The author, it says, was not yet 20 when he wrote this poem.

Love establishes that this was Eyles Irwin, born in 1750 and arrived in Madras in 1768. "Fascinated by natural beauty and historic associations of the Mount, he wrote (this) pastoral poem," says Love. In Madras, Irwin, who was in East India Company service, was appointed Land Surveyor in 1771. Five years later, it was found that he had done nothing and so, the post was abolished. He seems to have done well enough personally, for he applied and obtained from the Company eleven acres of land in the village of "Eremore" for his residence. Irwin was evidently a man of letters for in 1777, back in England, he printed his Series of Adventures in the Course of a Voyage up the Red Sea. He also has other works of poetry and prose to his credit. His death, as per Love, was in England, in 1817.

The poem is available free for download at archive.org. The frontispiece is an interesting depiction of the Mount, that Love says, is by J. Collyer. This was very likely Joseph Collyer the Younger, engraver to Queen Charlotte. He never came to India and so must have based his engraving on a sketch made by someone in Madras. If so, it depicts the hill, the steps that Petrus Uscana sponsored to the top, and a shrine at the summit. At the base, behind a compound are bungalows set amidst trees — these may be the cantonment houses for officers. Outside the compound is barren land with a few palm trees. It reminded me of Jaysree Venkatesan, India's first Ramsar Award winner. She has always maintained that lush and dense greenery was a colonial creation in Madras, the original vegetation being palm and scrub. A camel and an elephant, with keepers, are wandering around. A tamed cheetah, with its trainer, is hunting what seems to be an antelope on another side.

Now to the poem: it is in three cantos, the first having 220 verses, the second 175, and the third 170. Irwin seems to be one of those that rejoices in warm weather. "The eternal season of our eastern years," according to him is spring and he wonders if his compatriots back home in England, battered by winter storms and gloom, envy his good fortune. To us, reading it after 250 years and more makes us wonder, for Meenambakkam, if anything, is always a degree or two hotter than the Nungambakkam meteorological office temperature reading. But it also reinforces the theory that during colonial times, the Mount was considered an ideal getaway from the city.

The area evidently had several mango orchards for the poem pays tribute to the "blessed shade" of the trees and the abundance of the "ambrosial fruit". The poem then goes on to sing in praise of the elephant and the camel. Then Irwin describes a cheetah, trained to hunt, being encouraged by its keeper to go after antelopes. In his notes, Love has surmised that Collyer's engraving predated the poem, but what is clear is that it is a faithful depiction of the poem itself. Or was Irwin inspired by the engraving and so fashioned his opening canto after it? The second canto describes the legend of Saint Thomas right up to his martyrdom and notes how after his passing, all three religions — Gentoo, Mussulman, and Christian, coexist here — "When men unite in a friendly band, and truth presides over a guileless land."



As leaders are set to walk across a drawbridge to the 16th-century Alden Biesen castle, the fault lines in the battle for Europe's future are becoming clear. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni lead a wing of the bloc calling for deregulation, rebooting Europe's relationship with Washington and forging trade deals like the recent one struck with the Mercosur nations of South America.

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Leaders from across the European Union are meeting in a Belgian castle as the 27-nation bloc faces antagonism from U.S. President Donald Trump, strong-arm economic tactics from China and hybrid threats from Russia — challenges that have prompted a rethink of Europe's approach to diplomacy and trade. "We all know we must change course, and we all know the direction," Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever told a meeting with some European leaders on Wednesday (February 11, 2026). "Yet it sometimes feels like we're standing on the bridge of the ship staring at the horizon without being able to touch the helm." But there are competing visions of how the EU must change. Thursday's (February 12, 2026) meeting is to shape proposals for another summit in late March.

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How plastic whistles are becoming an anti-ICE resistance tool in Chicago



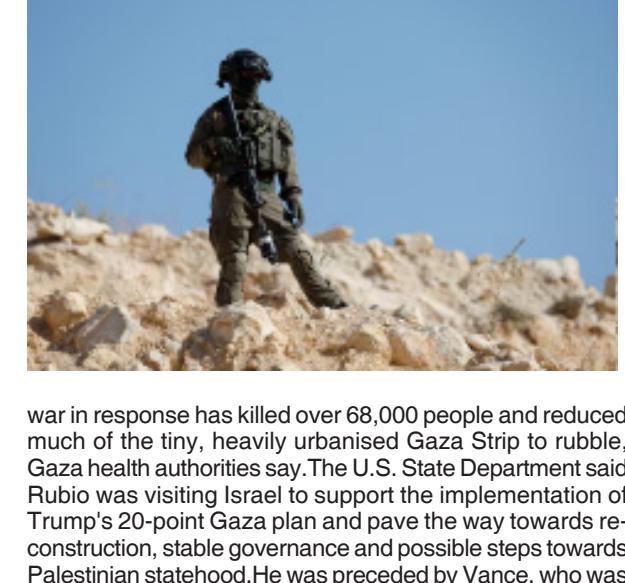
CHICAGO, GNS News Agency, Feb 13 As the shrill sound of whistles echoed through a parking garage in Chicago's North Side on Tuesday, two people flung their car doors open, ducked inside and shrank down into their seats. Outside, a convoy of federal immigration enforcement vehicles that had arrived in the area just minutes prior sped off. "We just saw a bunch of guys with whistles that chased them out," said Luke, a landscaper who was working nearby and declined to share his full name.

Read about innovative ideas and the people working on solutions to global crises with the Reuters Beacon newsletter. Sign up here. The Trump administration in early September launched a targeting what it said were hardened criminals among immigrants in the U.S. without legal status, though many noncriminals have been swept up in raids.

Since then, the piercing blow of a whistle has become a Chicago-wide means of signaling that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement or U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents are present. It warns undocumented people to flee and invites U.S. citizens to come to the scene to record arrests, give detainees legal information and discourage agents from lingering. Anti-ICE signs hang in the window of a home, after U.S. President Donald Trump ordered increased federal law enforcement presence to assist in crime prevention, in Chicago, Illinois, U.S., October 21, 2025. REUTERS/Jim Vondruska Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab

The aggressive immigration enforcement effort - which has no end date - has sparked widespread protests and resentment among residents. Hundreds of federal agents have fanned across the third-largest city in the U.S. and its suburbs, often carrying assault rifles and wearing military fatigues. Agents have teargassed crowds, rappelled from a Black Hawk helicopter to raid an apartment building, dragged immigrants from cars, held people at gunpoint and shot two people, including one fatally. Against this heavily militarized force, whistles have

Vance says Trump's policy rejects Israeli annexation of West Bank



TEL AVIV, GNS News Agency, Feb 13. Vice President JD Vance said on Thursday President Donald Trump would oppose Israeli annexation of the occupied West Bank and it would not happen, suggesting a move by Israeli lawmakers to that end looked like a stupid "political stunt". A bill applying Israeli law to the West Bank, a move tantamount to annexation of the territory Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war, won preliminary approval from Israeli lawmakers on Wednesday. The Reuters Gulf Currents newsletter brings you the latest on geopolitics, energy and finance in the region. Sign up here. Asked by reporters about the move, Vance said: "If it was a political stunt, it is a very stupid one, and I personally take some insult to it." Vance spoke after U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned that moves toward annexing the territory that Palestinians seek for part of an independent state could endanger Trump's plan to end the Gaza war, which has yielded a shaky ceasefire so far. "The West Bank is not going to be annexed by Israel. The policy of President Trump is that the West Bank will not be annexed. This will always be our policy," Vance said during a trip to Israel to help shore up the Gaza truce.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said after Vance's remarks that the government had not decided to bring the vote on annexation forward at this stage in order to ensure the success of Trump's multi-stage Gaza plan. The U.S. has long been Israel's most powerful and staunch major power ally and the Trump administration is particularly close to Israel with considerable sway over its leadership. Senior U.S. officials including Rubio have been visiting Israel seeking to keep alive the brittle ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas after two years of devastating war that has upended the Middle East. Vance told reporters in Tel Aviv that he "feels pretty good" about the Gaza ceasefire after having talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Repeated bouts of gunfire and explosions have shaken the deal and the two sides have traded blame for violations of its first phase, which has seen the return of Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, a handover of bodies of some deceased hostages, and a partial pullout of Israeli troops.

Item 1 of 4 A member of the Israeli force stands guard as the Israeli forces block the access of Palestinians and foreign activists to olive trees during the olive harvest, near Hebron, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Both sides have reiterated their commitment to the U.S.-mediated ceasefire after two years of war triggered by the October 7, 2023 cross-border Hamas assault on Israel that killed 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's air and ground

war in response has killed over 68,000 people and reduced much of the tiny, heavily urbanised Gaza Strip to rubble, Gaza health authorities say. The U.S. State Department said Rubio was visiting Israel to support the implementation of Trump's 20-point Gaza plan and pave the way towards reconstruction, stable governance and possible steps towards Palestinian statehood. He was preceded by Vance, who was also due to meet Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz and Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer on Thursday before departing.

There are hundreds of thousands of people living in Jewish settlements across the West Bank. The United Nations and much of the international community consider the settlements illegal under international law. Israel's government cites biblical and historical connections to the West Bank, territory that it regards as disputed, and opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state. The settlements are a highly volatile issue that have for decades loomed as a major obstacle to Middle East peace, as they fragment territory Palestinians want for a viable state. Wednesday's vote was the first of four needed to pass the law and coincided with Vance's visit to Israel - a month after Trump said he would not allow Israel to annex the territory. Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party did not support the legislation, which was sponsored by lawmakers outside his ruling coalition and passed by a vote of 25-24 out of 120 lawmakers. Netanyahu's government had been pondering annexation as a response to a string of major Western allies recognising a Palestinian state to put pressure on Israel to stop its war in Gaza, but appeared to shelve the idea after Trump objected. Settlement building has been expanding rapidly since 2022 when Netanyahu's government - the most right-wing in Israeli history with ultra-nationalist coalition partners who seek annexation of both the West Bank and Gaza - came to power.

Zelenskiy appeals to EU leaders over long-range weapons



BRUSSELS -GNS News Agency, Feb 13 President Volodymyr Zelenskiy urged European allies on Thursday to supply Ukraine with long-range weapons after failing to secure a promise from U.S. President Donald Trump to provide Kyiv with powerful Tomahawk missiles. Zelenskiy, who addressed European Union leaders in Brussels, also called on them to agree as soon as possible on a plan to use frozen Russian assets and said Kyiv would use a "significant part" of any funds made available to buy European-made weapons. "When we talk about long-range weapons for Ukraine, we mean that the Putin regime should feel real consequences from this war. I urge you to support everything that helps Ukraine get such capabilities — because it really makes a difference for Russia," he said. "Just look at how nervous (Russian President Vladimir) Putin became when this topic came up. He understands that long-range weapons can truly change the course of the war." Zelenskiy has been seeking Tomahawk missiles from the United

Northern Ireland court finds soldier not guilty of murder over 'Bloody Sunday' killings



BELFAST, GNS News Agency, Feb 13 A Belfast court on Thursday found a British soldier not guilty of murder in the only trial of a member of the British armed forces over the 1972 "Bloody Sunday" killings of 13 unarmed Catholic civil rights marchers in Northern Ireland. The British government in 2010 apologised for the "unjustified and unjustifiable" killings, when members of the British army's elite Parachute Regiment opened fire in the mainly Irish nationalist city of Londonderry in one of the defining moments of Northern Ireland's recent history.

The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here. But all efforts to prosecute soldiers have failed and many relatives of victims and their supporters now believe the chance of a successful prosecution of British armed forces is remote. Belfast Crown Court was silent when the verdict was read. The soldier, who cannot be identified legally and is known as Soldier F, was in court but hidden behind a blue curtain to protect his identity. He was found not guilty of killing two men and trying to kill five others. Judge Patrick Lynch said in his verdict that he was satisfied that soldiers had lost all sense of military discipline and opened fire with intent to kill and that "those responsible should hang their heads in shame". But he said the case fell short of the burden of proof.

"Delay has, in my view, seriously hampered the capacity of the defence to test the veracity and accuracy of

the hearsay statements," he said. "The evidence presented by the Crown ... signals fail to reach the high standard of proof required in a criminal case; that of proof beyond a reasonable doubt." Mickey McKinney, brother of William McKinney, one of the two victims named in the case, said he put the blame for the failure to successfully prosecute any soldiers squarely with the British state. "Soldier F has been discharged from the defendant's criminal dock, but it is one million miles away from being an honourable discharge," McKinney told journalists outside the court. A DEFINING MOMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND'S 'TROUBLES' Bloody Sunday became one of the defining events of the Troubles, three decades of sectarian violence involving nationalists seeking a united Ireland, unionists wanting Northern Ireland to remain a province of the United Kingdom, and British forces. The shootings fuelled suspicion of the authorities among the Catholic minority and prompted dozens to join the Irish Republican Army's violent campaign against British rule. Thirteen people, all unarmed Catholics, were killed when the soldiers opened fire in the staunchly nationalist Bogside area of Londonderry on January 30, 1972. A 14th victim later died from wounds sustained on the day. The troops said they shot at people armed with guns or nail bombs.

Defence lawyers did not call any witnesses and said that the core of the case, military statements taken over 50 years ago, were manifestly unreliable, with no independent supporting evidence offered to back the prosecution case. Earlier in the trial the court heard a short statement Soldier F gave to police in 2016, in which he said that while he was sure he properly discharged his duties as a soldier that day, he no longer had any reliable recollection of the events and therefore was unable to answer the officers' questions. The British government in 2010 apologised for the killings after a judicial inquiry found that the victims were innocent and had posed no threat to the military. That inquiry had been set up by British Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1998, after an original 1972 investigation absolved the paratroopers of blame. In a statement on the verdict the British government said it was "committed to finding a way forward that acknowledges the past, whilst supporting those who served their country during an incredibly difficult period in Northern Ireland's history."

What will happen to Louvre jewellery after heist? There are two likely scenarios

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

The spectacular heist of jewellery from the Louvre museum in Paris has many people wondering how a theft like this could occur in broad daylight and what might happen to the items that were stolen from the museum. In a matter of minutes, four thieves were able to enter through a first-floor window, break into secure glass displays, and take nine items of jewellery of immeasurable value. Although an alarm was set off and museum guards were nearby, the thieves were able to escape quickly, using motor bikes to get away. They dropped one stolen item, a diamond and emerald-encrusted royal crown that had belonged to Empress Eugenie, Napoleon III's wife. Their loot include jewellery from French imperial times - brooches, necklaces, earrings and a tiara. The French prosecutor's office said the jewels were worth some 88 million euros (A\$157 million), not including their historical value. The speed and professionalism of the heist shows this was a well-planned crime, carried out by highly skilled perpetrators. That suggests they are linked to organised criminal groups. Several media outlets reported a number of smaller thefts from French museums in recent weeks, including gold nuggets from the Paris Natural History Museum. There is no suggestion these thefts were linked to the Louvre heist.

What might happen to the loot?

The stolen jewellery includes well-known pieces that are easily recognisable. This will make it difficult, if not impossible, to sell them on the black market, even to well-heeled collectors and buyers. This problem is well-known from other museum heists - such as the theft of the Canadian "Big Maple Leaf" giant gold coin from Berlin's Bode Museum in 2017 or the famous heist of 13 masterpieces by Degas, Manet and Rembrandt from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston in 1990. Those paintings have never been recovered. Instead, most experts believe one of two scenarios are more likely. In the first, the jewellery would be broken down into smaller pieces. Diamonds and other gemstones may be taken out, altered and then offered for sale. Silver and gold may be used to manufacture other

pieces or may be sold separately.

This scenario would make it easy to conceal the origin of the pieces and sell them openly or online. The combined value, however, would be significantly lower compared to leaving the pieces intact. It is thus doubtful the thieves targeted the specific jewellery for this purpose. Scenario two would involve the thieves, or more likely the masterminds behind them, trying to sell the pieces back to the Louvre or trying to extort money from the French government for their return. This may be done through brokers or other middlemen and may not happen for a while, until there is less public and media attention and the perpetrators feel sufficiently safe to contact - directly or indirectly - museum or state authorities. Given the historical significance of the pieces coupled with the embarrassment caused by the heist, the Louvre and the French government would be keen to have the pieces returned as swiftly as possible and might be willing to negotiate, albeit secretly. Much of this remains, however, speculation. Only a few days have passed since the heist occurred and many questions about the events, perpetrators and their motives remain unanswered. And just who may be behind this spectacular heist from France's largest museum has everyone guessing.

The Louvre theft brings to mind the jewellery heist at the Green Vault at the Zwinger Palace in Dresden, Germany, in 2019. In this case, the perpetrators had closely examined the museum's security system for many days and were able to enter the building without being caught on camera. They entered through a window on the first floor and within minutes stole 21 pieces of jewellery from several displays. Unlike the Paris heist, the Dresden thieves entered at night and used brute force to damage the displays to take their loot. Some years after the robbery, German authorities were able to identify and arrest the thieves involved in the heist - all five were members of a notorious Berlin-based crime family. The perpetrators have since been tried and convicted and are serving long jail times. Most of the jewellery was retrieved and returned - unaltered - to its famous home.

Saudi Arabia appoints Sheikh Saleh bin Fawzan al-Fawzan as kingdom's new grand mufti

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Dubai: Saudi Arabia appointed a prominent ultraconservative scholar late on Wednesday as the country's new grand mufti, the kingdom's top religious scholar. Sheikh Saleh bin Fawzan al-Fawzan, 90, took over the position, the state-run Saudi Press Agency reported. The decision came from King Salman, based on the recommendation of his son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the report added.

Sheikh Saleh, reportedly born Sept 28, 1935, in Saudi Arabia's al-Qassim province, studied the Quran with a local imam after his father's death. He became a prominent scholar, speaking to the faithful via the "Noor ala al-Darb," or "Light the Way," radio show and via multiple books he's authored and his television appearances. His fatwas, or religious orders, have been shared via social media as well.

Sheikh Saleh has faced criticism in Western media in the past for some of his pronouncements. Human Rights Watch in 2017 reported Sheikh Saleh, when asked if Sunni Muslims should view Shiites as their "brothers," responded: "They are brothers of Satan." The Shiite "lie about God, his prophet, and the consensus of Muslims... There is no doubt about the unbelief of these" people, Human Rights Watch separately quoted Sheikh Saleh saying at another moment. Such comments about the Shiite from religious leaders in Saudi Arabia are common, particularly amid political tensions between the kingdom and Iran. Sheikh Saleh also criticised Yemen's Houthi rebels for firing missiles toward holy sites in the kingdom. In 2003, Sheikh Saleh was quoted as saying: "Slavery is a part of Islam. Slavery is part of jihad, and jihad will remain as long as there is Islam." The sheikh also had a fatwa attributed to him in 2016 banning the mobile game "Pokemon Go" as a form of gambling. Saudi Arabia under Crown Prince Mohammed now owns a sizable stake in Niantic and the gaming division of Niantic,



the maker of "Pokemon Go".

Sheikh Saleh takes the post after the September death of Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al-Sheikh, who held the position of grand mufti for a quarter century. The al-Sheikh family, descendants of Sheikh Mohammed ibn Abdul-Wahhab, long had seen its members serve as the grand mufti.

Sheikh Mohammed's ultraconservative teachings of Islam in the 18th century, widely referred to as "Wahhabism" in his name, had guided the kingdom for decades, particularly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran saw the kingdom grow even more conservative. The grand mufti is one of the top Islamic clerics in the world of Sunni Muslims. Saudi Arabia, home to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, hosts the annual Hajj pilgrimage required of all able-bodied Muslims once in their lives, making the pronouncements of the grand mufti that much more closely followed. Saudi Arabia has socially liberalized under King Salman, allowing women to drive and opening movie theatres as the country tries to move its economy away from being dominated by its oil industry.

In boost to India's N-security, NTPC, CCTE explore development & deployment of thorium-based fuel ANEEL: DAE



The Department of Atomic Energy has said that state-owned NTPC Ltd and Chicago-based Clean Core Thorium Energy (CCTE) are exploring the "development and deployment of a thorium-based fuel" for existing nuclear stations in India, subject to regulatory clearances. Clean Core Thorium Energy, only the second American company to have secured an export license from the US Department of Energy (DAE) to sell nuclear technology to India in nearly two decades, has developed a thorium-based fuel, called ANEEL or Advanced Nuclear Energy for Enriched Life, that can be deployed in the country's Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) at scale. The combination of thorium with small amounts of enriched uranium — and the promise of its use in PHWRs — will enhance India's energy security by using domestically available thorium, and improving safety and proliferation resistance. It could also reduce nuclear waste.

"The natural uranium oxide-based fuel will continue to be deployed in our current fleet of PHWRs, representing an optimised and efficient utilisation of our limited uranium resources in a sustained manner through the three-stage programme. With regard to waste, India is following a closed fuel cycle where the spent fuel is reprocessed to recover valuable fissile material for use in our second stage of nuclear programme," Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Jitendra Singh, said in response to a ques-

tion on ANEEL fuel in Lok Sabha Wednesday. This ties in with the Centre's plan to explore the deployment of a thorium-based fuel for India's existing fleet of PHWRs, which could, in turn, support the country's energy and fuel security. In December, the Centre had passed the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025, marking a major shift in how India's tightly-controlled nuclear power sector will be governed in the coming years.

For the first time, the law enables private players to enter the operations side of this critical sector. This includes a possibility of foreign participation in the future. It also envisages a role for private entities in areas such as fuel management, which had remained under tight public-sector control for decades. The advantage with the thorium fuel produced by the Chicago-based company is that it can be shipped to India and directly loaded on to PHWRs.

Thorium — the radioactive metallic element named after the Norse god of thunder — has been a long-standing hope for India's true energy security. It has long been seen as an alternative to uranium since it's more abundant, produces lesser amounts of long-lived radioactive waste (that have a long half-life) and potentially lowers the proliferation risk. For India, thorium has been part of a long-term strategy for curbing dependence on imported nuclear fuels, since the country has little uranium reserves. While thorium deployment has been predicated on the idea of new reactors being designed in the last leg of India's three-stage nuclear programme to run on this fuel, it could entail reconstructing the country's nuclear power fleet from the ground up. In this context, Clean Core's research of advanced nuclear fuel cycles has resulted in the fabrication of a new type of fuel. It blends thorium with a more concentrated type of uranium named HALEU (high-assay low-enriched uranium). This, according to CCTE, can then be used in India's PWHRs that make up the bulk of the country's existing reactor fleet. Additionally, the new fuel offers cost savings by delivering greater energy output within existing safety margins and lowering the operating costs of current reactors.

Toll collection set for record high in FY26, led by Rajasthan, UP, Maharashtra

Toll collection at the country's national highways (NHs) — one of the metrics of economic activity — is set to hit a new record during FY26. During the first three quarters of FY26, a user fee of Rs 50,345 crore was collected, which is almost 82% of the total toll collection in FY25, when a user fee of Rs 61,408 crore was charged from vehicles, the government told Parliament on Wednesday.

The pace of collection indicates that toll revenues in this financial year are likely to surpass those of previous years. According to the latest data tabled by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) in the Rajya Sabha, the total user fee collection in FY24 was Rs 55,882 crore, while it stood at Rs 48,032 crore in FY23. In FY22 and FY21, total toll collections were Rs 33,929 crore and Rs 27,927 crore respectively. Overall, the total user fee collected from FY21 to December 2025 stands at Rs 2.78 lakh crore. The total collection has increased significantly by about 120% or more than doubled in the last five years. Nitin Gadkari, the Union Minister for road transport and highways, said that the increase in user fee collection at toll plazas on national highways depends on several factors, such as the expansion of highway length under tolling, the volume of traffic on these stretches, and the category of vehicles using the highways.

Along with this, the annual revision of user fees in accordance with the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008, is another major factor. "Impact Assessment conducted for the National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC) Programme during 2024-25 indicates that the average time taken by a vehicle to cross a toll plaza under ETC operations was 40 seconds, as compared to 12.23 minutes per vehicle under the earlier manual tolling system. This demonstrates a significant improvement in traffic flow and a substantial reduction in congestion at toll plazas," Gadkari said in the written response.

The government has also decided to implement multi-lane free flow (MLFF) tolling through automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) with AI analytics and RFID-based Elec-



tronic Toll Collection (FASTag) which will facilitate barrierless tolling and increase toll collection further. While state-wise toll collection data for the current financial year is yet to be released, an analysis of the past five years shows that the increase in toll revenues has been largely driven by five states: Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Together, these five states account for about 48% of the total toll collection. Between FY21 and FY25, Rajasthan emerged as the top toll-collecting state, where collections rose from about Rs 3,330 crore in 2020-21 to Rs 6,289 crore in 2024-25. Its cumulative toll collection during the period is Rs 24,310 crore. Uttar Pradesh closely followed, with collections increasing from Rs 3,087 crore to Rs 6,574 crore during the same period, taking its total toll collection to nearly 23,900 crore. Maharashtra also recorded strong growth, more than doubling its toll revenues from Rs 2,591 crore in FY21 to about Rs 6,103 crore in FY25. Gujarat showed a similar upward trajectory, with collections rising from Rs 2,721 crore to Rs 5,450 crore. Tamil Nadu, though slightly behind these states, maintained consistent growth, with toll revenues increasing from Rs 2,333 crore to Rs 4,459 crore over the period. These five high toll collecting states have dense highway networks as well, which supports high vehicle movement and industrial activity.

Retail inflation rises to 2.75% under new CPI data series

India's headline retail inflation rate based on the revised and updated Consumer Price Index (CPI) stood at 2.75% in January, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) said on Wednesday. The statistics ministry has spent years updating the base year of the CPI for prices to 2024 from 2012, reframing the consumption basket based on the results of the 2023-24 Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) so that prices are measured as per the latest consumption patterns and not the 2011-12 survey, and revising the methods it uses to calculate price changes for certain items to more accurately measure national inflation. The new CPI basket contains 358 goods and services, up from 299 in the erstwhile basket.

As per the old CPI inflation series, retail prices had risen 1.33% in the final month of 2025. The modernisation of CPI inflation, India's most important macroeconomic indicator, is part of a larger overhaul of India's official statistics by MoSPI. Later this month, the new GDP series — with 2022-23 as the base year and sweeping methodological changes — will be released on February 27 starting with data for October-December 2025 and the second advance estimate for 2025-26. Then, in May, the revised Index of Industrial Production will be released, also with a new base year of 2022-23.

CPI inflation is an extremely important economic indicator as it directly influences the level of interest rates in the country. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has a legal mandate to target a CPI inflation rate of 4% in the medium term within a tolerance band of 2-6%. As such, if inflation is seen above 4% on a sustained basis, the RBI increases its policy repo rate to curb demand and bring down inflation. In 2025, the Indian central bank cut the repo rate by 125 basis



points to 5.25% as inflation under the old series fell to record lows, providing the RBI room to reduce interest rates.

Economists and policymakers have warned in the past that since the CPI basket had not been updated for more than a decade and the computation of the inflation rate was plagued by a few glaring errors, the CPI with 2012 as the base year ran the risk of not accurately representing the true level of inflation in India. This could lead to policy errors. As per the revised CPI, while headline inflation stood at 2.75% in January, food inflation was 2.13% in December as per the new series. The weight of food and beverage items has reduced sharply in the new CPI from 45.86% to 36.75%. This is in line with Engel's Law, named after German statistician and economist Ernst Engel, which states that as the income of a household rises, the proportion it spends on food reduces. A lower weight of food is also expected to reduce volatility in the headline inflation rate. While food items such as vegetables will continue to account for a sizable part of the CPI, a lower weight than before means its influence on the headline rate reduces.

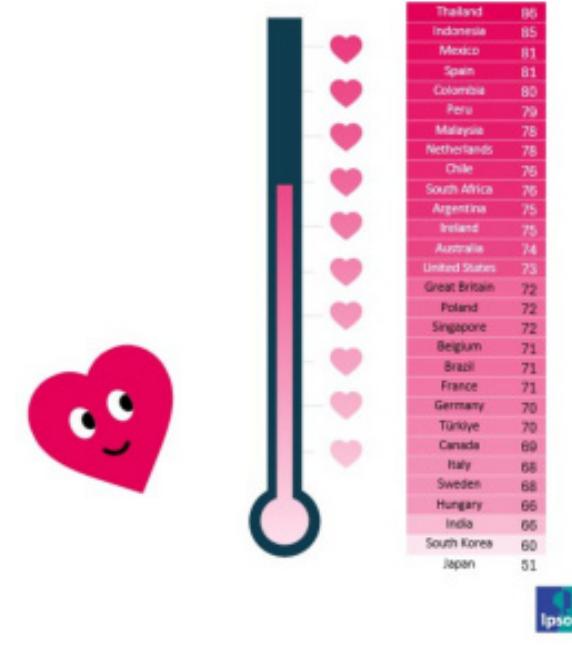
Why your HbA1c test could be lying: Experts warn of massive overdiagnosis of diabetes in seniors and women



have projected a staggering 215 million diabetic cases in India. Renowned diabetologist Dr V Mohan of Mohan Diabetes Centre, Chennai, who led the earlier ICMR study, recently clarified that HbA1c test is not intended for standalone diagnosis. He noted that the test picks up people with very mild abnormalities and labels them as diabetics. Therefore, HbA1c for diagnosis of diabetes is not a good test but it remains a 'gold standard' for assessing the control of diabetes. The core of the issue lies in several biological distortions that are particularly prevalent in the Indian population. For instance, research highlights that HbA1c levels naturally rise by approximately 0.08 percent for every decade of life, even in non-diabetic individuals.

This means that a 70-year-old with a HbA1c reading of 6.6 percent might be perfectly healthy for their age. However, such persons would be labeled as diabetic and potentially placed on unnecessary medication. Furthermore, the high prevalence of iron deficiency anemia in India falsely inflates HbA1c readings because red blood cells live longer in anemic patients, giving them more time to collect sugar. In a message to the general public and patients, noted public health speaker and top neurologist from Hyderabad, Dr Sudhir Kumar (hyderabaddoctor in X) says "Don't discard the test, contextualise it. If you have anemia or kidney issues, your HbA1c might not tell the whole story. Don't panic over a single number, look at the trend. HbA1c remains reliable to track blood sugar over the last 3 months but it is not absolute truth. It is a proxy".

'India scores low on partner satisfaction, but ranks 8th for romance, intimacy'



feel loved" — may be subtle, but it is significant. It hints at something deeper than relationship status: perceived emotional reciprocity. Ipsos India CEO Suresh Ramalingam cautions against reading the findings as a crisis. "Two in three Indians report being satisfied with their love life. The ranking is relative across markets and should be interpreted in context," he notes. Culture vs contemporary reality. India's ranking feels jarring against its global image. The land of the Kamasutra, Bollywood romance and elaborate wedding rituals is culturally synonymous with passion and intimacy. But modern love doesn't unfold in mythology. Multi-generational family systems, rising work pressures, dual-income households, shifting gender roles and evolving expectations within marriages may all shape how people experience emotional fulfilment today. Balancing caregiving, careers and partnership leaves less space for overt affirmation — even if affection exists. Love may be present. But is it felt and expressed? Ipsos Love Life Satisfaction Index 2026 Ipsos Love Life Satisfaction Index 2026 But romance still thrives

Interestingly, India performs far better when it comes to romance and sex life satisfaction. The country ranks 8th overall among 29 markets on this dimension — ahead of several Western nations. Thailand and Indonesia lead the category, followed by Mexico, Spain, Malaysia, Colombia, Peru, India and Argentina. This contrast suggests something important: emotional validation and physical intimacy do not always move together. People may feel reasonably satisfied with romance and sexual connection, yet still report lower levels of feeling emotionally affirmed. The global picture Thailand tops the overall Love Life Satisfaction Index in 2026, with respondents reporting high satisfaction across all three dimensions. Countries across Asia, Latin America and parts of Europe dominate the upper tier. At the bottom sit Japan, South Korea and India. Even Italy and France — long associated with romance — appear in the bottom ten, proving that cultural stereotypes don't always mirror lived experience.

Does money matter?

Across 29 markets, income appears to influence love life satisfaction. Eighty-two per cent of high-income respondents say they are satisfied with the love in their life, compared to 72% of low-income respondents. When it comes to romantic and sex life satisfaction, the gap widens to 14 percentage points. Money may not buy love, but financial stability seems to reduce stressors that strain relationships. The survey, based on over 23,000 respondents globally, including around 2,200 in India, ultimately reveals that love is multi-dimensional. Emotional fulfilment, romance and physical intimacy are distinct — and sometimes misaligned. For India, the findings are less about a deficit of love and more about evolving expectations. In a rapidly changing society, how love is expressed — and how it is perceived — may be shifting just as quickly.

Expert decodes the craftsmanship behind Kareena Kapoor's luxury watch, explains why it works as everyday wear: 'This is not a fragile accessory'

Airport fashion has increasingly become a space where comfort meets quiet luxury, and Kareena Kapoor Khan's recent Mumbai airport appearance is a perfect example of this shift. Dressed in a relaxed, travel-ready outfit, the actor leaned into ease and practicality. But it was her choice of accessories that subtly elevated the entire look and drew attention from many. While her rust-red sweatshirt, wide-leg denim jeans, and practical tote spoke to effortless travel style, the standout detail was the luxury timepiece on her wrist. Kareena was spotted wearing the Jaeger-LeCoultre Rendez-Vous Classic Night & Day watch, a refined design known for its understated elegance, delicate proportions, and meticulous craftsmanship.

According to the Swiss watchmaker, "With its jewel-finish, the Rendez-Vous Night & Day timepiece in steel is a beautiful expression of the Rendez-Vous collection, created for women by Jaeger-LeCoultre." On Kareena, the watch quietly highlighted how luxury today often makes its statement without loud branding. The popular Instagram page for horology enthusiasts, @theindianhorology, estimates the price at \$12,600, approximately ₹12.4 lakhs. However, Jaeger-LeCoultre mentions that the price is "available upon request." The timepiece reflects a blend of traditional watchmaking and modern wearability, from its compact 29 mm case and mother-of-pearl dial to its automatic in-house movement and subtle diamond detailing. Rather than over-

powering her outfit, the watch complemented the overall look, highlighting how high-end accessories can seamlessly fit into everyday wardrobes. To learn more about this luxury timepiece, indianexpress.com reached out to an expert to discuss luxury watches as daily wear, how craftsmanship influences value, and why certain timepieces transcend trends to become long-term style investments rather than occasional showpieces.

What makes a luxury watch like the Jaeger-LeCoultre Rendez-Vous Classic Night & Day suitable for everyday wear?

Mehul Bhagwani, watch enthusiast and digital growth marketer, tells indianexpress.com, "At first glance, the Rendez-Vous Classic Night & Day looks delicate. Diamonds, mother of pearl, soft curves. It gives the impression that it belongs in a jewellery box, not real life. But that assumption falls apart pretty quickly once you understand how it is built." He explains that the case is stainless steel, the glass is sapphire, and the movement is designed to withstand everyday shocks, temperature changes, and long hours on the wrist. "This is not a fragile accessory. It is closer to a daily companion that just happens to look elegant." The day-and-night display adds charm, Bhagwani notes, but it is also genuinely useful if you travel or deal with people in different time zones. "The best way to describe it is simple. It does the hard work quietly and looks polished while doing it."

Pizzeria worker Crishan Kalugamage, Mosca brothers give Italy first-ever World Cup win, a 10-wicket saunter against Nepal

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

When Anthony Mosca dug out a yorker-length ball from Dipendra Singh Airee in the 13th over and ran through for the single that sealed it, he flung both arms into the Mumbai sky. A roar followed. At the other end, his brother Justin waited. The embrace was instant. Tears soon followed. Italy had just silenced a sizable Nepalese-heavy crowd and created history – a 10-wicket win over Nepal in their Group C clash, and their first-ever victory at a World Cup. The margin was emphatic. The performance, clinical. And at its heart were three men who scripted an evening few in Italian cricket will forget. The Mosca masterclass

Chasing 124, the Mosca brothers made the target look trivial, racing home in just 12.4 overs. Justin, three years younger and a physical education teacher by profession, set the tone. The powerplay was carnage – 50 runs in four overs as he tore into Nepal's seamers and spinners alike, unfurling drives, pulls and lofted hits with fearless intent. Justin, who grew up in Sydney alongside Anthony, never harboured ambitions of turning professional.

"I never really had aspirations to play professional cricket in Australia. I studied for a teaching degree and was at university, so it was hard to pursue cricket. I love cricket for the competitive side of it and the team aspect, which is why I love playing with these boys so much," he had told Italy openers Justin Mosca (L) and Anthony Mosca during the T20 World Cup 2026 match vs Nepal in Mumbai. Italy openers Justin Mosca (L) and Anthony Mosca during the T20 World Cup 2026 match vs Nepal in Mumbai. (PHOTO: AP) On Thursday, with Italy's tournament hanging in the balance, he produced perhaps the finest innings of his life as the evening sun dipped over Mumbai. At the other end stood Anthony, a carpenter and a builder for 12 years, matching his brother stroke for stroke. The sixes flowed on both sides of the wicket. Nepal's bowlers searched for control but found none. Italy were 68/0 after six overs, the contest effectively decided.

"There were definitely a few tears in the boys' eyes. It meant a lot, especially for the two Mosca brothers – chasing down 100 together was phenomenal. We were also outstanding in the field. In our first game, nothing went our way. Today, everything did. But that was because we played brave cricket instead of being tentative like we were in our first World Cup match (against Scotland). Seeing AJ Mosca in tears shows what this means. You don't often see players crying after a group-stage win – but that's the passion Italians bring," stand-in captain Harry Manenti said at the post-match presentation. Both brothers reached their half-



centuries in the 11th over. Rohit Paudel shuffled through his spin options, probing for a breakthrough, but there was no opening. The pair remained unbeaten – Anthony on 62, Justin on 60 – as Italy romped home with 44 balls to spare. Kalugamage's turning point! The Moscas finished the job with the bat, Crishan Kalugamage set it up with the ball. On most Sundays, the 34-year-old is shaping dough in a pizzeria in Lucca, juggling orders during one of Tuscany's busiest shifts. On Thursday, he shaped something far bigger – Nepal's innings.

The Sri Lanka-born leg-spinner, who moved to Italy with his parents in 2007, returned figures of 3/18 in four overs. These were not taken wickets at the death. Rohit Paudel, Dipendra Singh Airee and Gulshan Jha all fell to his variations, each dismissal tightening Italy's grip. His journey has been anything but straightforward. "I lost a lot of jobs. Sunday is a very busy day, lots of bosses aren't keen on you not working because you are playing cricket," he had told the BBC, outlining the sacrifices required to pursue cricket in a country where the sport barely registers. There were reinventions along the way. Once a fast bowler, recurring injuries forced him to re-assess. The switch proved transformative. Since joining Roma Cricket Club in 2015-16 and breaking into the national side in 2022, Kalugamage has evolved into a control bowler. Ahead of the World Cup, he even spent time as a net bowler with Sri Lanka, gleaning advice from Wanindu Hasaranga – one of the leg-spinners he admires, alongside Shane Warne and Rashid Khan. Under the afternoon sun in Mumbai, Tuscany's pizzaiolo delivered spin with bite. By the time the Mosca brothers walked out, the hard work had been done. Italy did the rest – and made history. Brief Scores: Nepal 123 all out in 19.3 overs (Aarif Sheikh 27; Crishan Kalugamage 3/18) lost to Italy 124/0 in 12.4 overs (Anthony Mosca 62*, Justin Mosca 60*) by 10 wickets.

8 balls, 3 sixes, 1 four: Sanju Samson's blazing T20 World Cup debut ends in second over during India vs Namibia match

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

India opener Sanju Samson's T20 World Cup debut against Namibia lasted for only eight deliveries, where he managed 22 runs in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 Group A match at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi on Thursday. Samson replaced Abhishek Sharma in the playing XI after the latter missed the game due to an upset stomach and viral fever. Samson's whirlwind had three sixes and a four to get all of his runs through boundaries before being dismissed in the second over.

Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi fined 15% & handed a demerit point for ICC code of conduct breach during South Africa clash

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

Veteran Afghanistan all-rounder Mohammad Nabi has been fined 15 per cent of his match fee for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct during the T20 World Cup 2026 Group D match against South Africa in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. In a statement released on Thursday, the ICC confirmed that Nabi was found to have violated Article 2.4, which relates to "Disobeying an Umpire's instruction during an International Match."



proposed by David Gilbert of the ICC International Panel of Match Referees, meaning a formal hearing was not required. The charge was levelled by on-field umpires Jayaraman Madanagopal and Sharuddoula Ibne Shahid, third umpire Nitin Menon, and fourth umpire K. N. Ananthapadmanabhan. Level 1 breaches carry a minimum penalty of an official reprimand, a maximum penalty

of 50 per cent of a player's match fee, and one or two demerit points.

South Africa defeated Afghanistan in arguably one of the greatest T20 World Cup matches, which saw the two sides playing two sets of Super Overs after both the 20-over match and the first Super Over ended up in a tie. What happens in case of a breach of the ICC Code of Conduct? – When a player accumulates four or

more demerit points within a 24-month period, they are converted into suspension points, resulting in a ban. – Two suspension points equate to a ban from one Test, two ODIs, or two T20Is – whichever comes first for the player. – Demerit points remain on a player or support personnel's disciplinary record for 24 months from the date of imposition, after which they are expunged.

Why Pakistan is banking on Sahibzada Farhan to dismantle Jasprit Bumrah: 51 runs, strike rate of 150, three sixes, 0 dismissals

GNS News Agency, Feb 13

In a video that has gone viral on TikTok, taken during Pakistan's match against the USA, a fan is seen approaching Sahibzada Farhan from the grass banks. For a few seconds he tries to get Farhan's attention by screaming his lungs out. When the opener turns back, he relays a message that would be mentioned in Pakistan's dressing room, in the days leading up to their match against India. "Farhan bhai iss baar Bumrah ko chakke marke bhatheesa (32 hours) ki film banayenga. Chodna math." With a smile, Farhan gave him a thumbs up.

There is a reason beyond their dressing room why the whole of Pakistan is counting on Farhan against India. In three outings against India – all in last year's Asia Cup – he has scores of 40, 58 and 57. These may not be huge scores, but how he has got them is what will even make India's think tank dedicate a lot of time on the right-hander. For, Farhan has done what few other batsmen in the world has to counterpart Jasprit Bumrah and unsettle him in the first spell. In three innings, Farhan has scored 51 runs against Bumrah at a strike rate of 150. It includes six boundaries and three sixes without being dismissed. Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan takes picture with his supporters before the start of the T20 World Cup match between Pakistan and US in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2026. (AP Photo) Pakistan's Sahibzada takes picture with his supporters before the start of the T20 World Cup match against USA in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Tuesday. (AP Photo)

Before heading to Colombo for the T20 World Cup, in a response to a question on employing aggression from both ends, Farhan spilled his game plan, which explains why he didn't hesitate to take on Bumrah. "In international cricket you can't attack from both ends all the time. But I feel, it is very important to attack their main bowler who ever it is. If you do that, you will put him under pressure and also the opposition. If I do that it will help other batsmen as well," Farhan told Pakistan Cricket. From 2019 to 2024, Pakistan has witnessed their batsmen crumble against Bumrah. Be it Ahmedabad or New York, Bumrah has cracked opened the game with his artistry similar to how Pakistan's wondrous seamers had subjected Indian batsmen during their good old days. Hence, Farhan's success hasn't gone unnoticed. Last year, despite Pakistan losing the Asia Cup final to India, when Farhan returned to his hometown Charsadda in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, thousands mobbed his car. Some got on top of the car bonnet, some tried to climb atop his sedan and Farhan pleaded with folded hands not to with a smile. He also has a persona to match his batting. He has that feisty alley-cat persona, to be unfazed by crisis, to stand up in tough times and handle the tough jobs that endears to the public. Even on the field, he isn't a fiery batsman. Though his gunfire celebration against India added to the tension between the two teams and he subsequently received one demerit point, there is more to



Farhan than that. For starters, his batting is not complicated. It mostly goes on the lines of 'see ball, hit ball' but what stands out is the position he gets under to pull of those.

In the Asia Cup, among the shots that he hit off Bumrah, which included a pull and a cut, one stood out. To the pacer's stock delivery that comes in with the angle, batsmen often struggle when it comes to deciding whether to go forward or play him from the back. But Farhan, just cleared his front leg and lofted him high over mid-wicket. He got another boundary via same shot. He tried the slower-ball cutter in the final, but got the same treatment. Not the strongest square on the off-side, Farhan prefers to go straight by standing rooted in the crease. Unlike Shahid Afridi, he doesn't prefer to come down the track. Unlike him, he doesn't bring cross-batted shots that adds risks. Having to take a high-risk approach, his intention is to rely on his strengths – which is to hit straight and in the mid-wicket region. "In T20s, there is very little to plan. You have to identify your strengths and make the most out of it. In cricket, you will obviously hit the bad deliveries, but our intention in the powerplay is to maximise the field restrictions. You have to keep looking for opportunities and when you get a chance, you have to make full use of it irrespective of the risk involved," Farhan said. This clarity arrives from the hard yards Farhan put in the domestic circuit. In first-class cricket he averages 44.82 with 10 centuries. But it took him some exceptional batting in the domestic T20 tournament and the PSL to get a national call-up again in 2024, a good six years after making his debut. In practice sessions, Farhan has invariably stood out when it comes to the number of times the support staff shout 'watch out' when he sends the ball high and soaring into the Colombo skies. Primarily a middle-order batsman, Farhan has been handed the opening role because of his struggles to rotate the strike. Having seen his six-hitting capabilities, one of the first things that coach Mike Hesson did when he took charge of the team was to make Farhan open. It has meant, Pakistan have been able to maximise the powerplay with Farhan and his partner Saim Ayub given the license to play with intent. While Ayub still has some distance to cover, Farhan is breathing consistently. Asked about the prospect of facing Bumrah again, Farhan said: "When you score runs, you're very confident. I'm confident, too. Come Sunday, this could be a match-up that could well define the outcome."

Koneru Humpy to join Divya Deshmukh, Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa at Oslo event



GNS News Agency, Feb 13

A two-time World Rapid Champion, two-time bronze medalist in the same format and a silver in World Blitz, Koneru Humpy is clearly one of the best in the world in shorter formats. (PHOTO: FIDE via Anna Shtourman) A two-time World Rapid Champion, two-time bronze medalist in the same format and a silver in World Blitz, Koneru Humpy is clearly one of the best in the world in shorter formats.

Koneru Humpy will join the likes of Divya Deshmukh, world champion Gukesh D and Praggnanandhaa to compete at the Norway Chess tournament this year in Oslo. This will be Humpy's third appearance in the Norway Chess Women tournament. Joining Humpy in Norway Chess Women are reigning women's world champion Ju Wenjun, reigning champion of Norway Chess Women Anna Muzychuk, and the reigning Women's World Blitz Champion Bibisara Assaubayeva. The final female player to compete at Norway Chess Women will be revealed soon.

"I'm really happy to be part of Norway Chess Women. It's a tournament I've always enjoyed, not only because of the high level of competition but also the warm atmosphere and excellent organization. I'm looking forward to playing in Oslo and competing against some of the world's strongest players," Humpy was quoted as saying in the release by Norway Chess announcing her participation. Humpy will be

one of the eight contenders to compete at the Women's Candidates today. Humpy is widely regarded as one of the most accomplished female players of her generation. She made history in 2002 when, at just 15 years old, she became the first Indian woman to earn the Grandmaster title, and at the time, the youngest female grandmaster in history. Her rise continued in 2007 when she became only the second woman ever to cross the 2600 Elo rating mark, a milestone that underlined her place among the world's elite.

In recent years, Humpy has remained firmly in the global spotlight. She is a two-time Women's World Rapid Champion (2019, 2024), and in 2025 she finished runner-up at the FIDE Women's World Cup, securing qualification for the 2026 Women's Candidates Tournament and keeping her ambitions for the world title very much alive.

"Humpy has been at the very top for a long time, and that says a lot. Very few players manage to stay at that level while still pushing for the biggest titles year after year. She adds real strength to the field, and we're very happy to welcome her back to Norway Chess Women," Benedict Westre Skog, COO of Norway Chess, said. The Norway Chess Women tournament, launched in 2024, is the world's first fully equal super tournament for women in chess, staged in parallel with the main Norway Chess event. The tournament features the same format, number of players, playing conditions and prize fund as the open event, setting a new benchmark for gender equality in professional chess. This year, Norway Chess features five-time world champion Magnus Carlsen, Germany's number one Vincent Keymer, Alireza Firouzja besides the Indian duo of Gukesh and Pragg. Norway Chess is one of the world's premier chess tournaments, bringing together the top male and female players in a distinctive 6-player double round-robin format. The introduction of Norway Chess Women in 2024, with equal prize funds for men and women, underscores the event's commitment to gender equality and innovation in the sport. Norway Chess 2026 will take place from May 25 to 5 June at Deichman Bjorvika in Oslo.

Visakhapatnam carrom enthusiast uses AI to popularise sport

Hyderabad: Dr. Neeraj Samathy, a passionate carrom enthusiast from Visakhapatnam, has turned to artificial intelligence to create an innovative video presentation aimed at popularizing the traditional board game and challenging common misconceptions about it. What began as an experiment with AI technology has evolved into a comprehensive educational tool. Dr. Samathy used four videos from his YouTube channel, "carrompassion," to create a 15-slide presentation, with each slide lasting five seconds, highlighting the key aspects of the sport.

"Frankly, I found it can be really interesting for those who are new to the sport or even don't know anything about it. It essentially explains the nuances of the sport and, perhaps, changes the perception that carrom is not just about putting the coins into the pocket," Dr. Samathy told Telangana Today.

He believes carrom is a significant character-building activity. "The sport is one of the biggest character-building tools. For instance, even in a mind game like chess, once your mind takes a decision, you can make a move. In carrom, you get only 10 seconds to spot the position of



carrommen on the board, decide what to play, go through your pre-shot routine, and execute the stroke—all while simultaneously processing strategy and being aware of the score and board number. That is not easy, especially when facing a tense match situation," explained the carrom promoter. Dr. Samathy emphasized that carrom involves considerable skill and strategy, contrary to what casual observers might assume.

Adivi Sesh says India is a 'nepo country', have to earn respect of film families before entering Telugu film industry: 'I was too American for India'



Adivi Sesh may be a pan-India star now with Major (2022) and Goodachari (2018), but he had to travel a long road to get there. Having been raised in San Francisco in the US, Sesh had his share of struggles before he could break into the Telugu film industry, which is dominated by legacy film families. In this edition of SCREEN Spotlight, the actor-writer-producer talks about his journey, influences of Ram Gopal Varma, and his short stint on the sets of SS Rajamouli's Baahubali: The Beginning (2015).

Ram Gopal Varma had a huge role to play in you becoming an actor after you watched Satya (1998), right?

Oh yeah, he was extremely influential. It was at the time of Company (2002) that I thought I'd come to India and become a hero in a cutting-edge Ram Gopal Varma gangster film (laughs). I didn't know that's not how it happens. Try explaining that to a 15-year-old. In the world cinema class at my college, I showed Company as an example of what India can do. Because they used to constantly say, "You guys do only music, right?" I said, "Nahi bhai, dekh le". I've seen Rangeela (1995) 47-48 times, and he (Varma) is the reason I became a fan of Aamir Khan. I think he showed us all the way. Urmila Matondkar and Aamir Khan in Rangeela. Rangeela, starring Urmila Matondkar, Aamir Khan and Jackie Shroff, turned thirty on September 8 and is now releasing in theatres.

Is working with RGV then still on the wish list?

For me, as you grow older, it's really about working with someone as much as it's about working with a great idea. A great idea is bigger than any person. And a great idea can make for a great film.

Since you grew up in San Francisco before working in Telugu films, have you felt like an outsider?

I grew up in the US at a time when the IT invasion hadn't happened yet. There were no Telugu people there. There were mostly Punjabis and Gujaratis. Psychologically, I'd compartmentalized it like talk to parents in Telugu, Indian friends in Hindi, and American friends in English. The same year I'd come to Mumbai to audition for Ram Gopal Varma, I'd seen an open casting call for a serial in the newspaper. I didn't even know what a serial is because it was called a TV show in the US. So, after reading the lines in the audition, they asked, "Where are you from?" When I said

The Rs 40 Crore Gambit: How Farhan Akhtar's Excel is blocking Ranveer Singh's Pralay to settle Don 3 exit dispute



Excel Entertainment had sought compensation from Ranveer for sunk development costs, as well as delays tied to scheduling and planning, as per sources close to the development. "Money had been spent on pre-production — scouting location, doing recce, scheduling and budgeting etc. The producers' guild also needs to set a precedent in such cases where either the actors exit or the producers steps back. There is merit to their argument and they have also submitted messages from the actor saying he's onboard with script development while he has complained of an absentee director." However, at the moment, both the sides seem to be deadlocked, leading to speculation that they may take a legal recourse. "The guild has also lost power over the years and it's quite likely the stakeholders will take legal recourse. They appear to be deadlocked at the moment," says the source. There have been such cases earlier — when Deepika Padukone stepped away from Race 2 after shooting for a few days or when Sara Ali Khan was sued by the makers of Kedarnath after scheduling conflicts with Rohit Shetty's Simmba.

Producers Guild of India stepped in to resolve the dispute and two meetings have already taken place. During the meetings, Ranveer's team blamed Excel Entertainment for unprofessionalism and for not being serious about taking Don 3 on floors. He complained that there was no bound script and an absentee director in Farhan Akhtar, who refused to collaborate with him or accept his feedback. He further alleged that Excel was exploring the possibility of getting Hrithik Roshan on board and only re-appraised him after the success of Dhurandhar, to capitalise on his momentum. He said he is not liable for damages as he did not accept any remuneration from the producers. He cited his experience with Sanjay Leela Bhansali's shelved Baiju Bawra, for which he had prepared for a year without seeking compensation after the project was called off. He argued that such developments are inherent to the industry. Ranveer also referenced Shah Rukh Khan, who, according to him, had been approached for Don 3. Given that Shah Rukh had headlined the franchise twice, Ranveer reportedly argued that if the superstar had agreed, he would have been replaced without compensation. He also sought more time from the guild saying that he is at present busy with the release of Dhurandhar 2: The revenge. Farhan's position was also presented at the meetings. He reportedly maintained that Ranveer had never raised concerns about the script and had been enthusiastic about portraying the third generation of Don after Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan. He even claimed that drafts were shared at regular intervals and approved at each stage. Besides the reimbursement, they have also urged producers' body to frame resolutions against what they describe as unreasonable star demands.

Excel Entertainment had sought compensation from Ranveer for sunk development costs, as well as delays

'I felt finished, didn't know how to recover from it': Bhumi Pednekar recalls heartbreak of India's 'biggest flop film'



San Francisco, they said, "Yes, there's an American accent in your Hindi." The next week, I went for an audition to the same place, I told them I'm from Hyderabad. So they said, "Oh ya, that's why there's a South Indian twang to your Hindi" (laughs). So, I was too Indian for America, too American for India, too North Indian for South India, and too South Indian for North India.

Was it tough to break into the Telugu film industry since it's such a film family-oriented ecosystem?

Honestly, even if you go to an Indian village, the son of a doctor becomes a doctor only, and a farmer's son becomes a farmer. So, I think we're a nepo country (laughs). But audiences don't care. They're interested if you do something that others are not. Now more than ever before, it's very democratic. My luck is I earned respect of a lot of these film families from the first day itself. A lot of them have supported me. Like Mahesh Babu produced Major. Dacoit is being produced by Annapurna Studios (owned by Nagarjuna and family). My friend and favourite actor Nani produced Hit: The Second Case. So, it's a matter of respect more than anything.

Speaking of Major, there's an entire fan following of your pairing with Sobhita Dhulipala. How was the experience of working with her in both Major and Goodachari?

She's a dear friend. She's extremely honest and picky. She knows her craft really well. She can act in Major and Dev Patel's Monkey Man (2024) within the same month, do a Malayalam film the next month, and still bring a certain level of gravitas to what she does. So many people make it about just her looks and hotness, but she's really an incredible performer. She actually joked, "I'm Sameera (in Goodachari), then her twin sister Humaira comes back for revenge". I told him that's not how it works, that's not G2 (laughs).

But you are reuniting with Prakash Raj in both Dacoit and G2 after Goodachari and Major. How has that association been?

It's been a long partnership with Prakash Raj sir. We live very different lives and have very different politics, but I have great love for him as a person and for his artistry. It was extraordinary how he supported us on Major. He was like a walking hoarding. I'll always be grateful for the immense appreciation he's shown for the film. Prakash Raj sir was the engine of Major, and Revathy ma'am was the soul. I just fall at her feet whenever I see her.

You had a minor yet key role in SS Rajamouli's 2015 action fantasy epic Baahubali: The Beginning as Bhallaladeva's (Rana Daggubati) son. How much of a learning ground was that?

My learning from that set was extraordinary. One day, they were really struggling to erect this big Bhallaladeva statue. I remember Rajamouli sir put his hands on Rama (wife, costume designer) ma'am's shoulders and say, "This film will work, no?" (laughs). So, it was so incredible to see this master filmmaker have the same pressures we all feel. I realized what makes him masterful is how he goes across that bridge with resilience and strive for his art. I kid you not, I'm happy to outwork anybody on my set. I'd forever be the hardest worker on my set. And the day I'm not, I won't make movies.



A quick search for The Lady Killer, starring Arjun Kapoor and Bhumi Pednekar, will tell you that the film is widely regarded as one of the biggest box-office flops in the history of Indian cinema. Made on a reported budget of Rs 45 crore, the 2023 release is said to have sold just 293 tickets across India on its opening day and eventually earned less than Rs 1 lakh in its lifetime run. The film was later made available for free on YouTube, where curiosity driven by its disastrous box office performance and the surrounding trolling led many viewers to watch it, pushing its view count past 5 million. In a recent interaction, Bhumi spoke about the circumstances surrounding the film's troubled release, describing it as one of the most difficult phases of her career.

'An incomplete film was put out' In a conversation with Mid-Day, Bhumi revealed that what eventually reached the theatres was not the film the actors had signed on for. According to her, a significant portion of the story was never even shot. "The script that we read was complete, but a large part of it was never filmed. What released was an incomplete film. I wish I had known better — maybe if I was a part of the system, I could have manoeuvred things differently. I was in shock. I kept wondering what was happening be-

Rajpal Yadav to stay in Tihar Jail till Monday: Why is actor in jail and why his bail plea was rejected?



to get in touch with the actor. The matter was then adjourned to Monday, meaning Rajpal Yadav will continue to remain in judicial custody until at least February 16. Rajpal Yadav's surrender was not an overnight development but the culmination of a legal battle spanning over 15 years.

In 2010, the actor allegedly took Rs 5 crore from businessman Madhav Gopal Agarwal to finance his directorial debut, Ata Pata Lapaata. The film reportedly earned only Rs 37 lakh at the box office and failed commercially. Following the film's failure, repayment issues began. Over time, the Rs 5 crore amount reportedly ballooned to approximately Rs 9 crore with accumulated interest. Multiple cheque defaults followed, and the matter eventually reached court under cheque bounce proceedings. Yadav was sentenced to three months in civil prison for non-payment of the loan. While he was later granted relief on assurances that he would clear the dues in instalments, the payments reportedly did not materialise. In an interview with Lallantop, he said: "Three allegations have been levelled against me. One claims that I committed fraud of Rs 5 crore. The second says that I took a loan. Third, I did a fraud. But according to me, it was a security cheque that I invested, because I have never paid any interest on that money. The case is still pending in court, and I am grateful to the court for understanding my point of view." Calling it an investment, he added: "I received Rs 5 crore from Madhav Gopal Agarwal to make a film. I did not take it as a loan — he invested the money as a financer because he wanted to launch his grandson as the lead actor." Sonu Sood was among the first to extend help. Music composer Amaal Malik announced support of Rs 1.11 crore. Singer Mika Singh promised Rs 11 lakh, Tej Pratap Yadav announced Rs 10 lakh, Anup Jalota pledged Rs 5 lakh, and KRK claimed he would contribute Rs 10 lakh. Rajpal Yadav's manager, Goldie Jain, told SCREEN: "A lot of people have reached out to help Rajpal Yadav. Actors like Sonu Sood, Salman Khan and Ajay Devgn have extended their support. I was just on a call with David Dhawan — he too reached out. Ratan Nain, Varun Dhawan... many people are coming forward to help him this time, which Rajpal has deeply appreciated."

The incident has also sparked conversations about the remuneration of character actors in Bollywood. A clip of actor Mushtaq Khan resurfaced in which he claimed supporting actors do not earn in crores, irrespective of a film's box office success. Reports about Rajpal Yadav's recent film fees have circulated online. According to India.com, the actor earned approximately Rs 8 crore across five films — including Kathal, Baby John and Dream Girl 2 (Rs 1 crore each), Chandu Champion (Rs 2 crore), and Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3 (Rs 3 crore). This is not the only legal challenge the actor has faced recently. In August 2024, a portion of Rajpal Yadav's ancestral property in Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh, was reportedly sealed by a Mumbai-based bank over non-payment of another loan.

Lavanya Tripathi defends Chiranjeevi after his earlier male heir remark: 'If somebody comes for my family...'

Lavanya Tripathi, wife of actor Varun Tej and daughter-in-law of Telugu superstar Chiranjeevi, has publicly defended her family against a wave of online criticism that erupted following the birth of Ram Charan and Upasana Konidela's twins. Speaking during promotions for her upcoming film Sathi Leelavathi on Thursday, she addressed the controversy directly and without hesitation. "That tweet was in very bad taste," she said. "When a family is celebrating, what is the need for something like that? It's my family. If someone comes at my family, I will not like it."

Pressed further on a line from her original social media response, that very few men do even 1% of what Chiranjeevi does, she expanded rather than retreated. "I have great men in my life. I'm very lucky to have men around me who are genuinely supportive. I include all of them in that 1%, along with many, many others. We are a country of over a billion people. One percent is a lot." Her remarks

were a direct response to a now-deleted tweet that had tied Chiranjeevi's decision to hold a press conference, announcing the January 31 birth of Ram Charan and Upasana's twins, a boy and a girl, to a pattern critics felt was hard to dismiss. The pointed question the tweet raised was one many had already been asking: why a press conference now, when no such announcement had accompanied the birth of the couple's first child, daughter Klin Kaara, in 2023?

In her original reply, Lavanya had written that the author of the tweet clearly had no understanding of how Chiranjeevi treats the women in his family, especially his granddaughters. "Very few men can do even 1% of what he does," she had written. "So it's best not to comment on people you don't truly know." The criticism, however, did not emerge in a vacuum. In February 2025, Chiranjeevi had made remarks at a pre-release event that had drawn backlash.