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## KCR extends Maha Shivaratri greetings, prays for Telangana's prosperity

Hyderabad: BRS president K Chandrashekhar Rao extended Maha Shivaratri greetings to the people of Telangana and prayed to Lord Shiva to bless them with peace and happiness.

He said that as a symbol of patience and sacrifice, Uma Maheshwara, is worshipped by devotees. Lord Shiva has a special place in Indian spiritual and social life and fulfills the desires of devotees, he stated.

## BRS, Congress vie for Mahabubabad municipal chairperson post

Mahabubabad: As the main rivals Congress and BRS in Mahabubabad Municipality did not get a clear majority, the independents have become crucial in the selection of the chairperson.

In Mahabubabad Municipality, which has 36 councillor seats, all the parties are far from the magic figure of 19. With this, both these parties have been devising strategies to win the municipality. While the Congress won in 13 wards, the CPI (M) won in three places and with the support of the CPM, its strength reached 16. BRS won 11 seats and CPI won three seats, with their support, BRS's strength reached 14 seats.

# PM Modi inaugurates Brahmaputra bridge, IIM and data centre in Assam

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a major bridge over the Brahmaputra, unveiled IIM Guwahati and launched a regional data centre in Assam. He also flagged off electric buses, aiming to improve connectivity, education, digital services and public transport

Guwahati, Feb 14 Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated several projects in Assam, including a bridge on the Brahmaputra River, an IIM and a data centre for the northeastern region.

The projects, which were rolled out months ahead of Assam Assembly elections, aim to boost connectivity, strengthen digital infrastructure, promote higher education and enhance public transport.

Modi reached the state on a day-long visit to inaugurate an emergency landing facility (ELF) at Moran in Dibrugarh district and launch projects worth over Rs 5,500 crore.

The first project the prime minister inaugurated in the state capital was a six-lane bridge over the Brahmaputra River. He launched the Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu, built at a cost of around Rs 3,030 crore.

The six-lane extradosed Prestressed Concrete (PSC) bridge will connect Guwahati with North Guwahati and is the first extradosed bridge in the Northeast.



After the inauguration, Modi took a walk on the bridge.

Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa were present on the occasion.

The bridge will cut travel time between Guwahati and North Guwahati to just seven minutes. Presently, only the Saraihat Bridge in the Jalukbari area connects the two banks of the Brahmaputra in the capital region, with travel time taking around 30 minutes.

Considering the high seismicity of the region, the bridge incorporates base isolation technology using friction pendulum bearings, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office.

High-performance stay cables were used to ensure durability and long-term structural performance, it added.

"A Bridge Health Monitoring System (BHMS) has also been incorporated for real-time condition monitoring, early damage detection and improved safety and service life of the extradosed bridge," the PMO statement said.

Modi had laid the foundation stone for the bridge on February 9, 2019, and construction started on March 1, 2020, by the then Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

The initial cost of the bridge was Rs 2,608 crore, which escalated to Rs 3,030 crore, and the project was estimated to be completed within four years. The length of the bridge is 7.75 km, including approach roads and flyovers on both sides of the Brahmaputra, while the actual bridge over the river is 1.24 km long.

The project was implemented by the Assam Public Works Department with consultancy services from Systra Engenharia Consultoria Ltd of Brazil. The contractor for the bridge was S P Singla Construction Pvt Ltd, and the funding agency was the New Development Bank, with 20 per cent of the total project cost borne by the Assam government.

A senior official of the Assam government told PTI that after its formal opening to the public, the bridge

will remain open exclusively for pedestrians till February 28.

Later, at nearby Lachit Ghat, Modi unveiled the Indian Institute of Management Guwahati, inaugurated a high-tech data centre that would cater to the entire Northeast, and flagged off 225 electric buses for four cities, including the Assam capital.

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal, several state ministers, MPs, MLAs and senior government officials were also present along with the chief minister and governor during the inauguration of these projects.

The PM virtually inaugurated the temporary campus of IIM Guwahati, which is expected to give a major fillip to higher education and management education in the northeastern region.

The main IIM Guwahati project will entail an expenditure of Rs 555 crore. The central government had last year approved the establishment of an IIM in Guwahati. This is the second IIM in the Northeast and the 22nd in the country. The first IIM in the region is in Shillong. "The permanent campus will be developed at Palasbari near Guwahati, while the institute will commence its academic session from a transit campus at Tech City, Bongora. IIM Ahmedabad will monitor the temporary arrangements," the Assam government official said.

## Rahul Gandhi alleges govt cheated farmers in India-US trade deal

Rahul Gandhi accused the government of cheating cotton farmers and textile exporters through the India-US trade deal, claiming it favours Bangladesh and harms domestic sectors. Textile Minister Giriraj Singh rejected the charge, saying India secured a balanced agreement



zero per cent tariff benefit on garment exports to the US, with the only condition that they import American cotton.

"After the announcement of 18 per cent tariff on Indian garments, when I raised the question in Parliament about the special concession being given to Bangladesh, the reply from a minister of the Modi government was: 'If we also want the same benefit, we will have to import cotton from America'.

"Why was this fact hidden from the country till now? And what kind of policy is this? Is this really any kind of choice, or is it a trap designed to push us into a 'well in front, ditch behind' situation?" he asked.

The Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha said, "If we import American cotton, our own farmers will be ruined. If we do not import it, our textile industry will lag behind and get destroyed." He claimed that Bangladesh is also giving signals that it may reduce or even stop importing cotton from India.

## Who Will Ascend the Municipal Chairman's Seat?

"Minister's Verdict to Be Decisive Amidst Strong Aspirants" P. S. ASHOKAN \*KARIMNAGAR BUREAU.

"The resounding victory of the Indian National Congress in the Manthani Municipality—securing 11 out of 13 wards—stands as a clear testament to the unwavering trust reposed by the people in the leadership of Duddilla Sridhar Babu, Hon'ble Minister for IT and Industries, Government of Telangana, and Seenu Babu, TPCC General Secretary." "This sweeping mandate reflects the public's firm belief that meaningful and sustainable development of Manthani town is achievable under the dynamic stewardship of Minister Sridhar Babu. The electorate's confidence in his administrative acumen and developmental vision has undeniably paved the way for the Congress candidates' remarkable success." "Although several aspirants are reportedly in contention for the coveted Municipal Chairman's post, the ultimate decision is widely expected to rest with Minister Sridhar Babu. Political circles anticipate that his judgment will play a pivotal role in determining the leadership of the municipality." "Seenu Babu's consistent accessibility and proactive engagement with the public have further strengthened the bond of trust between the leadership and the citizens. His readiness to assist constituents—especially during medical emergencies, ensuring support regardless of the hospital or location—has endeared him deeply to the people." "Within the Manthani municipal limits, infrastructure development projects worth crores of rupees have been strategically planned, underscoring a clear roadmap for urban transformation and civic advancement. Their disciplined, committed, and service-oriented approach has significantly contributed to this emphatic electoral victory." "Despite the demanding responsibilities that accompany his role as a State Minister, Sridhar Babu remains steadfast in visiting all mandals within



the constituency whenever he is present, prioritizing the resolution of public grievances and developmental concerns." "Both Sridhar Babu and Seenu Babu have advised the newly elected representatives to remain consistently accessible to the people, to serve with integrity and dedication, and to further consolidate public trust through responsive governance." "This decisive mandate not only marks a political triumph but also signals the people's endorsement of visionary leadership and accountable administration in Manthani."

## Shivaratri Effect.. Increased Fruit Prices

the crops are not ripening properly. In addition, the city residents are suddenly shocked to see the prices of various types of fruits. It has become a situation where even if you give about a thousand rupees, you will not be able to fill your bag. On the day of Shivaratri, all the devotees who observe fasting for Lord Shiva break their fast with fruits in the evening. Even the poor who have never seen fruits buy fruits during the festival. Due to this, traders have taken advantage of this and increased the prices of all fruits. The prices of mainly apples, lotus, bananas, watermelons, grapes and dates have been increased drastically. On the other hand, the prices of fruits and garlands have also increased drastically. After the abhishekam of Lord Shiva, garlands are offered to Lord Shiva. In this process, devotees buy garlands, due to which their prices have also increased drastically in the markets of the city. With the arrival of Shivaratri, people buy fruits and vegetables, so it is inevitable that devotees buy all kinds of fruits, so the traders increased the prices as they wished and continued selling. Since it is a festival, people buy as much as they can and go home. These prices are likely to increase further on Sunday, said Mallesh, a fruit trader from Mahabubnagar. "The prices of fruits and garlands have increased drastically on the occasion of Mahashivratri. In areas like Bowenpally Market Yard Square, Secunderabad Monda Market,



Balanagar Road, Kansari Bazaar, Old Bowenpally Square, Dubai Gate, Tad Bandh, Balamraji Square, under Patni Metro Station and other places, watermelon is being sold for Rs. 30-40 per kg, black grapes for Rs. 125 per kg, oranges for Rs. 4 per hundred, apples for Rs. 4 per hundred, sapota for Rs. 80 per kg, Maskmelon for

100-150 kilos, dates for 250 grams for Rs. 80. Fruit sales are continuing at carts, footpaths and shops. Fruit trader Srinivas from Ramnagar said that they are selling fruits without expecting much profit. The prices have increased significantly compared to the last week, both traders and buyers said.



Secunderabad Cantonment, February 14 (Indian Chronicle): "On the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, the prices of fruits, flowers and other fruits suddenly skyrocket. As devotees flock to the markets to buy fruits on the occasion of Shivaratri, traders have increased their prices. In addition, the prices of watermelons are rising sharply as

# Indian Chronicle

## English Daily

### AI fury batters IT stocks

The disruptive power of artificial intelligence technologies is nothing new. But what happened to the global IT stocks around the world last week mirrored far deeper fears of the industry. A set of new AI tools released by Anthropic, a US-based AI company, sent tremors through America, Europe and Asia, wiping billions of dollars off the software and IT services firms' stock prices as their shares fell sharply. Anthropic, the creator of Claude chatbot, released 11 open-source plugins for its 'Claude Cowork' agent aimed at automating tasks across legal, sales, marketing and data analysis functions. The worry is that these automation tools, which can handle a wide range of customer service tasks, could replace many traditional software and IT outsourcing services. The scale of the meltdown was so massive that some analysts described the market reaction as a 'SaaSpocalypse,' meaning a severe downturn for software-as-a-service (SaaS) companies. The new plugins will lead to automation of tasks such as legal document review, compliance, sales workflows, marketing support and data analysis. Indian IT stocks too came under sustained pressure with their shares plunging by up to 8% and wiping out roughly Rs 2 lakh crore in market value amid fears that automating coding, legal review, sales workflows and other enterprise functions could erode the high-margin application services revenues that account for 40-70% of Indian IT companies' business. Analysts estimate that 9%-12% of industry revenues could be at risk over the next four years as clients pivot to AI-led efficiency over traditional service providers. A key takeaway for the Indian IT sector from Anthropic's disruption is that it should move from traditional outsourcing to becoming AI implementation partners. As Indian enterprises integrate Claude for critical coding workflows, dependency on large vendor teams may decline, squeezing billable hours and margins. Anthropic's advanced AI systems also threaten the entry-level talent pool at Indian IT firms by replacing routine development and testing tasks. However, the doomsday predictions are highly exaggerated. A closer look reveals that the scale of legacy software embedded in global enterprises is of the order of \$20-25 trillion across the US and Europe — with annual technology spending of \$1.2-1.75 trillion. Such installed bases cannot be replaced or automated away overnight by plugging in a new AI tool. Most global enterprises continue to use AI selectively, particularly in research, discovery and limited productivity use cases. Comprehensive AI-led transformation of core operations remains at an early stage.

### Ramanthapur Congress Party Working President Vallappu Srikanth Yadav Participates in Shiva-Parvati Kalyana Mahotsavam

““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 14 (Indian Chronicle).““On the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, the



Shiva-Parvati Kalyanam was celebrated with great devotion and grandeur on Saturday at the Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple in Old Ramanthapur of Ramanthapur Division. Ramanthapur Division Congress Party Working President Vallappu Srikanth Yadav participated in the Kalyana Mahotsavam ceremony. Temple EO Surender, Shekhar Pantulu, Temple Chairman Shaga Sridhar, former chairman Raji Reddy, trustees Krishna, Chandrasekhar, Arun Sai, Meetu Goud, Jangaiah, Shobha, Ravi, and Congress leaders Jangaiah, Babu Rao, Santosh, G. Bhaskar, Sandeep, Bhaskar, Bullet Ashok, Raju, Ravi, Kanna Yadav, Mallesham, Naresh, Anil Yadav, Kiran, along with village elders, attended the program.

### Food Prasadam Distributed on the Occasion of Annual Festival Poornahuti at Sri Shiva Shankara Mahamayi Temple, Uppal



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 14 (Indian Chronicle).““On the occasion of the annual festival Poornahuti, food prasadam was distributed on Saturday at the Sri Shiva Shankara Mahamayi Temple in Uppal. Temple members Uppoji Balavanthi Chari, Bikshapati, Eshwar, Srinu, Madhu, Vijay, Prashanth, Pawan, Bhavani, Santosh, Shravan, Cholleti Purushottam, Brahma Chari, Sridhar Chari, Palerla Sugreev, Gopi, Chiranjeevi, Palakurthi Dilleep, Theega Vital Rao, Gondi Prashanth Reddy, Gautham, Balaraj, Jaganath, Krishna Reddy, Gadila Sandeep Chari, Kishan Goud, Jagan, Narasimha Reddy, Abhiram, Satti Reddy, Shashidhar, Naveen, Mudugonda Ravi, Srinivas, Praveen Reddy, Narasimha Chari, Rao, Narsing Rao, Mahesh, Jagan, Bikshapati, Ram Prakash, Gopi Chari, Pasupu Neti Ramesh, Venkatayya, Kumar, Bhaskar, Chari, Bandarupu Nagesh Goud, Naveen Goud, Raju, Sandeep, Mahesh Kumar, Prashanth Kumar, Pawan Kumar, Bhavani Shankar, Lakshman, Santosh, Kumar, Banti, Srinu, Srinivas Goud, Ganesh Goud, Yadi Goud, Venkatesh and several other devotees participated in the programme. The event witnessed devotional fervor as devotees gathered in large numbers and received prasadam following the sacred rituals.

### Velugu Gutta Temple Decked Up for Maha Shivaratri — All Arrangements in Place for Devotees: EO Peddi Sri Kanth

““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 14 (Indian Chronicle).““On the occasion of the auspicious festival of Maha Shivaratri, the Uppal Velugu Gutta Temple has been beautifully decorated and prepared to welcome devotees. Electrical illumination, painting works, and queue lines have been arranged, and the temple premises have been thoroughly cleaned. Special signboards have been installed along the approach roads to guide devotees. Separate arrangements have also been made for Giri Pradakshina (circumambulation of the hill).“Temple Executive Officer Peddi Sri Kanth stated that all necessary arrangements were completed with the



cooperation of devotees after coordinating with police, municipal authorities, and IDA officials. The Maha Shivaratri celebrations began grandly on Saturday. Special prayers were performed at the temple, and Uppal Industrial Area Chairman Shivakumar, who participated in the rituals, was felicitated by EO Peddi Sri Kanth and presented with sacred prasadam. Chairman Shivakumar assured that efforts will be made to construct a cement road leading to the temple from Gen Pack-NGRI Road, provide parking facilities, and install a signboard near the Hanuman Temple at Gen Pack for the convenience of devotees. Participants in the program included Temple Trustee Gorige Malles, Industrial Association Secretary Suresh, Vijay Kumar, Murali, Rukmal Reddy Srinivas, Manjula Nagamani, and others. As part of the Shivaratri festivities, Ganapati Puja, Ankurarpana, Panchamam Abhishekam, Mahanyasa Purvaka Rudrabhishekam, and Rudra Homam were performed in the morning. In the evening, Panchamrita Abhishekam and Nandi Abhishekam were conducted with devotion. The EO appealed to all devotees to participate in the celebrations and seek the divine blessings of Lord Shiva.

### Free Medical Camp Held successfully

““Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, February 14:“A free medical camp was successfully organized under the joint aegis of Janahita Seva Trust, Ashritha Rainbow Homes Community Care, and KIMS Foundation. The camp was conducted on Saturday at the Balamrai Community Hall in the Cantonment area. Doctors from KIMS Hospitals examined nearly 350 people, providing free blood pressure and blood sugar tests. They also offered medical advice and distributed necessary medicines to the beneficiaries. Under the supervision of Bharat Vikas Parishad, hemoglobin levels were tested for all attendees. Iron tablets were distributed to those found to be anemic. Renowned physiotherapist M. Srinivas demonstrated suitable exercises for individuals suffering from body pains. Begumpet Circle Inspector Saidulu, SI Sridhar, Janahita Seva Trust Managing Trustee Narsimha Murthy, Venkat, Rameshwar, Rainbow Homes Manager Kranthi Kiran, Ashray Director Naveen, Ashritha Organization Secretary Nagaraj, coordinators Parvathalu, Jamuna, Shivamma, Nagma, Anita, local women leaders Anuradha and Bhagyalakshmi, Janahita Camp Coordinator B. Nursing Rao, and KIMS Foundation Coordinator J. Vikram were among those who participated in the programme.



### Journalism is the Fourth Pillar of Democracy: Former Uppal MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar“ Former MLA felicitates newly elected Uppal Press Club committee



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 14 (Indian Chronicle).““Members of the Uppal Press Club (Print & Electronic Media Committee), led by newly elected President Vaddepalli Kishore, paid a courtesy visit to former Uppal MLA Dr. N.V.S.S. Prabhakar on Saturday. On the occasion, he felicitated the committee members with shawls and extended his congratulations. Speaking at the meeting, Prabhakar stated that journalism stands as the fourth pillar of democracy. He emphasized that the media's responsibility goes beyond delivering accurate and unbiased information; it also includes exposing injustices in society. He urged journalists to remain courageous and stand for the people without yielding to any pressures. He further noted that the media plays a crucial role in creating awareness about public welfare and development programmes. He requested media represen-

tatives to offer constructive suggestions on issues related to the development of the Uppal region. Prabhakar assured that he would always extend his full support to the service activities undertaken by the Uppal Press Club members. The event was held in the presence of the club president and members. Ramanthapur Division BJP President Vangala Santosh Gupta, Medchal district OBC leader Repu Narasimha, and others were present at the programme.

### Nacharam Lake to Be Developed on the Lines of Nalla Cheruvu;

Rs30 Crore Sanctioned“

—Chiluka Nagar Congress leaders perform milk

abhishekam to CM Revanth Reddy

Special thanks to CM Revanth Reddy and Uppal

Constituency Congress In-charge Parameshwar Reddy:

Akiti Aagam Reddy



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 14 (Indian Chronicle).““Congress leaders from Chiluka Nagar and Beerappagadda divisions stated that the Nacharam HMT Nagar Lake will be developed on the lines of Uppal's Nalla Cheruvu. They said that 30 crore has already been sanctioned for the project, and the funds will be used for lake restoration and beautification works. They expressed gratitude to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy for facilitat-



# Foundation Stone Laid for School Kitchen

Mission Bhagiratha Works Intensified in SC Colony

““Indian Chronicle”“kumram bheem Asifabad District Reporte,Jade Srinivas.February,14““Development activities are progressing actively in Kukuda village of Bejjur Mandal, Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. As the Primary and Upper Primary School in the village has been facing difficulties due to the absence of a proper kitchen facility, Village Sarpanch Torrem Chiranjeevi took the initiative and laid the foundation stone for the construction of a new kitchen building. The work was formally inaugurated by breaking a coconut.“Speaking on the occasion, the Sarpanch stated that proper infrastructure is essential for the effective implementation of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme and that the construction of the kitchen will ensure better facilities for the students.“The programme was attended by the Bejjur Mandal MPDO, APO, Panchayat Secretary, TA, EC, Headmaster of Kukuda village Mr. Sathish, and other village elders.“Meanwhile, residents of the SC Colony in Ward No. 2 of Kukuda village brought to the notice of the Sarpanch that Mission Bhagiratha drinking water supply was not reaching their area. Responding promptly, Sarpanch Torrem



Chiranjeevi initiated pipeline works in coordination with Mission Bhagiratha staff and is personally supervising the works to ensure uninterrupted water supply to the colony.“Colony residents expressed their happiness and conveyed their gratitude to the Sarpanch for his swift action. The programme was attended by Merugu Ramesh, Junda Keshav, Mission Bhagiratha staff, and Gram Panchayat staff.

**Promote Peace – Share Love: Uppal Youth Congress President Akarapu Arun Patel**



Revanth Reddy, government welfare schemes would be delivered to every poor household, and he pledged to work beyond caste and religious differences. He appreciated the services rendered by the church to the community over the past 20 years under the guidance of Father Ravinder Reddy. Church committee members, local leaders, and a large number of devotees participated in the celebrations and offered special prayers.

**Grand Celebration of the 17th Annual Spiritual Satsang Discourse**

**Sri Sri Sri Paramahansa Sadguru Pulaji Baba Branch Meditation Centre Bambara**

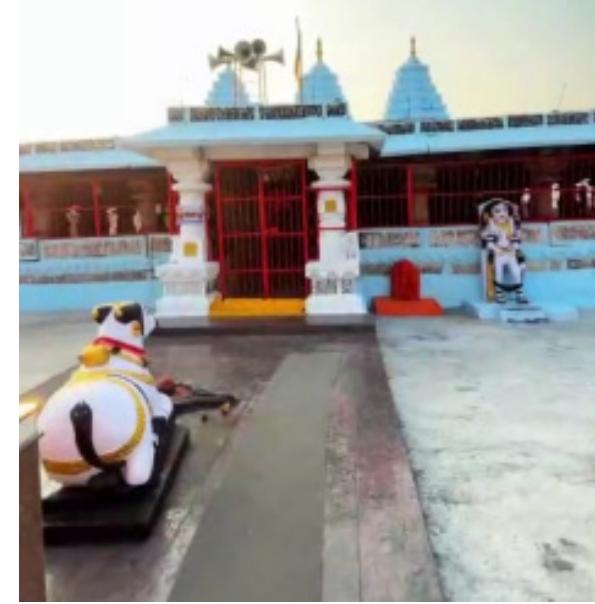


““Indian Chronicle”“kumram bheem Asifabad District Reporte,Jade Srinivas.February,14““The 17th Annual Spiritual Knowledge Satsang and Discourse Programme of Sri Sri Sri Paramahansa Sadguru Pulaji Baba was celebrated in a grand manner at the branch Meditation Centre in Bambara village of Wankidi Mandal. The entire village was filled with a spiritual atmosphere as devotees gathered in large numbers to participate in the sacred event.“Devotees, village elders, women, youth, and representatives from various meditation centres attended the programme with great devotion and enthusiasm. Special prayers, bhajans, and devotional activities were conducted from the morning, followed by the main spiritual discourse in the evening.“On this occasion, Sri Keshav Rao Dada, son of Baba, delivered the main address. He emphasized that in order to eliminate negative qualities such as ego, anger, and hatred, one must follow the path of meditation shown by the Sadguru. He stated that medi-

tation brings peace of mind and guides individuals towards a righteous way of life. He also advised devotees to stay away from bad habits and cultivate spiritual thinking through regular satsang. Baba's divine teachings were shared in a spiritual form, inspiring the devotees.“The programme was attended by Jadhav Tukaram, Vadai Baburao, Koli Tirupati, Chatare Posheti, Nagoshe Shankar, Bambara Sarpanch Bendare Krishnaji, Deputy Sarpanch Jade Santosh, ward members, Meditation Centre President Gurunulu Anand Rao, Annara Sende, Karpetta Ramchander, Sende Chandu, Nagesh, Ranji, Daulat Rao, Akash, and many others.“Women devotees, presidents of various meditation centres, village elders, and a large number of faithful devotees actively participated and made the event a grand success. The programme concluded with devotional songs and spiritual discourses that deeply inspired the gathering.

## Shivakeshava Temple at Wankidi – A Historical Legacy of the Kakatiya Era

““Indian Chronicle”“kumram bheem Asifabad District Reporte,Jade Srinivas.February,14.““The Shivakeshava Temple located on the banks of the Chikli River in Wankidi Mandal stands as a remarkable symbol of history dating back to the Kakatiya period. Local residents and temple committee members state that the temple was constructed as a symbol of the victories and glory of the Kakatiya rulers. Carrying centuries of heritage, the temple represents the rich spiritual and cultural legacy of the region.“A unique feature of this temple is the presence of both Lord Shiva and Lord Keshava (Vishnu) enshrined at the same place, which is considered rare. In addition, idols of Goddess Renuka Mata are also installed in the temple premises, adding to its spiritual significance.“The coexistence of Shaivite and Vaishnavite traditions in a single temple makes it particularly special.“The architectural style of the temple clearly reflects the grandeur of Kakatiya craftsmanship. The finely carved stone pillars, intricate sculptures, and the structural design of the sanctum and mandapam highlight the artistic excellence of that era. Visitors often admire the detailed stone carvings that narrate the glory of ancient temple architecture.“Every year, on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, a grand fair (Jataras) is organized in the temple premises and along the banks of the Chikli River. The Rathotsavam (chariot festival) is a major attraction during the celebrations. Thousands of devotees gather to perform special prayers and rituals, making the event spiritually vibrant and grand. Thus, the Shivakeshava



Temple of Wankidi remains an important historical and spiritual landmark, proudly preserving the legacy of the Kakatiya era.“[6:55 PM, 2/14/2026] +91 99485 55073: End...

## Tight Police Bandobast at Major Temples in the District on the Occasion of Maha Shivaratri

– District SP Nitika Panth ““Indian Chronicle”“kumram bheem Asifabad District Reporte,Jade Srinivas.February,14.““On the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, District SP Nitika Panth stated that stringent police bandobast has been arranged at major Shiva temples across the district to ensure that devotees do not face any inconvenience. As a large number of devotees are expected to visit the temples, advance precautionary measures have been implemented to maintain law and order.“She informed that special security arrangements have been made at the famous Shiva Temple in Wankidi Mandal, the Shiva Temple at Nambala village in Rebbena Mandal, and the Shiva Mallanna Temple in Isgam Mandal, where heavy crowds are anticipated. Dedicated police teams have been deployed at each temple to prevent any untoward incidents and to ensure smooth conduct of the celebrations.“Emphasizing that the safety of devotees is the top priority, she said that special queue lines and barricades have been arranged for effective crowd management within the temple premises. Traffic regulation measures have also been implemented to avoid congestion, and designated parking areas have been arranged for vehicles. Emergency services, including ambulance and fire personnel, have been kept on standby as a precautionary measure. Special arrangements have been made to ensure safe and hassle-free darshan for



women, elderly persons, and children. Women police personnel have been deployed, and continuous monitoring is being carried out through CCTV surveillance.“The District Police have appealed to devotees to cooperate with the authorities, follow the prescribed guidelines, and maintain discipline so that the Maha Shivaratri celebrations are conducted peacefully and successfully.

## Potharaveni Srilatha Secures Record-Breaking Majority in the District.

“P. S. ASHOKAN “KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. “In the Municipal Elections held on the 13th of this month in Manthani, Mrs. Potharaveni Srilatha Kranti Kumar, contesting as the candidate of the All India Forward Bloc, achieved a historic and resounding victory from the 6th Ward.“Out of the 13 wards in the Manthani Municipality, the Indian National Congress secured 11 wards, while one ward was won by the Bharat Rashtra Samithi and one by the Forward Bloc. What makes this victory particularly remarkable is that Mrs. Srilatha emerged triumphant with an extraordinary majority of 476 votes — the highest in the district.“Despite vigorous campaigning by prominent leaders, including Minister D. Sridhar Babu, TPCC General Secretary Srinivas Babu, and former MLA Putta Madhu representing the BRS, the overwhelming public mandate in favour of Srilatha could not be curtailed.“Election Results – 6th Ward“Total Votes Polled: 925“Potharaveni Srilatha (Forward Bloc): 670 votes“Polu Rajitha Shiva (Congress): 196 votes“Kaiyitha Jyothi Sammaiah (BRS): 46 votes“From the commencement of counting to its conclusion, the contest remained decisively one-sided, reflecting the immense confidence reposed by the electorate in her leadership.“It is noteworthy that Mr. Kranti Kumar, who had previously contested elections and faced defeat, consistently championed public issues and earned recognition as a committed and people-oriented leader. His steadfast dedication to addressing community concerns significantly strengthened the campaign. The “Lion” symbol of the Forward Bloc received exceptional support from voters.“In her native village, Koochirajupalle, Mr. Kranti Kumar has been known for standing firmly beside the people during times of distress. Villagers wholeheartedly participated in the campaign, contributing to this landslide victory that transcended party affiliations. Leaders and citizens alike extended their congratulations on this remarkable achievement.“On this occasion, Mrs. Srilatha and Mr.



Kranti Kumar expressed profound gratitude to all supporters who bestowed such a massive mandate upon them. They affirmed that this victory increases their responsibility and pledged to remain accessible to the public at all times, serving the people with dedication and integrity.

## Jakkula Maheshwar Reddy will pay the power bills himself



“Secunderabad Cantonment. February 14 (Indian Chronicle):“Jakkula Maheshwar Reddy, former vice-chairman of the Cantonment Board, said that he has taken temporary measures to prevent people from getting into trouble, but if the problem is not resolved, he will pay the electricity bill of the Bapujinagar Power bill himself. The TGSPDCL department has stopped the electricity supply to the boreholes in many areas including Bowenpally Bapujinagar under the Cantonment Board in the name of regularization, due to which the people of this area are facing water problems. In this context, the former vice-president of the board, Jakkula Maheshwar Reddy, responded and talked to the officials for two days. In this process, he asked the officials to restore the disconnected electricity. The officials who responded temporarily restored the electricity supply. On this occasion, Jakkula Maheshwar Reddy said. Actually, the summer is coming and there will be a water problem, he said. He said that it is not right to disconnect the boreholes in addition to the daily.

The Cantonment Board officials responded and said that the dues due to the electricity department should be paid immediately or else he will pay the dues with his own funds. He said that he had purchased all the electricity wires required for this temporary restoration from his own funds.

## Row Erupts in Kagaznagar Over Alleged Fake Voter Entry of MLC

Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 14, "Konappa Alleges Illegal Inclusion of MLC in Voter List Ahead of Municipal Meet" A political controversy has erupted in Kagaznagar town ahead of the upcoming municipal meeting. Addressing the media at his residence, Koneru Konappa levelled serious allegations against Dande Vithal, an MLC. He alleged that despite not having voting rights within the municipal limits, Vithal had created fraudulent documents to get his name included in the voter list and was attempting to participate in the meeting as an ex-officio member and cast a vote. The municipal meeting scheduled for the 16th of this month will include the election of the Chairman along with the participation of newly elected councillors. Ex-officio members are also expected to attend the meeting. As per government orders and Election Commission guidelines, ex-officio status applies only to public representatives who possess voting rights within the municipal jurisdiction. However, Konappa stated that Dande Vithal neither participated nor cast his vote in the recent municipal elections. He further claimed that Vithal's name did not appear in the final voter list released by the Election Commission, nor in the supplementary inclusion list. He added that no new voter registration process had been conducted in the past 10-15 days. Under these circumstances, showing Dande Vithal's name in the voter list now raises serious suspicions and appears to be illegal, Konappa alleged. He demanded a comprehensive inquiry by the District Collector and the Election Commissioner and urged that Vithal should not be allowed to continue as an ex-officio member until the matter is investigated. The issue has sparked intense discussion in local political circles. Attention is now focused on how the authorities will respond to the allegations.



## Trainee IAS Officers Visit Nagole Metro Rail Station

-Inspect Facilities, Safety Measures and Services



and promoting environmentally friendly transportation. Interactive discussions were also held with the officials. A detailed presentation was organized with the coordination of Hyderabad Metro Rail authorities, highlighting urban mobility, civic services, and the use of technology. Uppal Mandal Tahsildar Pool Singh Chauhan, MRI Ashwini Goud, and GPO Venkanna attended the program. Naib Tahsildar Ali coordinated the protocol arrangements. Officials stated that the visit helped them gain practical understanding of urban transport management.

## Husband Dies Unable to Bear Wife's Death – Tragedy in Dahegaon Mandal

Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 14, "A tragic incident occurred in Kammerpalli village of Dahegaon Mandal on Friday, where a husband reportedly died unable to cope with the death of his wife. According to family members, Durgam Vinod (32), a resident of the village, lost his wife Suvarna (29), who had been undergoing treatment in Hyderabad due to illness. She passed away on Thursday while receiving medical care. Deeply distressed by his wife's demise, Vinod returned home after completing her last rites. Shortly thereafter, he reportedly fell severely ill. Family members rushed him for medical assistance, but doctors confirmed that he had passed away. The consecutive deaths of the couple have cast a shadow of grief over the entire village. Relatives and villagers expressed deep sorrow over the heartbreaking incident." Note: If anyone is experiencing emotional distress or struggling to cope with loss, seeking support from family members, friends, or professional counselors can make a significant difference. Help is always available.



## SEC Issues Circular on Indirect Elections to Urban Local Bodies

Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 14, "High Court Guidelines to Be Followed in Election of Chairpersons and Mayors" The Telangana State Election Commission (TSEC) has issued a circular regarding the conduct of indirect elections for Ordinary Elections to Municipalities and Municipal Corporations across the State. The notification, issued under No. 209/TGSEC-ULBs/2026 dated January 27, 2026, outlines procedural clarifications and legal provisions governing the election of Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of Municipalities, as well as Mayors and Deputy Mayors of Municipal Corporations. The Commission stated that the directions have been issued in accordance with Article 243-ZA read with Article 243-K of the Constitution of India, Section 194 of the Telangana Municipalities Act, 2019, and relevant statutory provisions. The clarification also follows the judgment of the High Court for the State of Telangana in Writ Petition No. 20262 of 2021. Court Directions on Ex-Officio Membership As per the High Court's order, only

specific categories of individuals are eligible to become or be co-opted as ex-officio members of Municipalities: 1. Experts in Municipal Administration – Persons possessing special knowledge or experience in municipal administration may be co-opted; however, they will not have voting rights. 2. Lok Sabha and MLA Members – Members of Parliament (Lok Sabha) and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) representing constituencies that fall wholly or partly within the Municipal area. 3. Rajya Sabha and MLC Members – Rajya Sabha Members and Members of the Legislative Council (MLCs) registered as voters within the Municipal area concerned. 4. Constituted Committee Chairpersons – Chairpersons of Committees formed under Clause (5) of Article 243-S of the Constitution, provided they are registered voters within the Municipal area. The Commission emphasized that the elections must strictly adhere to the constitutional framework and judicial guidelines to ensure transparency and legality in the electoral process.

## Shiva raatri arrangements should be made for devotees

Secunderabad Cantonment, February 14 (Indian Chronicle): "The ancient Shiva temple behind the Bowenpally Post Office is very famous and devotees come in large numbers from different places, mainly those wearing Shiva mala. In this context, the former vice-chairman of the Cantonment Board, Jampana Pratap, has asked the temple committee to take steps to ensure that devotees participating in the Shivaratri celebrations do not face any problems. In this context, Jampana Pratap visited the temple on Saturday and performed special pujas to Shiva. Committee president E. Srinivasa Chari said that on the occasion of Shivaratri, the temple committee is organizing the marriage of Goddess Parvati on Sunday morning. Special pujas and abhishekams. He said that there will

be a night vigil. He said that special arrangements have been made for devotees wearing Shiva mala. Raju Mudiraju participated in this program.

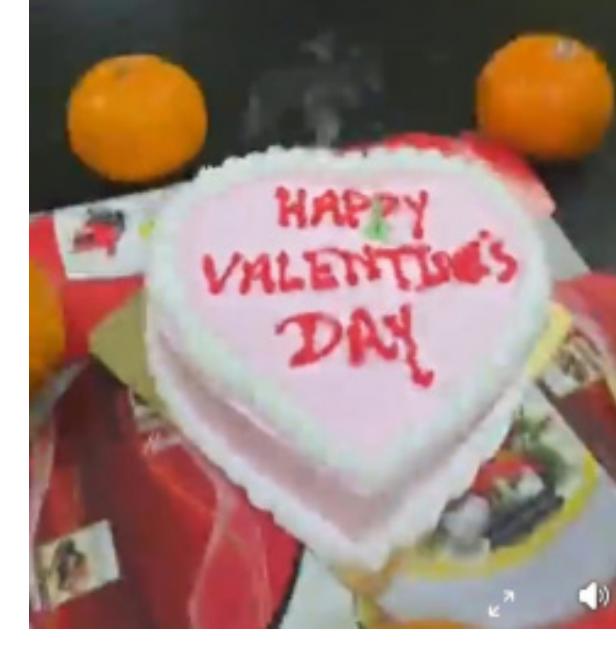


## Women Dominate Kagaznagar Municipal Elections – A Historic Victory

Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 14, "Women Dominate Kagaznagar Municipal Elections – A Historic Victory" The Kagaznagar Municipal elections have turned into a remarkable celebration of women's political empowerment. Out of 30 wards in the municipality, women candidates secured victory in 20 wards, marking a historic and impressive achievement. The results clearly highlight the growing influence and acceptance of women in local governance. The reservation of the Municipal Chairperson post for a BC (Backward Class) woman played a significant role in encouraging female participation. Major political parties also prioritized women candidates while distributing tickets, reflecting their confidence in women's leadership abilities. The overwhelming success of these candidates demonstrates that voters strongly supported this progressive move. Among the prominent winners are software engineer Gajji Swathi, noted medical professional Dr. Kothapalli Anita, experienced public representative Chintalapani Vidya Vath, AIMIM candidate Alia Begum, and Congress candidate M. Sharada. Each of

them secured convincing victories in their respective wards, earning the trust and support of the electorate. A notable highlight of the election was in Ward No. 12, where Congress candidate Alladi Durgamma won with a massive majority of 452 votes. Her victory margin became one of the most discussed outcomes of the election. These results underline the increasing importance of women in politics and demonstrate public faith in their leadership, administrative skills, and commitment to development. Compared to the past, women's representation in local bodies has significantly increased, signaling a positive shift toward inclusive governance. Following the results, supporters gave a grand welcome to the winning candidates. Celebrations were held across wards with garlands, drumbeats, and festive gatherings, reflecting the enthusiasm and pride of the people. Overall, the Kagaznagar Municipal election results stand as a powerful testament to women's rising political strength and their expanding role in shaping local governance.

## Grand Valentine's Day Celebrations Held by Christian Dharma Prachara Parirakshana Samiti



Kishore, Vaddipalli, Hyderabad, February 14 (Indian Chronicle): "Valentine's Day celebrations were held in a grand manner under the leadership of the Christian Dharma Prachara Parirakshana Samiti. Representatives extended greetings after cutting a cake to mark the occasion. The organizers protested against the locking of city parks, alleging that the Revanth Reddy government, out of fear of Hindu extremist forces, ordered closures. As a symbolic counter to the fruit distribution protests by the Vishva Hindu Parishad, they staged a demonstration by peeling sweet lime fruits. They stated that locking municipal parks across the city and state on Valentine's Day by organizations such as Vishva Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, and RSS caused severe inconvenience to visitors and couples and amounted to a violation of constitutional civil rights and human rights. Speaking on the occasion, Christian Dharma Prachara Parirakshana Samiti President Jerusalem Mathaih criticized what he described as moral policing, alleging that those who oppose Valentine's Day preach

morality only on February 14 while ignoring other social issues. He strongly condemned the harassment of innocent couples and Christian preachers by extremist groups. The organizers emphasized that the government should encourage love marriages without obscenity or indecency to promote a casteless and harmonious society. They also demanded that the incentive for inter-caste marriages be increased to 3 lakh. Bishop Swami Das, Rev. Karunakar, Rev. Dr. Agrippa, Rev. Suresh Paul, Rev. John Nayak, Pastor Samuel, and others participated in the program.

## Sarvajana Vikas March 1st Anniversary Celebrated at Marlavai



Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 14 (Indian Chronicle): "The first anniversary of Sarvajana Vikas March was celebrated grandly at the Padma Shri awardee Kanakaraju Gussadi Training Centre in Marlavai village, Kumuram Bheem Asifabad district, Jaihoor mandal. The program was presided over by Marlavai Sarpanch Kanaka Pratibha. Advocate Raghavendra (Tamil Nadu) and Shivamurthy (Karnataka) attended as chief guests. During the meeting, key issues discussed included protection of Adivasi rights, safeguarding tribal lands, prevention of land encroachments, providing legal awareness to poor and marginalized communities, and promoting educational awareness. The representatives stated that under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, their primary objective is to prevent injustices against tribals, Dalits, minorities, and backward communities and

ensure justice for them. They also emphasized creating awareness about the implementation of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA Act-1996), strengthening the powers of Gram Sabhas, and protecting self-governance in tribal areas. As part of the anniversary celebrations, newly elected Sarpanches were felicitated, and awareness sessions were conducted on their duties, rights, and relevant laws. Educational awareness programs were organized for students of government residential schools, and exam pads and pens were distributed to 10th-class students. The organization's representatives assured that, if necessary, they would provide voluntary legal assistance and argue cases up to the Supreme Court. They reiterated that the platform would continue to work for the protection of the rights of marginalized communities. Several public representatives, teachers, social activists, and villagers participated in the program.

## Kuchipudi Dance Performances Enthrall Audience at Uppal Mini Shilparamam



Ayameva. Students including Aaradhy Rao, Hamsika, Karthika, Niharika, Nithya, Shanvi, Yakshita, Arya Mishra, Rishika, Naisha, Kalyani, and Sauparnika delivered graceful performances and earned appreciation from the audience.



Kishore, Vaddipalli, Hyderabad, February 14 (Indian Chronicle): "As part of the weekend cultural programs held at the Uppal Mini Shilparamam, a captivating Kuchipudi dance performance was presented on Saturday evening by the disciples of Guru Pavani Srilatha from Abhinaya Kuchipudi Kalakshetram. The performance mesmerized the audience with traditional items such as Rangapuja, Ananda Nartanam, Idigo Bhadradi, Namah Shivayate, Pahi Rama Prabhu, Suryashtakam, and

## No wages for 8 years: How 172 railway workers at Kharagpur station survived on 'unfair means'



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

For more than eight years, from 2001 to 2009, 172 workers selling food to passengers at the Kharagpur Railway Station were pushed into "unfair means" simply to survive. The reason: throughout this entire period, not a single one of them received any wages for their labour. On January 20, 2026, the Calcutta High Court finally provided some relief to these workers, directing that they must be paid wages for a period of 100 months, between April 2001 and July 2009, along with interest. The victory came after a protracted legal battle that stretched across more than two decades, during which the workers were compelled to knock on the doors of courts, tribunals, and labour authorities in their fight for unpaid wages. The workers were helpers and vendors engaged in selling food and refreshments at Kharagpur Railway Station. Their services were used daily to cater to passengers, an activity that generated revenue for the Railways, yet remained unpaid for years. What happened?

Ajitesh Pandey, one of the advocates appearing for the petitioners, said, "The problem began after the Railways entered into a profit-sharing agreement with a private contractor, M/s Dynamic International, in 2001. Under this arrangement, the contractor was allowed to sell food at the station and keep 75 per cent of the sales, while the Railways received 25 per cent. The contractor used the labour of these 172 workers to run stalls and trolleys." He added, "While the Railways and the contractor earned from the catering business, the workers were caught in the middle. When they demanded wages, the contractor claimed the workers were not his employees. The Railways, on the other hand, said the responsibility lay with the contractor. As a result, the workers were left unpaid." How the workers survived? On being asked why the workers continued for eight years without wages, Arvind Pandey, general secretary, Kharagpur Division Railway Thikadar Mazdoor Congress, told The Indian Express, "The main reason was greed. The then catering manager had told the workers they would get permanent jobs just like the railway commission vendors. They were also told that they would be given 10-15 per cent commission for selling food."

Pandey also said that the workers survived by engaging in "unfair means". "On July 3, 2012, T B Moitra, Labour Enforcement Officer, Kharagpur, had submitted an enquiry report in which it was mentioned that, suppose 80 puris can be made from a kilogram of flour, then the workers would make 100. If a portion of aloo dam was supposed to have five pieces of potatoes, they would give four or give only 50 ml of tea instead of the mandated 70 ml. By selling the 20 puris or the excess potatoes and tea, the workers managed to survive," Pandey said. While hearing the case, the Calcutta High Court noted that the Labour Enforcement Officer (Central) had examined the matter and found that both the contractor and the Railway administration were responsible for the abnormal delay in payment. The court also noted that the enquiry report clearly stated that the workers' claim was genuine. However, despite this finding, the workers still did not receive their dues.

What the enquiry report says? The enquiry report, a copy of which is available with The Indian Express, says, "Prior to 2001, the food items at Kharagpur Rly Stn were being sold by the Railway Commission vendors who were directly under the control of the Railways and were receiving commission from the Railway catering department for sale." After a 1997 Supreme Court order, the commission vendors were regularised into railway service. At Kharagpur Railway Station, 86 such commission vendors worked, and they were permitted to have two assistants each, making the total sub-vendors 172. The enquiry report stated that the workers tried their best to be heard, but the Railway administration and the contractor "probably did not pay any heed to their legitimate demand". It added that the workers were "put to un-

## Double-decker design delaying Sarjapur-Hebbal Red Line proposal for Bengaluru Metro, says BJP MP P C Mohan

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

A proposed 37-km Red Line of the Bengaluru Metro (Namma Metro) service to connect Sarjapur, on the south eastern fringe of the city, to Hebbal in the north of the city has not received the approval of the Union Cabinet on account of technical issues connected to its construction, according to a BJP MP representing Bengaluru in the Lok Sabha. "Karnataka's blanket double-decker rule has stalled Centre's approval for the ₹28,405-crore Hebbal-Sarjapur Metro corridor. MoHUA cautions that full-length road and Metro stretches weaken mass transit gains. BMRC must revisit the design and justify viability to secure approval," P C Mohan, BJP MP for the Central Bengaluru region, stated on social media on February 11. "A double-decker may be justified at select junctions. But extending it across an entire corridor risks creating parallel infrastructure, encouraging private vehicle use, reducing Metro ridership, and weakening anticipated social benefits, including lower congestion and pollution," the BJP MP posted on X. The MP has implied in the post that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs had red-flagged the Karnataka Government proposal to have a rail-cum-road flyover system along the proposed Red Line. Earlier, Mohan had stated that the Phase 3A (Red Line) from Sarjapur to Hebbal is crucial, but at ₹28,405 crore (₹776 crore/km), it is the most expensive project in Namma Metro's history. "The Centre has rightly sought revisions. BMRC will now reassess and aim to reduce the high estimated costs," he had posted earlier on social media. The Karnataka Cabinet approved Phase 3A in December 2024, with the Detailed Project Report (DPR) submitted in June 2023. The Union Urban Development Department granted initial approval on October 16, 2024, and the project now awaits final Union Cabinet approval. The proposed Red Line will span 36.59 km, with 22.14 km elevated (17 stations) and 14.45 km underground (11 stations), featuring 28 stations in total. The line connects Sarjapur to Hebbal, passing through key areas such as Carmelaram, Koramangala,

due risk and stress by their employers who reportedly used to threaten them, indicating withdrawal of their Identity Cards". What the workers said Over the years, the workers approached multiple authorities, including the Central Administrative Tribunal, labour officials, and the High Court, Pandey said. "Many of their cases were dismissed on technical grounds, such as limitation or jurisdiction, without ever addressing the core issue, that they had worked for years without wages," Pandey added. Speaking to The Indian Express, Pradip Dey (52), a tea vendor, said, "The catering manager lured us by saying he would get us a permanent job and also get us a commission. But neither did we get the jobs nor were we paid commissions till 2009."

He added, "We had a tough time making ends meet. While my mother worked as a maid, my father worked as a labourer. With no steady income in sight, I used to ask passengers for some money. Some would give, some would abuse. I feel very ashamed to say this, but I had no other way out." While the complaint against the then catering manager is consistent among all the workers, The Indian Express spoke to, asking for alms to run their families was not the only way out for all of them. 42-year-old Nandadulal Dutta said, "We are supposed to provide 70 ml of tea to passengers, but we gave only 50 ml. By selling whatever we saved, we made some money to help run our families." Accepting that they had no option but to resort to unfair means, Anil Rana (51), who worked at a food trolley, acknowledged the findings of the enquiry report. "Yes, we did make eight to 10 puris extra out of one kilogram of flour and made the chapatis thinner than usual to sell whatever we could squeeze out," Rana said. Rana was echoed by Milon Sau, who said that if a food item was meant to be sold at Rs 20, they charged passengers Rs 21. "But whatever we did, we did to run our families," Sau, who is now in his fifties, said.

Pandey said the then catering manager was Narendra Prasad, who was later removed from service. The Indian Express accessed the termination letter issued to Prasad on March 31, 2011, which said he is a "blot on the system leading not only to the loss of the revenue to the government exchequer but the loss of image of the Railway Administration". In the letter, undersigned by the Senior Divisional Railway Manager, Kharagpur, Prasad has been mentioned as OS-Gr II under Sr. DCM/KGP. Prasad was removed with "immediate effect as a measure of disciplinary action without any compassionate allowance". The High Court observed that the workers had been "running from pillar to post" for decades and that their wages for the 2001–2009 period had never been paid. The court rejected the argument that the workers were merely helpers with no employer-employee relationship. It relied on official agreements, identity cards issued to the workers, and admissions by the contractor to conclude that they were contractual labourers working under the Railways as the principal employer. Justice Shampa Dutt (Paul) held that under the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, the contractor was legally responsible for paying wages. The court further ruled that if the contractor fails to do so, the Railways, as the principal employer, must step in and make the payment and later recover the amount from the contractor.

Considering that the workers began receiving monthly payments of ₹4,000 to ₹10,000 only after 2009, the court fixed ₹4,000 per month as the minimum wage payable for the unpaid years. The contractor has been directed to pay the wages with statutory interest within 30 days. The consolidated amount, without interest, comes to ₹6 crore 88 lakh. If the dues are not paid, the Railways must pay the workers and then recover the money from the contractor. The court made it clear that no worker who has put in honest labour can be denied wages, especially for such an extended period. No end to their plight? Although the Calcutta High Court order goes in their favour, most of the 172 workers do not have any permanent employment. After the contract with M/s Dynamic International ended, most of the workers were rendered unemployed. Left with little choice and age not on their side, some of them started working as hawkers independently. However, since this is illegal, the railway police often impose fines on them. Sau said, "We don't have any option left. Even if the police impose fines on us, at this age, finding a different type of employment is nearly impossible. We have a family to look after." Taking up their cause, Pandey said, "These workers have been engaged in this job for years; where will they go at this age? We demand a respectable life for them. They should be allowed to sell without being fined."



Dairy Circle, and Basaveshwara Circle. It includes five interchange stations: Ibbalur (Blue Line), Agara (Blue Line), Dairy Circle (Pink Line), KR Circle (Purple Line), and Hebbal (Blue Line and Orange Line). Namma Metro Phase 3/Phase 3 of the project, which includes the Orange Line, was approved in August 2024 for ₹15,611 crore and includes two elevated corridors totaling 44.65 km: Corridor-1 (32.15 km, JP Nagar 4th Phase to Kempapura – Orange Line) and Corridor-2 (12.50 km, Hosahalli to Kadabagere – Grey Line). The construction has begun for this section, which is expected to be operational by 2029. A total of 96.1 km of the Bengaluru Metro is currently operational. The target is a 317 km network around the city. In 2026, the operational length is targeted to increase by 41.01 km from 96.1 km to 137.11 km with the opening of sections of the Pink Line. The Reach 6 Line – from Kalena Agrahara to Tavarekere (Pink Line) – which has an elevated section of 7.50 km with six stations, is planned for opening in May 2026, and a 13.76 km underground section from Dairy Circle to Nagawara (Pink Line) with 12 stations, is planned for commissioning in December 2026. Phase-2A (Blue Line) from Central Silk Board to Krishnarajapura, having a length of 19.75 km along the Outer Ring Road with 13 elevated stations, is also slated for opening in December 2026.

## RTE admissions limited to 1 km radius, documents must be uploaded online



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

In a significant change to the Right to Education (RTE) admission process, the Maharashtra school education department has restricted school selection to within one kilometre of a student's registered residential address, replacing the earlier provision that allowed applicants to choose schools within a three-kilometre radius and beyond. Additionally, parents will now have to upload all required documents online at the time of application, instead of submitting them later during admission.

The revised guidelines were issued through a Government Resolution GR dated February 12, even as parents across the state await the commencement of RTE admissions. While the core framework of the admission process remains unchanged, officials said the two key modifications, the reduced distance limit and mandatory online document submission, are aimed at improving trans-

parency and preventing last-minute disputes. Under the RTE Act, 25 percent seats in private unaided schools are reserved for children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, with the state government reimbursing the schools for the fees.

Director of Primary Education Sharad Gosavi said the changes are based on recommendations of a committee constituted in January 2025 to suggest reforms to the RTE admissions process. Officials said the panel also took public feedback into account. Admissions under the revised process are expected to begin next week. Gosavi said, "The one km restriction will ensure that children are admitted to nearby schools. Whereas with mandatory online submission of all required documents, there will be no room for confusion at the time of admission when a seat is allotted to an applicant. In the past there have been multiple instances when admission is denied by the school, after seat allotment; due to incorrect or insufficient document proofs." As part of the updated procedure, applicants must upload Aadhaar cards of both the student and parent. If the residential address mentioned in the application differs from the one on the Aadhaar card, parents will be required to submit a valid rental agreement or other proof of current residence. Officials clarified that in case of complaints, the applicant's address will be verified to rule out fraud. Authorities noted that under the earlier system, some applicants submitted temporary rental agreements in localities close to preferred schools to secure admission, a practice the new verification norms seek to curb.

## PU forensic scientist Dr J S Sehrawat gets US honour for identifying India's 'unsung heroes' of 1857



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

Dr J S Sehrawat is the principal investigator leading a government-funded forensic project aimed at identifying hundreds of human remains discovered in an ancient well in Amritsar in 2014. Dr J S Sehrawat is the principal investigator leading a government-funded forensic project aimed at identifying hundreds of human remains discovered in an ancient well in Amritsar in 2014. Dr J S Sehrawat, a scientist from Panjab University, has been elected a fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) at its Annual Scientific Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, for his "continued contributions to the field of forensic science". The conference, which began on February 9, is set to conclude on Saturday.

Dr Sehrawat is the principal investigator leading a gov-

ernment-funded forensic project aimed at identifying hundreds of human remains discovered in an ancient well in Amritsar in 2014. Earlier scientific research in 2013 had suggested that the nearly 250 skeletons found in the Ajnala well were of Indian soldiers killed during the uprising of 1857, rather than victims of Partition violence in 1947. The strontium isotope analysis, reinforcing earlier DNA-based genetic findings, indicated that the skeletal remains belonged to individuals originating from the Gangetic plains — specifically Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal — as well as coastal Odisha, rather than from communities living in and around Ajnala. This research was a collaborative effort involving several leading institutions, including Panjab University, the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences in Lucknow, and Memorial University in Canada.

In its communication to Dr Sehrawat, chairperson of the Department of Anthropology, PU, on Thursday, the Academy stated: "This achievement reflects your continued contributions to the field of forensic science, your commitment to excellence, and your active involvement within the Academy. Your status of Fellow recognizes not only your experience and expertise, but also your dedication to promoting our collaborative mission of promoting forensic science through integrity and justice for all." It further added, "We are proud to have you among our Fellows and appreciate the leadership and insight you bring to the Academy. Congratulations again on this well-deserved recognition. We look forward to your continued engagement and involvement as a Fellow of the AAFS." Dr Sehrawat's work involves international collaborations with institutions such as Memorial University (Canada), Max Planck Institutes (Germany), University of Oklahoma (USA), and University of California, Chico (USA), focusing on identification strategies for the Ajnala skeletal remains. He has published several research papers in diverse areas of forensic science, particularly in forensic anthropology, where he applies advanced techniques such as ancient DNA analysis and stable isotope studies to identify unknown human remains.

## Divorced women targeted on matrimonial sites; conman arrested in Mumbai



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

The Navghar Police have arrested a 45-year-old man for allegedly cheating divorced women by befriending them on matrimonial websites, posing as the son of an IPS officer and an NGO worker supporting widows and divorcees. The accused, identified as Viraj Bhusale, allegedly duped several women of lakhs of rupees by making false promises of marriage, government-scheme housing and jobs in the film industry. In the most recent case, Bhusale is accused of cheating a Mulund-based woman of ₹17.70 lakh. Police have seized his Mercedes car during the investigation. During interrogation, the accused told police that he does not have a permanent residence in Mumbai and has been living out of his car.

According to the police, the complainant, a 42-year-old graphic designer residing in Mulund, got divorced a decade ago. About four years ago, she had created a profile on a matrimonial website and was searching for a life partner. In September last year, she received a marriage proposal request, which she ignored. The same person sent another request in October, which she accepted. The accused allegedly contacted her the next day, introducing himself as Viraj Bhusale, a resident of Pune. He claimed that his father was an IPS officer, his mother a physiotherapist, and that his sister lived in the UK. He further told the complainant that he was the chairman of an NGO, Stree Sutram Foundation, and claimed to have close connections with politicians and other influential figures in Maharashtra.

The victim alleged that Bhusale claimed to manage CSR funds, Nirbhaya funds and several government schemes, through which he provided financial assistance to divorced and widowed women and single mothers. He allegedly promised to help her secure affordable housing in Mumbai through these schemes, asking her to pay an initial amount of ₹7 lakh. Trusting him, the woman trans-

ferred money from her savings account. Subsequently, the accused allegedly demanded additional sums citing various charges. The victim took a personal loan and eventually transferred a total of ₹17.70 lakh, either from her savings account or via GPay. The complainant realised she had been cheated after the accused stopped responding to her WhatsApp messages and calls. She then approached the Navghar police station and registered a case on February 3 under sections 318(4), 352 and 351(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS). Based on the accused's mobile phone location, police traced him to Versova and arrested him. He was produced before a court and remanded to police custody till February 15.

During the investigation, police found that Bhusale had allegedly cheated multiple women by making false promises of marriage or by misusing the pretext of government welfare schemes. His modus operandi involved targeting divorced women on matrimonial platforms, gaining their trust and then extracting money or valuables. Several cases have already been registered against him at police stations in Thane, Mumbai and with the Economic Offences Wing (EOW), a police official said. "It appears that the accused had victimised several women and we are requesting the victim to overcome stigma and approach the police. He used many aliases names Yuraj, Rajveer, Viraj, Satish and Virendra" said Bharat Rathod, police sub inspector at the Navghar police station.

## Two held with marijuana at Secunderabad railway station

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

Hyderabad: In a joint operation, the Secunderabad Government Railway Police (GRP) and the Railway Protection Force (RPF) caught two interstate drug peddlers and seized 18.2 kg of marijuana at Secunderabad Railway Station on Thursday.

The seized marijuana is valued at ₹9.14 lakh.

The arrested suspects were Abhishek Singh from Uttar Pradesh and Abhishek Kumar Singh from West Bengal, who were allegedly carrying the contraband from Balugaon in Odisha to Secunderabad.

Police said the duo had boarded a train from Bhubaneswar and were waiting in the general waiting hall to hand over the consignment to a contact when they were arrested.

## Bengaluru realtor murder: Businessman-advocate linked to MLA Byrathi Basavaraj arrested



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

A real estate businessman-turned-advocate with a criminal history in Bengaluru, A G Ajeeth Kumar, 48, was arrested by the CID unit of the Karnataka Police on Thursday in connection with the murder of realtor V G Shivaprakash alias Bikla Shiva. BJP MLA Byrathi Basavaraj was also arrested in the same case on Thursday. Kumar was arrested after a special court cancelled the interim bail granted to him in November 2025 and directed him to surrender. The development followed the Supreme Court's rejection of an anticipatory bail plea by Basavaraj. Kumar alias Malayali Ajeeth is a close associate of the MLA.

Shiva was hacked to death outside his home in east Bengaluru on the evening of July 15, 2025, by a gang of assailants over a real estate dispute. The gang members were allegedly associated with Basavaraj and involved in the real estate business in east Bengaluru. Basavaraj was named in the FIR after Shiva's mother lodged a complaint alleging that he had been receiving threats from the MLA and his associates over a 12-gunta property dispute in Kithaganur. Ajeeth Kumar claimed shelter from arrest citing advocate credentials. The CID had originally arrested Kumar on November 10, 2025, after investigations allegedly revealed that the businessman-advocate provided financial and logistical support to the main accused both before and after the crime. He was, however, released on interim bail after he claimed the privileges of being an advocate on record in the high court for Jagadish P alias Jaga, a former gangster associated with Basavaraj and the main accused in the case. According to the CID, Kumar is an integral part of the gang involved in the conspiracy to murder Shiva. "The regular bail application filed by the petitioner/accused No.20 Ajeeth under Sec.483 of Bharatiya Nagarika Suraksha Sanhita-2023 is hereby dismissed. Needless to mention the interim order granted stands vacated and the accused No.20 is hereby directed to surrender forthwith before the jurisdictional police and in default of the same, the investigating Agency are at liberty to proceed in accordance with law," a special court for cases against elected representatives said in its bail rejection order for Kumar on Thursday. The court passed the order on the basis of new material placed in the court by the CID Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) Ashok Naik to reveal that Call Detail Record (CDR) analysis and tower location analysis had shown that Kumar was in the company of several key accused on the day of the murder and was an integral part of the murder conspiracy.

Kumar, who has a real estate business, allegedly financed Jaga through the course of planning and executing the murder and also facilitated his escape from India to Dubai

soon after the murder, CID sources said. Jaga was nabbed on the basis of an Interpol Blue Corner notice in Jakarta and was arrested by the CID in Delhi in August 2025. On Thursday, the special court stated that Kumar's role had prima facie gone beyond providing legal advice to the accused and entered the territory of participation in the conspiracy for the crime. "Since it is noticed from the recent CD files which is furnished by the IO about the incriminating materials available against him and also in the wake of the CDR analysis report furnished by the investigating agency, the court is of the opinion that no infringement of liberty pertaining to the present accused person has taken place," the special court said. The court said that materials placed in court by the prosecution "does indicate that the present accused was acquainted with accused No.1 and just prior to the incident he had travelled with accused No.1 and also on the date of incident the tower location of all the accused persons as per the CD furnished by the Investigating Officer would involve the same tower location which requires to be determined only during the course of investigation". What the CID told the court

The CID told the court that Kumar, who was a rowdy sheeter in Bengaluru between 1999 to 2016, used the mobile phones of his office staff to communicate with Jaga and others for the murder conspiracy. "It is also submitted that accused No.5 (MLA Byrathi Basavaraj) and accused No.20 (Ajeeth) along with accused No.1 (Jaga) have travelled in a same flight to participate in Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj on 10.02.2025 on the day on which a quarrel had taken place between the followers of accused No.1 and deceased Bikla Shiva...", the court noted. "In the latest CD files which is furnished by the Investigating Agency, it has been specifically narrated that accused No.1 and accused No.20 were both involved in a murder case in the year 2008 and from that point of time they were known to each other and were doing the real estate business together," the court noted. The case diary files also indicated from the CDR analysis "that on the date of incident the other accused persons had all assembled in the very same tower location of accused No.20 and at that time accused No.1 Jagadish had also visited the office of accused No.20 and had discussions with him for about 2 to 3 hours," the special court noted.

CID to seek 10 days' police custody of two accusedFollowing the twin arrests of Basavaraj and Kumar, the CID is set to seek 10 days of police custody of the two accused in the murder case in order to complete the probe that has been on for nearly eight months. The CID earlier filed a chargesheet against 18 of the 20 accused in the murder case in December, with the exception of Basavaraj and Kumar. The police have informed the courts that the murder had its origins in a dispute dating back to February 2025, when a claimant to a property, identified as Ravi, contacted accused No.2 Kiran K stating that Shiva had illegally built a compound wall for four 30 x 40 sites on 12 guntas of land belonging to the claimant in Kithaganur. The claimant alleged that Shiva was verbally abusing accused No.1 Jagadish alias Jaga, who is closely associated with Basavaraj, who claimed the land on behalf of Ravi. After a series of confrontations between the Jaga gang and Shiva for dominance in the region, the former plotted the latter's murder, it is alleged.

## Access control road project to decongest Mumbai's WEH, EEH: BMC kicks off construction on new U-turn flyover at BKC connector

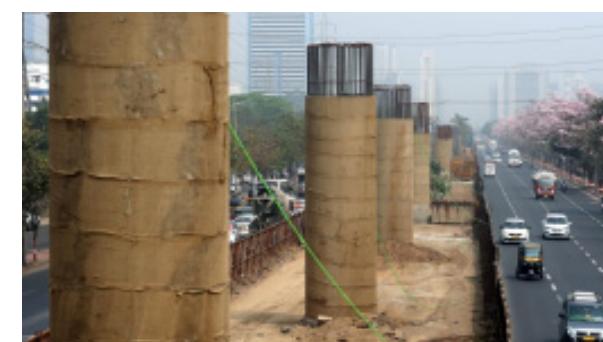
GNS News Agency, Feb 14

To ease congestion along the Eastern and Western Express highways, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has initiated works on its ambitious access road project, which seeks to separate traffic levels through a series of underground tunnels and flyovers. While the originally mooted plan sought to construct tunnels at nine locations, the BMC has now cut down the scope of works at three congested junctions of the arterial routes.

What is the access control road project?

With the idea of reducing wait time at traffic signals, the BMC charted the concept of an access control project to implement a 'grade separation' mechanism at heavily congested junctions along the Western Express Highway and the Eastern Express Highway. First proposed in 2023, the idea was to separate traffic into two separate levels by the construction of tunnels and flyovers. While the initial proposal was aimed at constructing tunnels at nine junctions, the BMC later revised the plan to take up works at four junctions. Earlier in January 2025, the BMC also cancelled plans for an underpass at Hanuman Road junction near the airport, bringing the scope of the project down to three junctions. Scope of worksAt present, the BMC will implement the access control road project at three junctions along EEH and WEH. These include:

1) A 'U-turn' bridge along the Eastern Express Highway at the BKC connector2) An underpass at Milan Subway along the WEH3) An underpass at the Sudhir Phadke flyover of Dahisar along the WEHDeleted work: Construction of an underpass at Hanuman Road near the airport along the WEH. The project was cancelled owing to space constraints flagged by MMRDA over its proposed underpass in the area. Details of work initiated at present While work



along the Western Express Highway is yet to take off, the civic body has initiated works for a new flyover along the Eastern Express Highway, where a new 'U-turn bridge' is coming up at the BKC connector. The project seeks to facilitate traffic movement between Dadar, BKC, and Wadala. At present, the BMC has completed work on constructing 120 of 170 piles, while pile caps have been installed at 9 of 79 locations. Meanwhile, work on 5 out of a total of 79 piers has been completed so far. "We have already started construction work on the BKC connector along the Eastern Express Highway. The work on WEH is yet to commence owing to the significant congestion along the lane, where construction work may hamper commuters. However, we have already received permission to start work on the subway near the Sudhir Phadke flyover in Dahisar in September 2025. We have already initiated work on the augmentation of the drainage adjacent to this Dahisar subway. Once this project is complete, it will enable commuters to bypass the congested lanes through this alternate network of carriageway," a senior BMC official told

## Bengal worker's murder in Pune is not 'hate crime', say police; teenager arrested, minor detained

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

A day after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee claimed the killing of a worker from her state was motivated by the victim's language, identity, and roots, the Pune Rural police said Friday their probe shows that the murder in Koregaon Bhima was not a hate crime, but the result of an alcohol-fuelled quarrel. The Pune Rural police said Sukhen Dhiren Mahato, 30, was found dead on the morning of February 10, on an open land behind Hotel Aapla Ghar in Koregaon Bhima. He belonged to the Purulia district of West Bengal. During their investigation, the police detained two youngsters in connection with the murder case on Thursday evening, including Amin Shaukat Shaikh, 18, a resident of Perni Phata near Koregaon Bhima village, and his accomplice, a 16-year-old boy. According to Deepantan Gaikwad, Inspector at Shikrapur Police Station, on February 9, Sukhen skipped work at JAL Precision Products Limited, was drinking, and was roaming around

Koregaon Bhima from 3 pm, during which he got into a quarrel with two residents. "The victim and the arrested accused both had consumed liquor. They had a quarrel under the influence of alcohol. Due to it, the accused and his minor accomplices murdered the victim with a koyta (machete). The probe has revealed that the murder was not a hate crime. The accused do not have any previous criminal record," said Gaikwad. The police said Shaikh will be produced before a court on Friday, and his custody will be sought for further investigation. They added that the minor accused has been taken to the observation home in accordance with legal procedure. The police added that they are investigating the source of the sharp weapon used by the accused to kill Sukhen Mahato. On Thursday, Mamta Banerjee stated in a post on X, "I am shaken, enraged, and sickened beyond words by the barbaric murder of Sukhen Mahato, a 24-year-old migrant worker from Bandwan in Purulia, the sole earning member of his family, in Pune, Maharashtra.

## BJP MLC Prasad Lad demands removal of 'Bangladeshi infiltrators' along Mumbai's Eastern Expressway



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

BJP MLC Prasad Lad Thursday urged the Maharashtra Government to take stern action against illegal Bangladeshi settlers, claiming that several colonies along the Eastern Express Highway have turned into illegal Bangladeshi ghettos, during a meeting of the Mumbai District Planning Committee to discuss city issues. The meeting was chaired by Deputy Chief Minister and Mumbai City Guardian Minister Eknath Shinde. During the meeting, MLC Prasad Lad held detailed discussions on several issues and presented key points regarding the city's development.

"There are several colonies along the Eastern Expressway which have become illegal Bangladeshi ghettos. The state government should crack the whip and initiate concrete action," said Lad. He provided information regarding encroachments allegedly made by Bangladeshi infiltrators at various locations along the Eastern Freeway. Shinde said the state government will extend full cooperation to make Mumbai an encroachment-free, safe, and fully equipped "world-class" city. He also stated that priority would

be given to essential infrastructure, effective planning, and implementation for the city's overall development. Lad also presented a proposal to preserve and promote Mumbai's cultural and historical heritage. A demand was made for funds to renovate and restore the Shri Vitthal-Rukmini Temple at Wadala, popularly known as "Prati Pandharpur." Additionally, he also sought funds for the restoration and beautification of the historic Sion Fort and Sion Lake. Lad also raised issues concerning BEST colonies, Mumbai police housing colonies, and the reconstruction and repair of public toilets across various parts of the city.

A positive response was given to these demands, and it was indicated that approval for the required funds would be granted. In line with the annual budgetary planning, Lad submitted demands for allocation of funds for the following:

1. Cultural tourism: Provision of funds for the renovation and restoration of Shri Vitthal-Rukmini Temple
2. Historical tourism: Allocation of separate funds for the development of historical tourism at Sion Lake and the Sion Fort area
3. Water supply facilities: Provision of funds for water tanks, underground tanks, water pumps, and borewells for the convenience of citizens across various parts of the city
4. Mumbai police housing facilities: Allocation of funds for the construction and repair of housing facilities for the personnel
5. Support for BEST: Provision of funds to improve the infrastructure and services of the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport Undertaking, along with repairs of their residential colonies. MLC Prasad Lad expressed confidence that the administration would take positive action on all these matters, which are crucial to Mumbai's development.

## Nearly 2 months after mob attack on Gujarat govt officials in Banaskantha, 3 held



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

Nearly two months after a mob of around 500 people allegedly attacked state government officials from the revenue, police, and forest departments at Padaliya village in Gujarat's Banaskantha district, the police have made the first arrests in the case by nabbing three people. The police identified the accused as Chhatrabhai Damor, 37, from Ambapani village, Kalubhai Parmar, 29, from Padaliya village, and Sayabhai Dungaisa from Bedapani village. While the accused were arrested on February 9 and 10, Parmar and Dungaisa were sent on police remand for two days till Friday. A senior police officer from Banaskantha district said

that the three accused were arrested after receiving tip-offs, and a search is underway for the other accused. The alleged incident took place at Padaliya village near the temple town of Ambaji in Danta taluka on December 13, 2025. A team of forest department officials, accompanied by police and revenue staff, had gone for a tree plantation drive on forest land when a mob of around 500 people allegedly staged a protest and attacked them with stones, bows and arrows, swords, and axes. The mob also reportedly blocked the exit route by felling trees and hurling stones at the officials. Forty-seven government officials were injured in the alleged attack, some of them seriously.

A First Information Report (FIR) was registered under charges related to attempted murder and dacoity, among others, under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act after a forest department officer lodged a complaint. The FIR named 26 people and a mob of around 500 people as the accused. The FIR also named an organisation, AC Bharat Sarkar Sangathan, alleging it was behind the attack. According to sources, AC Bharat Sarkar Sangathan believes that they are the 'original owners' of the land and 'does not believe' in elected bodies such as the Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha, or the Indian Constitution.

## 'Why bring Western garbage to India?': VHP in Maharashtra voices disapproval of Valentine's Day celebrations

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

The VHP claims that despite being victims of attacks, their activists were arrested under false charges. Ahead of Valentine's Day, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in Maharashtra criticised the celebration as a 'Western concept', saying India should not adopt what it called alien cultural practices. A day before Valentine's Day, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in Maharashtra on Friday criticised the 'Western' concept, and voiced strong disapproval over its celebrations in India.

"We strongly disapprove of Valentine's Day. It is Western culture. It is essentially celebrated in Western countries. Why should we in India follow it? Why bring all the Western garbage to India?" VHP spokesperson Shiriraj Nair, the joint secretary of the Maharashtra-Goa region, told. "India has an ancient civilisation and culture. We should adhere to our culture and tradition. Blindly following everything Western makes no sense. Moreover, Valentine's Day is doing more harm to our youth," he added. However, Nair maintained that the VHP was only voicing its reservations and was not planning protests.

In Maharashtra, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal have reportedly circulated pamphlets and held community meetings urging people to mark February 14 as 'Veer Jawan Day' or 'Matru-Pitru Pujan Diwas'. A senior Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh functionary, requesting anonymity, said, "The RSS believes Bharatiya sanskruti (Indian culture) should be preserved and promoted. Valentine's Day represents Western culture, promoted for commercial rea-



sons. Youths are getting drawn to it without realising its fallout. We believe in preserving the family value system."

The protest against Valentine's Day is not an isolated incident. The VHP and Bajrang Dal have also enforced moral policing during Navratri festivals. Last year, the VHP issued a strict advisory to event organisers, directing them not to allow non-Hindus to participate. In several states, Aadhaar cards were made mandatory for entry into garba events during the nine-day Navratri celebrations. Last week, the VHP raised objections to the title of the film 'Ghooskhor Pandit', urging filmmakers to change it, saying it mocked Hindus. "We have noticed an increasing trend in the entertainment sector where film titles or characters are portrayed to ridicule or mock Hindu deities, saints, and religious leaders," Nair said.

## Customs recovers 5 crore-worth hydroponic weed from toy boxes, Bangkok passenger held at Pune airport

The Customs Department has arrested a passenger at the Pune International Airport for allegedly possessing 5.429 kilograms of "hydroponic weed" (cannabis plants), valued at Rs 5.42 crore in the illicit market, according to a statement issued on Friday. Officers from the Air Intelligence Unit, Pune Customs, intercepted a passenger arriving from Bangkok by an Air India Express Flight on February 11 and recovered the contraband stored in transparent packets inside five toy boxes from his luggage bag, it said.

The suspect has been booked under sections of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. An investigation is underway to determine the source of the hydroponic cannabis weed and whether the accused is part of any larger drug smuggling racket, said an officer.

Officers said that hydroponic weed, also called 'OG Kush', is marijuana grown using hydroponic techniques. The police said there is a rise in the smuggling of OG Kush to Pune. Last July, the Customs Department nabbed a pas-



senger at the Pune International Airport for allegedly possessing 10.47 kilograms of hydroponic weed, worth Rs 10.5 crore.

## Indian Navy makes history, takes global Maritime Command



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

Washington: The Indian Navy has assumed command of Combined Task Force 154, marking the first time it is leading the multinational training task force under the Combined Maritime Forces. The change of command ceremony was held on Feb. 11 at the CMF headquarters in Manama, Bahrain. The event was presided over by Vice Admiral Curt A. Renshaw, Commander, CMF, US NAVCENT and US Fifth Fleet.

Vice Admiral Tarun Sobi, Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff of the Indian Navy, attended the ceremony. Senior military leaders from member nations were also present. Commodore Milind M. Mokashi, Shaurya Chakra, formally took over as Commander of CTF-154 from the outgoing commander of the Indian Navy. CTF-154 focuses on training and capacity building for member nations of the 47-nation Combined Maritime Forces. The development underscores India's commitment to collaborative maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond. The task force

was established in May 2023. It is dedicated to enhancing maritime security through multinational training programs across the Middle East and the wider region. The training framework is built around five pillars. These are Maritime Domain Awareness, Law of the Sea, Maritime Interdiction Operations, Maritime Rescue and Assistance, and Leadership Development.

CTF-154 conducts regular Maritime Security Enhancement Training events. It also carries out exercises such as Compass Rose and Northern and Southern Readiness. These programs aim to strengthen partner nations' capabilities against common threats. These include illegal trafficking, piracy and irregular migration. CTF-154 operates alongside other CMF task forces. CTF-150 focuses on maritime security. CTF-151 handles counter-piracy operations. CTF-152 is responsible for maritime security in the Arabian Gulf. CTF-153 oversees maritime security in the Red Sea. India's assumption of command reflects growing trust in its professional expertise and operational experience. It also signals recognition of India's role as a preferred security partner among CMF nations. The Indian Navy said it looks forward to a productive tenure. It plans to deliver high-impact training initiatives. It also aims to reinforce global maritime partnerships for peace, prosperity and security. The Combined Maritime Forces is a multinational naval partnership headquartered in Bahrain. It brings together 47 nations to promote security and stability across key international waters in the Middle East and nearby regions. India has expanded its maritime engagement in recent years. The Indian Navy has increased joint exercises, anti-piracy patrols and humanitarian missions across the Indian Ocean. It has positioned itself as a net security provider in the region, working with partners to secure sea lanes vital for global trade and energy supplies.

## BNP claims victory in Bangladesh's election, set to return to power after 20 years

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

Dhaka: Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Friday claimed victory in the crucial general elections, marred by sporadic incidents of violence, to elect a new government to replace the interim administration, which took charge after the fall of the Awami League regime in August 2024. "The Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP is set to form the government after victory in the majority of seats," BNP's media cell posted on x. The Election Commission (EC) is yet to make a formal announcement.

According to multiple media reports, EC is expected to declare BNP the winner in the general elections with tallies in predawn hours on Friday, suggesting it got majority seats in parliament. Different media tallies suggested BNP received more than 151 seats in the 300-seat parliament on Thursday's daylong voting, fair enough to form the next government, ending the 18-month rule of Muhammad Yunus-led interim government.

According to an EC spokesperson, the results in several seats are still being processed and are likely to be announced in a few hours. The election is seen as a direct contest between the BNP and its former ally Jamaat-e-Islami, in the absence of ousted premier Sheikh Hasina's now debarred Awami League. The voting for the 13th parliamentary elections was held along with a referendum on the implementation of a complex 84-point reform package, known as the July National Charter. BNP was in power last time between 2001 and 2006 when Jamaat was its crucial partner, with two of its leaders serving as ministers. Jamaat has raised allegations of "abnormal delays" and "result tampering," warning that it would launch a tough movement if the public mandate were "snatched away."

Speaking to reporters at the Election Commission building early morning, Jamaat's assistant secretary general Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair alleged that returning officers were intentionally delaying results to favour a "particular party." The BNP had earlier announced that if it wins the election, then its chairman and former premier Khaleda Zia's son, Tariq Rahman, would be the next prime minister of Bangladesh.

## US prepares to send second aircraft carrier to Middle East



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

Washington: The world's largest aircraft carrier has been ordered to sail from the Caribbean Sea to the Middle East, a person familiar with the plans said Thursday, as US President Donald Trump considers whether to take possible military action against Iran. The move by the USS Gerald R. Ford, first reported by The New York Times, will

put two carriers and their accompanying warships in the region as Trump increases pressure on Iran to make a deal over its nuclear programme. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military movements.

The USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and three guided-missile destroyers arrived in the Middle East more than two weeks ago. It marks a quick turnaround for the USS Ford, which Trump sent from the Mediterranean Sea to the Caribbean last October as the administration built up a huge military presence in the leadup to the surprise raid last month that captured then-Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. It also appears to be at odds with Trump's national security strategy, which put an emphasis on the Western Hemisphere over other parts of the world. Trump told Axios earlier in the week that he was considering sending a second carrier strike group to the Middle East. The USS Ford set out on deployment in late June 2025, which means the crew will have been deployed for eight months in two weeks time. While it is unclear how long the ship will remain in the Middle East, the move sets the crew up for an unusually long deployment.

## Bangladeshi voters endorse sweeping democratic reforms in national referendum

Bangladeshi voters have endorsed sweeping democratic reforms in a national referendum, the Election Commission said. A key pillar of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus's post-uprising transition agenda. The referendum took place alongside parliamentary elections on Thursday (February 12) that marked the first vote since a 2024 uprising ended Sheikh Hasina's iron-fisted 15-year rule. The lengthy document, known as the "July Charter" after the month when the uprising that toppled Ms. Hasina began, proposes term limits for prime ministers, the creation of an upper house of parliament, stronger presidential powers and greater judicial independence.

It also includes increased representation of women in parliament and the election of the deputy speaker and par-

liamentary committee chairs from the opposition. Mr. Yunus, who took charge as interim leader after what he described as a "completely broken" political system, championed the reform blueprint as essential to preventing a return to authoritarianism. The referendum question noted that approval would make the charter "binding on the parties that win" the election, obliging them to endorse it. However, several parties raised notes of dissent before the vote, and the reforms will still require ratification by the new parliament. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) secured a landslide victory in the elections, winning a majority of more than two-thirds of the available seats. Senior BNP leader Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the party will implement the parts of the charter it agreed on.

## Pakistan hockey team faces embarrassment in Australia over unpaid bills



Karachi: The players of the Pakistan hockey team were forced to spend several hours on the road upon reaching Canberra, as their hotel bookings in the Australian capital were cancelled after the Pakistan Hockey Federation failed to pay the bill due to lack of funds. They are in Australia for the second leg of the FIH Pro League event in Hobart. According to sources close to the team, the players and officials were left with no option but to "roam on the roads" before finding accommodation.

"Apparently the players and officials were booked in a four-star hotel in Canberra and were told that the Pakistan Sports Board and Pakistan Hockey Federation had made all upfront payments for their stay in Canberra," a source said on Thursday. "But when they reached Canberra last week, they found no bookings for them at the designated hotel. The team's head coach Tahir Zaman faced problems getting in touch with PSB and PHF officials back home be-

cause of the time difference," he added. "Tahir messaged them about the awkward situation the players were facing and had no place to stay and rest after a long journey from Lahore," the source said.

The incident has been seen as a major source of embarrassment for Pakistan's national sport, with the team struggling to compete against top ranked sides like Australia and Germany in the Hobart leg of the Pro League. The source said that after waiting outside for several hours, the hotel management was eventually convinced and gave the players some rooms. "Because of unavailability of required rooms the players and officials were accommodated in a lesser number of rooms than they were told. As a result two-three players occupied one room and next day they went straight to the ground to play their first match against Australia, which they lost 3-2," the source said.

This is not the first time the Pakistan hockey players have faced such situations in recent past. During the first phase of the FIH Pro League held in Argentina, the players were not paid their daily allowances, putting them in a tight financial situation in a foreign country. The team is without a manager in Canberra after the regular manager, former Olympian Anjum Saeed, was removed by the PHF and not sent with the team this time. Anjum was removed after he was caught smoking on the flight while returning home and got into an altercation with airport security officials who held him back for a day, as the team resumed its onward journey to Dubai and Lahore. Before the team left for Canberra, the PSB had increased the daily allowances to USD 115 for each player. "Some local Pakistani people were contacted in Canberra who came to their rescue at the hotel after players spent time on the roads," the source said.

## India overpower Namibia ahead of Pakistan clash

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

New Delhi: Sanju Samson disappointed again, Ishan Kishan dazzled and his mentor Hardik Pandya entertained, but India's 93-run victory over Namibia here on Thursday was not exactly the box office hit one expected ahead of a tense T20 World Cup face-off against Pakistan. The victory felt less like an assurance and more like the calm before the cricketing tempest with Pakistan lying in wait.

The margin of victory, India's highest in a T20 World Cup, did not depict the entire picture as little-known Namibian captain Gerhard Erasmus came out as a surprise package by taking 4 for 20 in India's final total of 209 for 9, despite Kishan's smashing 24-ball 61 and Pandya's 52 off 28 balls. In reply, the Namibian batting unit struggled against the kind of attack that they hardly get to play, as the innings ended on 116 in 18.2 overs. Varun Chakravarthy (3/7 in 2 overs) and Pandya (2/21 in 4 overs) shared the bulk of the spoils and India now need just one more win in their next two games to qualify for the Super Eights.

Why India's batting show, despite a 200-plus score, would be considered below par is because of the Namibian skipper. Erasmus' side-arm action created considerable discomfort for the Indian batters, including Kishan, Pandya and Tilak Varma, as he also bowled from behind the crease at times. The 24 deliveries that Erasmus bowled were certainly an eye opener for the Indian batters as to what they can expect from Pakistan's Usman Tariq, who would pose even more probing questions on a tickier Premadasa track in Colombo. When Namibia batted, they used the long handle to good effect but one always knew that it was just a matter of time before Chakravarthy and Axar Patel (2/20) came and demolished them in unison. Earlier, Samson's three-sixes innings was akin to a short-lived Instagram reel but Kishan's batting was a gripping web series, full of drama, action and anticipation. Kishan muscled five sixes and half a dozen boundaries for a 20-ball 50 that set the foundation for a marauding Pandya (52 off 28 balls) to take the team to a total that looked beyond the reach of this Namibian batting line-up.

However, Erasmus gave a fantastic account of him-



self and would certainly keep Pakistan's Tariq interested come Sunday. Erasmus bowled side-arm deliveries in between the stock ball which is round arm. As a variation, he also bowled from behind the crease to shorten the length, as a set Tilak Varma (25) could not reach the pitch of the delivery. It was a flat Kotla deck but Samson (22 off 8 balls) and skipper Suryakumar Yadav, with a run-a-ball 12, missed out on scoring big with the African side making some sort of a comeback with the ball during the middle overs. Surya certainly got the best delivery of the innings from left-arm spinner Bernard Scholtz, who got one to dip and turn as the skipper gave the charge, missed, and was duly stumped.

It was a golden opportunity for Samson to make it count. The three sixes — one down the ground and the other two a product of sinewy wrists — sent the capacity crowd into raptures. But another flick did not have the wings to clear the fielder at cow corner. Samson's knock was full of intent but fell short in effectiveness. The difference between Kishan and Samson over the past one month has been consistency and understanding the value of a second chance. The Namibian pacers did not stand any chance against Kishan and the moment they erred in length, his willow came down like a sledgehammer at tremendous bat speed and the sixes soared into the stands. During the back-10, India's Pandya took charge as his four sixes and four boundaries kept the momentum going, with Shivam Dube (23 off 16 balls) giving him good support in an 81-run stand off just 6.3 overs.

## From sociology to journalism: A lesson from André Béteille



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

The passing of André Béteille, renowned sociologist and public intellectual, reminded me of an exchange I had with him that shaped my approach to journalism in later years. As a Master's student, I had applied for a scholarship at the Centre for Advanced Study in Sociological Research for the academic year 1997-99. Besides the head of the department, Anand Chakravarti, the panel included many other stalwarts, including Professor Béteille. I anticipated questions on thinkers such as Émile Durkheim, Louis Dumont, and Claude Lévi-Strauss. And sure enough, Prof. Béteille asked me about Durkheim's comparative method and urged me to point out what I thought were the shortcomings of that approach. Obituary | André Béteille: A sociologist with rigorous scholarship who laid emphasis on importance of fieldwork thought I was well prepared. I rattled off points I had picked up from commentaries on Durkheim. "And you think Durkheim did not know this? You must always think for yourself and not just rely on what others have said about an issue," he responded. Prof. Virginius Xaxa came to my rescue and I managed to secure the scholarship. That brief exchange stayed with me. Both scholarship and journalism require independent judgment, not borrowed opinions. Prof. Béteille's own academic journey reveals this approach. Born in 1934 to a Bengali mother and a French father, his growing years reflected the confluence of cultures that defines India's pluralism. Starting out as a student of Physics, he moved to Anthropology. After completing an M.Sc. in the subject from

the University of Calcutta, he moved to Delhi.

Béteille did his doctoral research under the legendary M.N. Srinivas, who had set up the Department of Sociology at the Delhi School of Economics. Prof. Srinivas had given the concept of Sanskritisation to Indian sociology — the process through which castes placed low in the traditional hierarchy seek to move up by adopting the rituals and dietary habits of those above them. Prof. Béteille made caste, often understood in terms of one's hereditary status, a dynamic concept. His book *Caste, Class and Power* (1965), based on his fieldwork in Sripuram village of Tamil Nadu's Thanjavur district, demonstrated how land ownership, political authority, and economic change reshaped caste relations. It is a classic work in understanding social stratification in the modern Indian context and continues to be a model of how empirical research can illuminate broader theoretical questions. Prof. Béteille was a quintessential old-school professor: he wore a tweed jacket with a matching tie during Delhi winters, bush shirts in summer, and occasionally, a dhoti-kurta in the Bengali style. Walking into the classroom, he would remove his leather-strapped wristwatch and place it on the table. Then, he would recap what had been taught earlier before continuing from where he had left off. More than any other scholar of his generation, he helped establish sociology as a rigorous, empirically grounded discipline — one that was capable of engaging with India's social complexity without being captive to ideology. His work constantly reminded readers that society could not be reduced to slogans or theories alone; it had to be observed, measured, and understood in its contradictions. His approach was not very different from what a reporter ought to do — go to the field, listen carefully, check facts, and resist the temptation to fit reality into preconceived frameworks. Prof. Béteille took academic writing beyond esoteric circles without ever compromising on meticulous research. And his approach teaches journalists to follow academic rigour in our writings. Reporting is not merely repeating; it is asking one's own questions and testing every claim against evidence. I have to thank my professor for instilling a fundamental principle of journalism in me.

## Is a 'double engine government' crucial for growth?



Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Kerala and Tamil Nadu, scheduled to have Assembly elections soon, and stressed the need for a double-engine government. The term double-engine government refers to having the same political party (in this case, the Bharatiya Janata Party or its allies in the National Democratic Alliance) in power at both the Centre and in a State. Critics of this model include Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, who has asked how Opposition-ruled States are doing well without a double-engine government. Is a double-engine government crucial for growth? Louise Tillin and Yamini Aiyar discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Sai Charan. Edited excerpts:

Does the discourse around a double-engine government imply an inherent bias against non-BJP/non-NDA governments in the States?

Louise Tillin: In a literal sense, yes. It suggests that political alignment between the Union and State governments is better for voters than the lack of it. However, this is different from asking whether the Union government actually governs in a way that is biased against non-NDA States. At one level, we see that States that are not ruled by the NDA do not receive special treatment. We saw in last year's Budget, for instance, that coalition partners of the BJP at the Centre received special fiscal packages that non-NDA States did not receive. But can we say therefore that NDA-ruled States receive other forms of preferential treatment?

We can think about this in fiscal and political terms. A large quantity of Centre-State transfers take place through formulas set by the Finance Commission. And these are not inherently biased against Opposition-ruled States. Even if a number of States currently ruled by Opposition parties contribute more to the Central kitty than they receive in return, that is because of the way fiscal redistribution works in India. So, we can't say that the Finance Commission is partisan in the way it manages Centre-State transfers. But there is more room for discretion in other types of transfers. Opposition-ruled States complain about delays or non-payment of matching funds for Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS). Because these transfers allow for more discretion, they create more scope for potential partisan bias compared to transfers governed by the Finance Commission. At the same time, all States, regardless of political alignment, are operating within a broader context of increasing fiscal centralisation. The other way to think about this question is politically. States which are politically aligned with the Centre are likely to experience a lower degree of interference by Union agencies.

It is difficult to say that we can detect partisan bias in some of the more rule-bound operations of the Government of India. But there is noise around it, which is politically driven, which suggests that there is partisan bias going on.

Yamini Aiyar: A principal problem with the idea of 'double engine' is in its framing. It undermines the core principle of federal accommodation. Federalism allows for multiple political identities to cohere within the framework of the nation state. Thus, a truly federal India, with its diverse identities, is going to have different types of political parties. The idea of 'double engine' invokes a challenge to this principle of accommodation. It is presented to voters as a means by which efficiency can be entrenched within Centre-State relations. Constitutionally, India's federal structure is dependent on cooperation between the Centre and the States. What the framework of 'double engine' posits is the idea that different political parties across States and the Centre make cooperation harder and therefore require more symmetry. In that sense, it pits efficiency against democracy. So, the idea of 'double engine' undermines the fundamental principle of federalism and pits Opposition parties against the political party at the Centre.

It is important to say that even in a world where the framework of 'double engine' was not invoked, in moments

of political dominance, national parties have misused their constitutional powers in ways that have politicised the dynamic of Centre-State relations. However, the framing of 'double engine' seeks to legitimise this form of political control.

Is the absence of a 'double engine' setup hindering the financial autonomy of States, particularly regarding the timely release of Central funds?

Louise Tillin: We have to think about the discourse of 'double-engine' government within the wider context of an ideological assault on the idea of federalism in India. Under the weight of a dominant national party, we are seeing the steady erosion of what I would describe as a culture of federal restraint in which the Centre and States mutually respect each other's spheres of autonomy. But the shrinking of the fiscal autonomy of States is not simply a 'double engine' question. All States are seeing their fiscal autonomy shrink for a number of reasons, including the introduction of GST and the introduction of new cesses and surcharges.

Yamini Aiyar: Since 2008-09, at the Accountability Initiative at the Center for Policy Research, we began tracking the flow of funds for CSS released by the Centre which go into the State treasury and then through layers of administration to the last mile where there is expenditure. We began to notice expenditure units spend a significant part of the financial year awaiting funds, and then rush to spend it before March 31 to show utilisation certificates so that next year's money gets released. This was largely on account of a complete administrative failure caused by rules and conditionalities imposed on the flow and use of CSS. States have long demanded greater fiscal devolution from the Centre. The 14th Finance Commission pushed for enhanced devolution of the divisible pool of taxes to States, and said CSS conditionalities that make fund flows difficult and create inefficiencies must be addressed. The Modi government dismantled the Planning Commission, claiming that allocation of funds was centralising. It replaced it with NITI Aayog, which established a Chief Ministers' subcommittee tasked with examining the restructuring of CSS to address inefficiencies in fund flows. But its recommendations were ignored.

Thus India has had a history of administrative failure when it comes to fund flows and these have affected all States. The big shift now is that discretionary channels of CSS are being used, and administrative failures are being leveraged more politically. So we are no longer merely in the arena of administrative failures creating inefficiencies; those inefficiencies are being deployed politically to create deeper problems.

Does the claim that double-engine governments benefit States hold up against the reality of the south, where several States with better socioeconomic indicators are ruled by non-BJP/non-NDA governments?

Louise Tillin: The notion that there is a consistent pattern of what double-engine governance does for economic outcomes or fiscal redistribution is fiction. It is fiction that India can achieve greater efficiency and economic growth by negating its pluralism. The southern States are good examples of that. Tamil Nadu has seen a high pace of economic growth over the last few decades. Why is that the case? It is not only a question of the party in power. Historically, changes in land ownership patterns and political mobilisation around social justice for lower caste communities took place in the south much earlier than in the north. Those have been important preconditions for the economic dynamism we see in the south today. We also have to acknowledge that India has a skewed pattern of development, where industrial development is heavily concentrated in the south. Tamil Nadu's growth rate is also a result of investments from other parts of India; it is built on the back of internal labour migration from poorer regions, often with exploitative wage levels.

Yamini Aiyar: If you look at patterns of growth in India, there is an aggregate national picture. But a closer look reveals that individual States have followed distinct trajectories of economic growth and human development. These variations reflect their own historical and political path dependencies, many of which predate Independence. Kerala's growth comes from remittances, which is different from Tamil Nadu's attempt at trying to hasten its growth via manufacturing. All this points to the fact that deeper federalism plays a role in shaping growth. It is only through a deeper and more effective federalism that we will arrive at a cooperative federal bargain. Louise Tillin, Professor of Politics at King's India Institute, London; Yamini Aiyar, Former President and Chief Executive of the Centre for Policy Research and Senior Visiting Fellow at Brown University

In Pottipadu, a village in today's Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh, B. Nagi Reddi's journey began far from the arc lights and studios of cinema. Drawn early to India's freedom movement, he later moved to erstwhile Madras to manage the family business, showing a natural flair for enterprise that took him even as far as Rangoon (Burma). From these scattered geographies, his life gradually converged on Vadapalani, Madras (now Chennai), which became his emotional and professional centre. In time, the area became a hub of the south Indian film industry, shaped by his vision in cinema, publishing, and the institutions he built in healthcare. The 250-page book published by Chennai-based Vijaya Publications reads like a parallel history of south Indian cinema. Moving through the formative decades of Telugu and Tamil cinema, it captures the spirit of what is often called the golden era, tracing the rise of Vijaya Productions and offering a first-hand chronicle of an industry in the making, its visionaries and institutions.

Speaking over the phone from Chennai, B. Viswanath Reddi, aka Viswam, says B. Nagi Reddi – A Son's Memoir is not written as a monument, but as a memory. Viswam, editor of the iconic Chandamama, a 15-language children magazine, frames his father not as a titan, but as a gentle, disciplined, and private person. "These were unsung heroes," he says simply. Men who built industries and livelihoods, yet never believed in self-publicity. If they had worked in Bombay (now Mumbai) or Delhi, he feels, history would have deified them. In the south, they preferred dignity over display. From the grandeur of Patala Bhairavi and the brilliance of Mayabazar to the entertaining social Missamma, his Telugu productions defined the grammar of classical Indian cinema. In Tamil cinema, his collaborations with M.G. Ramachandran remain unmatched in scale and influence, while his partnerships with Sivaji Ganesan and later Rajinikanth bridged generations of stardom.

In Telugu, his films with N.T. Rama Rao and Akkineni

## Geopolitical changes may help make GCCs resilient, say experts



Global disruptions caused by geopolitical developments could provide an opportunity for Global Capability Centres (GCC) based in India to build resilience while adapting to the challenges, speakers at a panel discussion said on Thursday. Speaking on 'Resilient GCC: Continuity and Compliance at a Global Scale' at The Hindu Tech Summit 2026, industry experts said recent developments in global visa rules had affected talent mobility, forcing companies to adapt. Similarly, geopolitical developments affected data flow as well. These circumstances pushed the companies and the GCCs to adapt to the challenges arising out of these eventualities.

GCCs in India had witnessed rapid growth in the value chain and many among them had transformed to carrying out a large part of the core functions of the parent company. The global disruptions would only provide an opportunity for the GCCs to develop resilience, they added.

Harsha Ram G., Business Head, Network Services, Sify Technologies, said in the face of global uncertainties, GCCs operating out of India were scaling up quite rapidly, while new GCCs were also being set up. There are 1,900 GCCs across India. "We have seen rapid growth in the value chain as some of the GCCs have even started developing or designing 70% to 80% of the core product in India," he said.

Deepak Kota, Director, Global IT Support, Mars Snacking, said many large-scale GCCs set up in the past were led by processes and efficiency, but of late, it was more about driving value and bringing back more critical capabilities to this part of the world. "Today, the focus is more on understanding the customer, hyper-personalisation in terms of certain markets, and optimising supply chain as well depending on where you operate," he said.

Kalilur Rahman, Senior GCC Advisor, said that over

the past 10 years, India has transformed from being an "order taker" to being the pharma of the world. About 45% of innovative medical research was conducted in the pharma GCCs of the country, while a certain amount of biomedical research and innovative medical research was also being carried out in India, thanks to the technology available. In terms of leadership, there was a global shift happening from headquarters to India, slowly and steadily. "Around 4,500 to 4,800 of global leaders of the GCCs reside here and is expected to go up to 30,000 by 2030," he added. Santhosh Kumar M., Senior Director – Digital, KBR, Inc., said that while Indian GCCs in the oil and gas sector were getting a seat at the table in decision-making, care must be taken to consider behavioural challenges and people-related aspects while adopting technologies on a global scale. John Xavier, Tech Editor, The Hindu, moderated the session. He said one of the key takeaways from the conversation was the progress made by nano-GCCs in various specialised fields, even while decoupling from tech and performing completely non-tech core functions of the parent company. Development of potential global leaders was another area where the GCCs had huge scope.

## Too few psychologists for India's mental-health push, says study



of professionals must increase. Equally important, the licensing pipeline has to be clean and transparent," he said.

The analysis that examined entries for "Clinical Psychologist" in the CRR found that only 2,900 of the 3,890 professionals listed were marked as "Active," while the remaining 990 were shown as "Not Active." "This means roughly one in four registered clinical psychologists was not practising at the time of the snapshot," Dr. Soni said. For a country of India's size, an active pool of about 3,000 clinical psychologists is grossly inadequate to meet demand across hospitals, community services, disability and rehabilitation settings, and educational institutions, he pointed out.

Beyond the numerical shortfall, the report highlighted inconsistencies in how qualifications are recorded in the CRR. Multiple course labels appear under the same licensure categories, suggesting gaps in equivalence rules, handling of legacy nomenclature, and documentation practices. Licensure is the public assurance of competence and accountability; inconsistencies in the register undermine both workforce planning and public trust, the authors said. The findings gain added urgency in the wake of recent Supreme Court directions on student mental health and suicide prevention, which have increased pressure on institutions to establish functional mental-health support systems. Such systems require qualified professionals rather than symbolic compliance. "The CRR snapshot offers a reality check. At a time when mental-health services are expected to scale up rapidly, the register reflects a limited and unevenly managed workforce," Dr. Soni said. The report outlined three immediate priorities: expanding training capacity by increasing seats and strengthening institutions that produce licensable psychologists; standardising qualification mapping and equivalence rules to ensure transparency; and reducing avoidable inactivity through improved renewal systems, reminders and clearer status information. "Mental health care and suicide prevention are demanding tasks. Without enough trained psychologists, and without a regulator ensuring a consistent licensing pipeline, India will struggle to meet what its policies - and its courts - now require," he added.

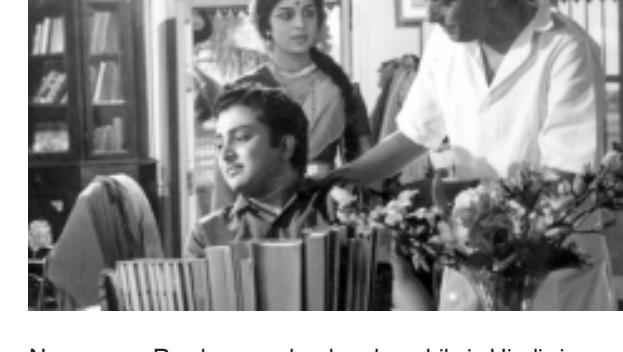
## B Nagi Reddi – A Son's Memoir: A legendary producer's legacy through the eyes of a son

In south Indian cinema, a production house once had the power to become an identity. Janaki became Shavukaru Janaki after her debut in Shavukaru (Telugu) under Vijaya Productions; Nirmala became Vijaya Nirmala after Enga Veet Penn (Tamil). Such was the cinematic significance of the studio B. Nagi Reddi created. His fame came from the unforgettable films he produced and the legacy he left behind. These and many other anecdotes form B. Nagi Reddi: A Son's Memoir, the English-language portrait by his son Viswam, which reads as both personal remembrance and living history.

Born in Pottipadu, a village in today's Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh, B. Nagi Reddi's journey began far from the arc lights and studios of cinema. Drawn early to India's freedom movement, he later moved to erstwhile Madras to manage the family business, showing a natural flair for enterprise that took him even as far as Rangoon (Burma). From these scattered geographies, his life gradually converged on Vadapalani, Madras (now Chennai), which became his emotional and professional centre. In time, the area became a hub of the south Indian film industry, shaped by his vision in cinema, publishing, and the institutions he built in healthcare. The 250-page book published by Chennai-based Vijaya Publications reads like a parallel history of south Indian cinema. Moving through the formative decades of Telugu and Tamil cinema, it captures the spirit of what is often called the golden era, tracing the rise of Vijaya Productions and offering a first-hand chronicle of an industry in the making, its visionaries and institutions.

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In Telugu, his films with N.T. Rama Rao and Akkineni



Nageswara Rao became landmarks, while in Hindi cinema, Rani aur Shyam with Dilip Kumar reflected his national reach. Institutionally, his acquisition of Vauhini Studios and its merger with Vijaya Studios created one of the most powerful studio ecosystems in Indian cinema, a space where production, training, craft, and infrastructure came together, forming a lifelong creative and ideological partnership with Chakrapani. That same instinct for institution-building extended beyond cinema into healthcare: through Vijaya Hospital and the Vijaya Health Centres, Nagi Reddi created a medical infrastructure that treated not just the public, but generations of film personalities and celebrities from other fields.

The book also traces the parallel growth of the south Indian film industry and its camaraderie, its ethical competition and its collective spirit. Viswam remembers an era where studios looked out for one another, where producers worried about the welfare of rival producers, and where growth was seen as shared, not hoarded. His father, he says, constantly backed new entrants, believing stagnation was the real enemy of cinema. Yet the memoir is as intimate as it is historical. Viswam writes as a son who once felt hurt that even his own family did not fully know what his father had done. The project took years of gathering voices — colleagues, workers, associates — because he never wanted the story to be told in a single voice. "We never wanted to directly narrate the story. We wanted people who were associated with him to speak." Viswam's training at Chandamama shaped the method: no gossip, no exaggeration, no mythology — only chronology, fact, and context. The book does not try to enlarge the stature of Dada Saheb Phalke-awardee B. Nagi Reddi. It shows a man who built studios and hospitals, shaped cinema and publishing, and mentored generations.

## NavIC tracks 10,400 trains, 40,000 fishing vessels; disaster alerts operational

New Delhi: Real-time train tracking is operational on over 10,400 locomotives and over 40,000 fishing vessels have been equipped with NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) receivers for tracking and emergency alerts, the Parliament was informed on Thursday. Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha that the commercial and public utilisation of NavIC has seen significant growth over the past years.

"More than 60 mobile handset models from major global manufacturers support positioning with NavIC. To strengthen the constellation, ISRO is in the process of launching the NGS series (NVS-03, NVS-04, and NVS-05) of second-generation satellites," the minister informed. He further stated that disaster alerts and personal distress connectivity is provided through GSAT and NavIC/GAGAN systems under Vessel Communication and Support Systems (VCSS) of Department of Fisheries. In addition, search-and-rescue using three satellites under COSPAS-SARSAT programme have been used to save lives during many distress incidents in the Indian service area. Moreover, NavIC one way messaging service broadcasts emergency warnings for cyclones, tsunamis, and high wave alerts directly to NavIC-enabled receivers on boats — in coordination with the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS).

Singh said that the system provides potential fishing



zone (PFZ) advisories to help fishermen locate fish aggregations, saving fuel and time, while simultaneously providing International Maritime Boundary alerts to prevent accidental straying into foreign waters. According to an official statement, satellite internet services are emerging as critical solution to bridge India's digital divide. Programmes like BharatNet and Digital India already leverages use of satellite connectivity in broadband area to expand the reach. The benefit of communication satellites are translated in terms of applications like television broadcasting, DTH television, telecommunication, Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) services, Radio networking, Headend

## Hungarian 'Master of the apocalypse' Krasznahorkai wins 2025 Nobel Prize in Literature

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

won the 2025 Nobel Prize in Literature on Thursday "for his compelling and visionary oeuvre that, in the midst of apocalyptic terror, reaffirms the power of art". "Laszlo Krasznahorkai is a great epic writer in the Central European tradition that extends through Kafka to Thomas Bernhard, and is characterised by absurdism and grotesque excess," the Swedish Academy, which awards the prize, said in a statement. Read about innovative ideas and the people working on solutions to global crises with the Reuters Beacon newsletter. Sign up here. "But there are more strings to his bow, and he also looks to the East in adopting a more contemplative, finely calibrated tone." TRAVELS TO CHINA AND JAPAN LEFT DEEP IMPRESSION

The settings of his novels move across central Europe's remote villages and towns, from Hungary to Germany, before skipping to the Far East, where his travels to China and Japan left deep-seated impressions on Krasznahorkai. The American critic Susan Sontag crowned Krasznahorkai contemporary literature's "master of the apocalypse", the Academy said, "a judgement she arrived at after having read the author's second book Melancholy of Resistance". The second Hungarian to win the prize, worth 11 million Swedish crowns (\$1.2 million), after Imre Kertesz in 2002, Krasznahorkai was born in the small town of Gyula in southeast Hungary, near the Romanian border.

His breakthrough 1985 novel, Satantango, is set in a similarly remote rural area and became a literary sensation in Hungary. "The novel portrays, in powerfully suggestive terms, a destitute group of residents on an abandoned collective farm in the Hungarian countryside just before the fall of communism," the Academy said. Across the region, collective farms had been set up when farming land was confiscated at the start of communist rule, and many had become symbols of mismanagement and poverty by the time it ended in 1989. "Everyone in the novel is waiting for a miracle to happen, a hope that is from the very outset punctured by the book's introductory (Franz) Kafka motto: 'In that case, I'll miss the thing by waiting for it,' the Academy said. Krasznahorkai has repeatedly referenced "The Castle" by Kafka as a key influence. "When I am not reading Kafka, I am thinking about Kafka. When I am not thinking about Kafka, I miss thinking about him," he told the White Review in 2013. CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED SCREEN ADAPTATIONS

Krasznahorkai had a close creative partnership with Hungarian filmmaker Bela Tarr. Several of his works have been adapted into films by Tarr, including "Satantango", which runs to more than seven hours, and "The Werckmeister Harmonies". "When I read (Satantango), I knew it immediately that I must make a film based on it," Tarr told Reuters by phone. "I am very happy... it's hard to say anything right now." Their collaboration has garnered



critical acclaim. In 1993, he received the German Bestenliste Prize for the best literary work of the year for "The Melancholy of Resistance". Krasznahorkai's writing may resonate with readers immersed in news from Russia's war in Ukraine or the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. "We seem to have entered the 21st century in a more hostile and bleak environment than we hoped for at the end of the 20th," said Jason Whittaker, Professor of Communications at the University of Lincoln. "So actually... some of the bleak and darkly comic elements of books such as Satantango actually will resonate with many more readers than previously." Established in the will of Swedish dynamite inventor and businessman Alfred Nobel, the prizes for achievements in literature, science and peace have been awarded since 1901. Past winners of the prize include French poet and essayist Sully Prudhomme, who bagged the first award, American novelist and short story writer William Faulkner in 1949, Britain's World War Two Prime Minister Winston Churchill in 1953, Turkey's Orhan Pamuk in 2006 and Norway's Jon Fosse in 2023. Last year's prize was won by South Korean author Han Kang who became the 18th woman - the first was Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf in 1909 - and the first South Korean to receive the award. Over the years, the choices made by the Swedish Academy have drawn as much ire as applause.

In 2016, the award to American singer-songwriter Bob Dylan sparked criticism that his work was not proper literature, while Austrian Peter Handke's prize also drew criticism in 2019. Handke had attended the funeral in 2006 of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, seen by many as responsible for the deaths of thousands of ethnic Albanians who were killed in Kosovo and the displacement of almost 1 million others during a brutal war waged by forces under his control in 1998-99. Prizewinners have also in the past been accused of ignoring some of the giants of literature, including Russia's Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, France's Emile Zola and Ireland's James Joyce.

## Pope Leo invokes criticism of Trump's policies in first major document



VATICAN CITY GNS News Agency, Feb 14 Pope Leo made an urgent plea for the world to help immigrants in his first major document, which was released on Thursday and invoked one of the late Pope Francis' strongest criticisms of U.S. President Donald Trump's anti-immigration policies. Leo's document, known as an apostolic exhortation, is focused on the needs of the world's poor. It calls for widespread changes to the global market system to address rising inequality and to help people living paycheck-to-paycheck. The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here.

The 104-page text started as a writing project by Francis, who was unable to complete it before his death in April after 12 years leading the global Church of 1.4 billion people. It was finished by Leo, the first U.S. pope. "I am happy to make this document my own - adding some reflections - and to issue it at the beginning of my own pontificate," Leo writes at the beginning of the text. Cardinal Michael Czerny, a senior adviser to both Francis and Leo,

said that while the new document was started by the late pope it represents Leo's positions. "This is Pope Leo's document," Czerny told a Vatican press conference. Elected in May to replace Francis, Leo has shown a much more reserved style than his predecessor, who frequently criticised the Trump administration. But Leo has been ramping up his disapproval in recent weeks, drawing heated backlash from some prominent conservative Catholics. "The Church, like a mother, accompanies those who are walking," the pontiff writes in the document, titled "Dilexi te" (I have loved you). "She knows that in every rejected migrant, it is Christ himself who knocks at the door of the community." "Where the world sees threats, (the Church) sees children; where walls are built, she builds bridges," Leo says, referencing Francis' 2016 criticism of Trump as "not Christian" because of the president's plan in his first term to build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border. The White House has said Trump was elected based on his many promises, including to deport "criminal illegal aliens".

The number of people living in poverty "should constantly weigh upon our consciences", the document said. "There is no shortage of theories attempting to justify the present state of affairs or to explain that economic thinking requires us to wait for invisible market forces to resolve everything," it said. "The poor are promised only a few 'drops' that trickle down, until the next global crisis brings things back to where they were." The document signals that Leo shares some of the same priorities of Francis, who shunned many of the trappings of the papacy and frequently criticised the global market system as not caring for society's most vulnerable people. "The illusion of happiness derived from a comfortable life pushes many people towards a vision of life centered on the accumulation of wealth and social success at all costs, even at the expense of others," the text says.

## Israel, Hamas agree to 'first phase' of plan to end fighting, release hostages, Trump says

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

Israel and Hamas have agreed to the "first phase" of his peace plan to pause fighting and release at least some hostages and prisoners, U.S. President Donald Trump said on Wednesday (October 8, 2025) in announcing the outlines of the biggest breakthrough in months in the two-year-old war. "This means that ALL of the Hostages will be released very soon, and Israel will withdraw their Troops to an agreed upon line as the first steps toward a Strong, Durable, and Everlasting Peace," Mr. Trump wrote on social media. Earlier on Wednesday (October 8), Mr. Trump said that he might travel this weekend to Egypt, where his envoys were in talks to try to seal the ceasefire and hostage-release agreement. "All Parties will be treated fairly!" Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on social media. "With God's help we will bring them all home." Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Trump spoke about the 'historic achievement' of reaching the deal, Israeli leader's office said. Benjamin Netanyahu said he would convene the government on Thursday (October 9) to approve the Gaza ceasefire agreement aimed at bringing home all the Israeli hostages. Palestinians follow the news on a television after the announcement that Israel and Hamas have agreed to the first phase of a peace plan to pause fighting, as they sit in a tent outside Al-Aqsa Hospital, in Deir al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, on Thursday, Oct. 9, 2025. | Photo Credit: AP/A great day for Israel," Mr. Netanyahu added in a statement following U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement that a deal had been reached between Israel and Hamas to end the two-year war in Gaza.

The Israeli military said that Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir instructed forces to prepare strong defenses and be ready for any scenario and to prepare to lead the operation for the hostages' return with sensitivity and professionalism, following the announcement of the Gaza ceasefire agreement. Hamas to release all living hostages. Hamas said separately that the deal would ensure the withdrawal of Israeli troops as well as allow for the entry of aid and exchange of hostages and prisoners. Hamas called on Mr. Trump and guarantor states to ensure Israel fully implements the ceasefire, it added in a statement. Hamas plans to release all 20 living hostages this weekend, people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press, while the Israeli military will begin a withdrawal from the majority of Gaza. "We salute our great people in the Gaza Strip, in Jerusalem and the West Bank,

## China honing abilities for a possible future attack, Taiwan defence report warns

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

TAIPEI, Oct 9 (Reuters) - China is increasing military activities near Taiwan and honing its ability to stage a surprise attack, as well as seeking to undermine trust in the government with "hybrid" online warfare tactics, the island's defence ministry said on Thursday. Democratically-governed Taiwan, which China views as its own territory, has faced increased military pressure from Beijing over the past five years, including at least seven rounds of major war games around the island since 2022. The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here.

"The Chinese communists have adopted routine grey zone harassment tactics, combined with joint combat readiness patrols, targeted military exercises and cognitive warfare, posing a comprehensive threat to us," the defence ministry said in a report released every two years. Grey zone refers to non-combat operations designed to put pressure on Taiwan such as coast guard patrols, damage to undersea cables and flying balloons. China's coast guard is expanding its activities around Taiwan and may in future take "aggressive containment measures" in concert with the military while rehearsing attack scenarios, the report said. Beijing is also using "hybrid warfare" to weaken people's trust in the government and support for defence spending, and using artificial intelligence tools to weaken Taiwan's cybersecurity and to scan for weak points in critical infrastructure, it added. "Through both conventional and unconventional military actions, it aims to test its capabilities for attacking Taiwan and confronting foreign forces," the ministry said.

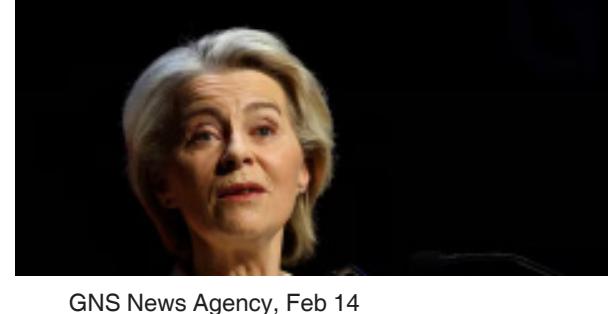
China's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment. China has never renounced the use of force to bring Taiwan under its control. A China Coast Guard vessel is seen on a giant screen showing news footage about the coast guard's law enforcement patrols in waters around Taiwan, outside a shopping mall in Beijing, China, April 1, 2025. REUTERS/Florence Lo Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab China could also try to suddenly shift drills into active combat mode to catch Taiwan and its international supporters off guard, posing a significant threat to re-



gional peace and security, Taiwan's ministry added. In recent years, China has been extensively using civilian roll-on/roll-off merchant vessels for military transport operations and continues to develop specialised equipment for beach landing operations, the ministry said. The report said China is using a "professional cyber army" to manipulate social media accounts and flood them with misinformation to sow division in Taiwanese society and weaken trust in the government.

Chinese state media outlets and collaborators have also worked to weaken the will to fight, it said. The ministry added China has also been using deepfake technology to make videos and utilising AI to "generate polarising political rhetoric". China considers Taiwan President Lai Ching-te a "separatist". Lai rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only the island's people can decide their future. Taiwan's government has embarked on a military modernisation programme and pledged to spend 5% of GDP on defence by 2030. The report was released one day before Lai gives his key national day speech. China last year held war games after that same event in what it said was a warning to "separatist acts". China's last formal war games around Taiwan took place in April, though its warplanes and warships operate almost daily in the skies and waters close to the island.

## EU's von der Leyen survives no-confidence votes in parliament



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

EU lawmakers rejected the two motions of censure with 378 members of the 720-strong parliament expressing support for von der Leyen in the first vote and 383 in the second. The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here.

Von der Leyen said in a post on X that she deeply appreciated the support and that her team of commissioners would work closely with the parliament to tackle

Europe's challenges. The results were slightly better for the EU executive chief than in July, when 360 lawmakers voted against a motion brought by mainly far-right lawmakers, although below the 401 votes for von der Leyen's re-election for a second term in July 2024. Although the motions of censure had almost no chance of reaching the two-thirds majority required to unseat von der Leyen, some lawmakers said they could expose more general disquiet over her leadership and destabilise the EU assembly, whose backing is required to pass legislation. Parties outside the mainstream have realised that previously seldom-used censure motions are easy to trigger after the 2024 elections swelled the far right to more than 100 lawmakers,

with only 72 required to back one. Both censure motions criticised von der Leyen for accepting an unbalanced tariff deal with the United States and proposing a trade agreement with South American bloc Mercosur, which critics say threatens farmers and the environment. The U.S. and Mercosur deals will be put to votes in the European Parliament in the coming months, with the outcomes unclear.

## India-China flights to resume after five years from October 26



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

The Centre on Thursday (October 2, 2025) gave the green signal to resume direct flights between India and China after a gap of five years, with IndiGo's flights from Kolkata to the trading hub of Guangzhou set for take-off from October 26. "It has now been agreed that direct air services connecting designated points in India and China can resume by late October 2025, in keeping with the winter season schedule," a statement from the Ministry of External Affairs said, adding that the move will "further facilitate people-to-people contact between India and China, contributing towards the gradual normalisation of bilateral exchanges." The statement was followed by IndiGo announcing daily flights between Guangzhou and Kolkata, adding that the trading city would be connected with New Delhi soon, "subject to regulatory approvals". Tickets for flights between Kolkata and Guangzhou will open for sale from Friday (October 3). Industry sources said Air India too expects to start flights to Shanghai "before the end of the year". In July, the Indian government had announced resumption of tourist visas to Chinese nationals.

Direct flights between India and China have been suspended since March 2020, when India halted all international travel amid the Covid-19 pandemic. While restrictions eased gradually for many countries, flights to China remained suspended due to heightened tensions along the Line of Actual Control. IndiGo's flights start on the first day of the winter schedule that begins on the last Sunday of October. The annual aviation timetable is divided into summer and winter schedules and allows airlines to plan and adjust flights. Summer schedule starts from the last Sunday in March.

On the resumption of flights by Chinese carriers such as Air China, China Eastern Airlines, China Southern Airlines, and Shandong Airlines, sources said there has been a delay in submission of their applications to the government. Air China is learnt to have sought permission to connect Beijing with Delhi and later Mumbai, said one industry veteran. Though all international flights were banned on March 22, 2020, as part of lockdown measures to curb the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, international flights gradually

resumed from the first week of May 2020 through special air bubble arrangements until March 2022, when normal commercial international flights were once again permitted. But direct flights between India and China did not restart because of tensions in the relationship between the two countries following the Galwan Valley clash of June 2020. The disruption had especially impacted small traders. For over five years, travellers needing to move between India and China relied on connecting flights via third-country hubs such as Hong Kong and Singapore, resulting in increased travel time and costs.

The tourism industry welcomed the government's decision. "China is one of the world's largest sources for outbound tourism and has a significant contribution to inbound tourism for India. Resumption of air links between the two countries is welcome, especially as India hasn't yet reached pre-COVID levels of inbound tourists, which used to be at 11.5 million and today lags behind at 9.5 million," said founder-chairman of STIC Travel Group of Companies, Subhash Goyal.

## Canadian PM Carney visits Trump as relations between them remain at a low point

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

Washington: Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney will meet with President Donald Trump in the Oval Office on Tuesday at a time when one of the world's most durable and amicable alliances has been fractured by Trump's trade war and annexation threats.

Carney's second visit to the White House comes ahead of a review next year of the free trade agreement, which is critical to Canada's economy. More than 77 per cent of Canada's exports go to the US. Trump's talk of making Canada the 51st state and his tariffs have Canadians feeling an undeniable sense of betrayal. Relations with Canada's southern neighbour and longtime ally haven't been worse. "We've had ups and downs, but this is the lowest point in relations that I can recall," said Frank McKenna, a former Canadian ambassador to the United States and current deputy chairman of TD Bank. "Canadians aren't being instructed what to do; they are simply voting with their feet," he said. "I talk every day to ordinary citizens who are changing their vacation plans, and I talk to large business owners who are moving reward trips away or executive business trips. There is an outright rebellion." There is fear in Canada over what will happen to the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement. Carney is looking to get some relief on some sector-specific tariffs, but expectations are low.

## Reports that Air India crash investigation has been finalised are 'incorrect and speculative', says probe agency AAIB



Amid speculation in sections of Western media that Indian investigators probing the fatal crash of Air India flight AI 171 are veering towards deliberate action by one of the pilots as the cause of the accident, the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) said Thursday that reports suggesting that the investigation into the accident has been finalised are "incorrect and speculative". "The investigation is still in progress. No final conclusions have been reached. The AAIB conducts investigations strictly in accordance with the Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2025, and India's obligations under ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) Annex 13. Aircraft accident investigations are technical, evidence-based processes aimed at determining root causes and enhancing safety," the investigating agency said Thursday evening in a clarification.

"The Preliminary Report released earlier provided factual information available at that stage. The Final Investigation Report, containing conclusions and safety recommendations, will be published upon completion of the investigation in line with established international norms," it said, while urging media organisations to "exercise restraint and avoid premature speculation". "Unverified reporting causes unnecessary public anxiety and undermines the integrity of an ongoing professional investigation," the AAIB said.

Reports in Western news outlets have been indicating that the probe is purportedly zeroing in on deliberate action by one of the pilots; AAIB and the government have maintained that the probe is underway with all angles being investigated and nothing has been ruled out yet. AAIB's latest clarification comes close on the heels of a report in Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, which said that Indian investigators "are preparing to write in their final report that the plane crashed because one of the pilots turned off the two fuel switches". The report, the newspaper said, is based on inputs from "Western sources". "In short, there was no

technical defect. But human intervention was 'almost certainly' intentional. This is what *Corriere* learned from two Western sources familiar with the most recent discussions between New Delhi and Washington," the news report, translated from Italian, said. The preliminary report released by the AAIB a month after the June 12 crash had said that the accident occurred after both engines of the aircraft were starved of fuel as both its engine fuel control switches transitioned from 'RUN' to 'CUTOFF' position within a second of each other, moments after lift-off. The crash—the worst aviation disaster involving an Indian airline in decades—claimed 260 lives.

The preliminary report mentioned that in the cockpit voice recording, one of the pilots was heard asking the other why he cut off the fuel, to which the other pilot responded saying he did not. There has been speculation on whether the switches were flipped by one of the pilots—inadvertently or otherwise—or whether the transition signal to the system was due to a technical, mechanical or software issue. The AAIB report did not state that either of the pilots physically flipped the switches, just that they transitioned from 'RUN' to 'CUTOFF'. The investigation into the crash is ongoing, with the final probe report expected before the one-year anniversary of the crash.

"It's currently unclear whether a detailed description of the incident will be provided, nor whether explicit attribution of responsibility will be forthcoming—the commander is the prime suspect. But for the American experts assisting the investigation, this is a welcome breakthrough, after weeks of heated discussions with an Indian side that has so far refused to acknowledge a human role in the tragedy," the report by the Italian newspaper said. The selective information presented in the report had many believing that it implicitly pointed a finger at the flight crew, particularly the flight's captain Sumeet Sabharwal, a highly experienced pilot. Pilot suicide theories also started doing rounds, despite the government's assurances that all aspects and possible causes will be thoroughly examined. Pilot bodies, including the Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP), have raised strong objections to the preliminary report, so have some aviation experts. The FIP and Sumeet Sabharwal's father Pushkar Raj Sabharwal also filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court, challenging the fairness of the AAIB probe, apart from demanding that the government should initiate a judicial investigation into the crash, instead of relying on the AAIB probe. Aviation safety experts have said that the possibility of catastrophic system failures should be investigated thoroughly.



The viral hype and success of the Canadian television show *Heated Rivalry* have brought to light the fact that women's taste in romance has shifted significantly in the last decade or two. Moving on from films showing emotionally unavailable partners who spoke less and expressed their affection through violence and possessiveness, to stories that break traditional gender norms and celebrate softness and vulnerability, women are rooting for content that is being dubbed 'female gaze' friendly. Let's talk about it. Aishwarya Dixit, a writer and content strategist, found *Heated Rivalry* a refreshing and reaffirming watch. "Queer representation is either doomed or sanitised, and watching *Shane and Ilya* navigate desire that turns into love was beautiful," she told *indianexpress.com*.

Nandini Upadhyay did not watch a lot of romantic dramas growing up, but after watching the movie *Gehraiyaan*, she found herself falling in love with the genre. "Gehraiyaan is one of my favourite Indian movies, possibly one of my favourite movies in general. Although it does depict toxicity, I like it for its in-depth exploration of characterisation and psychology," the former social media executive at Your Design District (an interior design firm) told *indianexpress.com*. For her, stories that explore human behaviour, psychology and the complexity of relationships tick all the boxes.

"I think it's because growing up, we all saw too much 'fairy tale love', which can be innocent and even whimsical in Bollywood, so movies like *Gehraiyaan* and shows like *Made In Heaven* are refreshing for me," she said, adding that if the story revolves around ambitious women who focus on their career, it becomes "more relatable" for someone like her. When it comes to the romance genre, Dixit wants more vulnerability and willingness to be represented in media, a lot like Ilya's character from *Rivalry*. She wants imperfect characters that grow, change, and do not see change as a threat to their being, like Scott. More women characters are treated respectfully, like Svetlana and Rose. Women who are valued friends to men, not just objects of desire. Indian women want more diverse romance, especially happy queer romance stories, to be put under the spotlight. "Where is our version of *Jane Tu Ya Jaane Na?* Can someone make it please?" asked the writer and con-

tent strategist. A scene from *Bridgerton*. (Source: Instagram/@@bridgertonnetflix) When it comes to straight stories, Dixit is looking for more assertive women who "refuse to settle for the bare minimum and for men who stop complaining, take accountability and do what Mr Darcy (from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*) did—change their ways without feeling entitled to getting the girl".

For Drishti Anup Khandelwal, 2026 should be a year where romance feels healthy and equal. Stories where love is built on communication, mutual respect, and emotional safety, without losing passion or attraction should take the front seat. Relationships driven by control, jealousy, or emotional suffering are not the vibe anymore, apparently. Instead, women want to see partners who grow together, express their feelings openly, and treat vulnerability as a strength. This shift reflects a desire for romance that feels realistic and supportive, offering positive examples of love for younger audiences growing up with these stories. According to the PR freelancer, these portrayals matter deeply for younger generations. "On-screen romances often become emotional reference points, shaping how love, conflict, and care are understood in real life. When stories centre kindness, communication, and mutual respect, they quietly reset expectations around what healthy love looks like," she shared.

Culture Analyst Abha Ahad believes Gen Z women are 100% evolving from putting up with low-commitment, casual connections to valuing emotional depth and vulnerability. She attributed this shift to be a counter-narrative to the red-pilled manosphere. According to her, BookTok has definitely evolved from the mysterious macho bad boys to wanting the male leads to be yearners. And so have the average Gen Z women's expectations from love and partnership. The popularity of the *Bridgerton* web series is a great example. "When we have the manosphere telling young, impressionable men that women only care about their gym gains and bank balance, women are flooding the internet with memes (for example, the Colin *Bridgerton* Yearner meme) and theories on what they actually care about. Soft, understanding, loving men who remember their coffee orders and lose their cool at the mere sight to their paramour," she shares. Ahad says all the male leads of the show are 'certified yearners'. "I see this is a response to the increase in non-committal romantic entanglements. In the age of situationships and semi-committal relationships that most often leave us confused and drained, yearners are the dream. Unlike the nonchalance we are quickly normalising, yearners come with a certain sense of fire that makes you seen," she added. Instead of normalising emotional neglect or control, this new wave of romance offers models rooted in equality and emotional safety. As women increasingly embrace these narratives, they are not just changing what succeeds on screen, they are redefining what love should feel like: fulfilling, expressive, and humane.

## Dizziness and drops: Why fasting isn't safe for all blood pressure patients

High blood pressure is influenced by factors such as body weight, insulin sensitivity, inflammation, diet, physical activity, and stress. In recent years, fasting has been studied for its potential effects on these markers. But does it really support blood pressure control? According to Dr Prateek Kumar, Consultant Physician at Maccare Hospital, fasting can help—but it isn't a cure-all.

Does fasting directly lower blood pressure?

"There is scientific evidence showing that fasting can reduce blood pressure, but the effects are largely indirect," explains Dr Prateek Kumar. He notes that fasting often leads to weight loss, better insulin sensitivity, and lower inflammation—factors that are closely linked to healthier blood pressure levels. Studies have shown modest reductions in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure, particularly in people who are overweight or have early-stage hypertension, he adds. "However, fasting on its own is not a treatment," Dr Kumar cautions. "Its impact depends on overall diet quality, physical activity, sleep, and stress management."

Which fasting methods show the most promise?

Not all fasting styles work the same way. According to Dr Kumar, time-restricted eating—where meals are limited to an 8–10-hour daily window—appears to be the most sustainable and effective approach for supporting blood pressure. "This pattern aligns better with our circadian rhythm and improves metabolic health without extreme calorie restriction," he says. Intermittent fasting methods such as the 5:2 diet or alternate-day fasting have also shown improvements in blood pressure, but results vary among individuals. Longer fasts may temporarily lower blood pressure, but Dr Kumar advises caution. "They are difficult to maintain and come with higher risks, so they're not suitable



for routine blood pressure management."

Who should avoid fasting for blood pressure control?

Fasting is not safe for everyone. Dr Kumar warns that people with uncontrolled hypertension, those on multiple blood pressure medications, individuals with diabetes prone to low blood sugar, pregnant or breastfeeding women, and people with a history of eating disorders should avoid fasting altogether. "In these groups, fasting can increase the risk of dizziness, electrolyte imbalance, or sudden drops in blood pressure," he explains.

Safer, proven alternatives to manage blood pressure For those who cannot or should not fast, Dr Kumar recommends evidence-based lifestyle approaches. "Balanced eating patterns like the DASH or Mediterranean diet, reducing salt intake, regular physical activity, stress management, and consistent sleep have far stronger and safer evidence for blood pressure control," he says. Ultimately, he emphasises consistency over trends. "Fasting can be a helpful tool for some people, but it works best as part of a larger, balanced lifestyle—not as a standalone solution."

## What's in a name? From rasgulla to champagne, why authenticity matters

The same outrage or scepticism that Indians feel when they read about Turmeric Latte and Chai Latte or Chai Tea and Naan Bread is what I reckon the Italians, the French, or the Mexicans would feel if they looked at shelves of Indian Gruyere and Parmesan and now even Indian Champagne and Tequila in supermarkets and liquor stores.

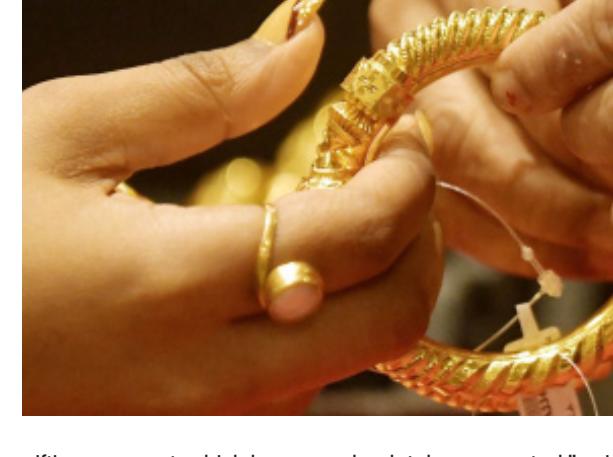
I am all for innovation and any move that spreads varied tastes and enhanced flavours and cuisines across the world. But what qualifies a bubbly beverage to be called Champagne, or a certain cheese to be called Gruyere or Parmigiano Reggiano? There are geographical qualifications—these products must originate from specific regions, such as grapes from the Champagne region. In the case of Tequila, it can be produced outside Jalisco, but only within specific municipalities in four other Mexican states: Guanajuato, Michoacán, Nayarit, and Tamaulipas. If the alcohol is not made from Blue Weber agave, or is produced outside these specific regions or outside Mexico, it cannot be classified as tequila. Instead, it is called an "agave spirit" or "mezcal".

This brings us to Geographical Indication (GI) tags, which caught my attention when Odisha applied for a GI certificate for rosogolla. GI status identifies a product as originating from a specific location and guarantees its authenticity and distinctiveness. Odisha claims that the rosogolla was created within its borders as an offering—the khiramohana—to Lord Jagannath. Bengal begs to differ. In 2019, the 'Odisha Rasagolla' was given a GI tag, but

Bengal could rest easy, as the softer, spongy white rasgulla of the state had already received a separate GI tag in 2017.

Now, the rasgulla isn't the only delicacy to have received a GI tag. In fact, the recent years have seen a slew of such recognitions. In 2022 and 2023, the Mithila Makhana (Bihar), Tandur Red Gram (Telangana), Raktsey Karpo Apricot (Ladakh), Alibag White Onion (Maharashtra), and Mancurad Mango (Goa) all received GI tags.

Some of the other well-known GI-tagged Indian foods include Darjeeling Tea (West Bengal), Kashmir Saffron (Jammu & Kashmir), Naga King Chilli (Nagaland), Bikani Bhujia (Rajasthan), Tirupati Laddu (Andhra Pradesh), Dharwad Peda (Karnataka), Goan Bebinca (Goa), Alphonso Mango (Maharashtra), Basmati Rice (Northern regions), the delicious Manipuri Black Rice (Manipur), the almost Halloumi-like Kaladi Cheese (Jammu), and Odisha's Majhi Laddoo. Last year saw a few other Indian sweets receive the GI tag. And it's no surprise that four of the five are from West Bengal—with its perfect combination of chhena (homemade soft paneer) and jaggery. First on the list is Nolen Gur Sandesh, made with fresh chhena and cooked over a low flame with liquid date palm jaggery (nolen gur) harvested from date palms around Bardhaman, West Bengal. It is the gur or liquid jaggery that lends the sandesh its biscuit colour and caramelly sweetness. The other sweet to make the cut was the Murshidabad Chhanabora, again from West Bengal. Fresh chhena is shaped into small roundels, lightly fried, and soaked in sugar syrup.

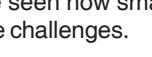


gifting segment, which has now absolutely evaporated," said Solanki of Zaveri Kapoorchand Lalchand. Jewellery retailers have increasingly had to innovate and offer more affordable options to compete in this environment. Customers are also turning to lower purity gold to afford it, with retailers now offer jewellery of 9 karat as well. "People now don't necessarily look if it's a 9 carat or 18 carat jewellery, as long as it's gold, it's fine. What matters is the status symbol (of owning gold)," said Arthi Ramalingam, founder and CEO of online jewellery marketplace Eternz. In this scenario, bigger players have enough resources and funds in order to quickly innovate and launch new products to cater to the shifting consumer trends. These companies not only have a wide range of offerings in the jewellery segment, but also have a diversified product range. For example, Titan's jewellery segment consists of Tanishq (the flagship premium brand), Mia (affordable and trendy jewellery for young professionals), and Zoya (high-end boutique jewellery). The company also offers watches and eyewear, making it a well-diversified conglomerate that can mitigate stress in a particular segment to a large extent. The same goes for Tata group's Caratlane and Reliance Industries' Reliance Jewels, which only deal in the jewellery space but have a wide range of products. Meanwhile, experts said traditional jewellers such as Kalyan Jewellers and PC Jewellers have likely been slow to adapt and innovate, which was reflected in the stock prices. They also have a more limited product range. Unsold inventory & tax burden The sluggish demand has led to higher inventories, which has increased the tax burden of these smaller jewellers. Companies are taxed on the basis of the value of unsold inventory. Since inventory has increased, taxes have also been high despite slow sales. "I know people (jewellers) who paid as much taxes as they had earned last year. Even the bigger shops are sweating now," said Solanki. Jewellery companies are also having to give higher discounts on both the gold and making charges in order to attract customers, which is further squeezing margins. Larger conglomerates such as Titan and Caratlane are better positioned to absorb the impact, while smaller players face significantly greater strain.

Smaller individual shops that have a large share of fixed clients with particular preferences find it difficult to switch to high-margin segments such as studded jewellery which is easier for bigger chains. These clients have paused their jewellery shopping recently, and the high discounts and brand value of jewellery chains have made it difficult for small jewellers to attract new customers. The entire industry seems to be at the cusp of a big transition, with gold prices unlikely to slow down, and things have been more challenging down the value chain. While established players will likely remain stable if the situation persists, it remains to be seen how smaller players will stay afloat and navigate the challenges.

While even the smaller listed players have been able to navigate through the challenging times, it is the small local jewellery shops that have been hit hard. Some smaller jewellers in Mumbai's Zaveri Bazaar even let go of employees in order to mitigate costs and stay afloat. "It's been a struggle in recent months. We are importing new molds in order to offer newer products, but cash is tight. We have started offering 14 karat jewellery recently as customers want lower-priced products," said a small jewellery shop owner in the area on the condition of anonymity.

Moreover, the gifting segment—a big revenue driver for jewellery companies—has come to a standstill. "Gold, in fact silver too, has become unaffordable for gifting purposes. Earlier, 80% of our business used to come from the



## Pakistan spinners vs India: Why Ajantha Mendis backs Abrar Ahmed and Saim Ayub at Premadasa



GNS News Agency, Feb 14

In the practice nets at Premadasa stadium at the T20 World Cup, two ropes lie stretched across the pitch, perfectly aligned with off and leg stump. Between them, a left-handed batsman shuffles—forward, back, across—while Pakistan's spinners hunt for perfection. The drill is simple: keep the ball within those trammels until deception becomes instinct, until mystery becomes muscle memory. This is where Abrar Ahmed and Saim Ayub are forging their weapons for Sunday's showdown against India at the Premadasa. And in a contest historically defined by Pakistan's pace against Indian batting prowess, this match promises something entirely different—a battle won or lost in the flick of a wrist, the skid of a carrom ball. The OG speaks

Ajantha Mendis remembers. Two decades ago, the Sri Lankan was cricket's original illusionist, the godfather of mystery carrom-ball spin who bamboozled India with deliveries that seemed to defy physics itself. He took 116 wickets at the Premadasa, turning this very ground into his theatre of deception. When he speaks about the carrom ball—his carrom ball—there's the quiet authority of a man who once made the world's best batsmen look foolish. "The carrom ball, particularly when bowled with back-spin, where the revs go back, will ensure the ball skids on here," Mendis tells The Indian Express, his words carrying the weight of lived experience. "And both Abrar and Saim are similar in this aspect. They rely on back spin. So naturally they will get good help at Premadasa."

For Mendis, the conditions in Colombo aren't just favourable—they're ideal. The dry Premadasa surface transforms the carrom ball from a party trick into a lethal weapon. "When the pitch is dry, the full effect comes into play. You can get the ball to skid on, which opens up two options to take wickets—bowled and LBW. Even a slight variation is enough because in T20s, batsmen commit quickly to their shots. You can't make late adjustments to a carrom ball unless you pick it." He pauses, before adding a crucial insight about Pakistan's duo: "From whatever I've seen, they have good control over their variations. In T20s, it's vital to have variations because you keep the batsman guessing. If you bowl six carrom balls an over, batsmen get used to it. It's the delivery you should use to surprise batsmen—very few can read the pace off it." Coming from

the man who once made reading spin look impossible, it's the ultimate endorsement. The nurtured one

Saim Ayub didn't choose this path—it chose him. A reluctant part-timer who started with a few tentative leg-breaks, he found inspiration in Afghanistan's Mujeeb Ur Rahman and added the googly to his repertoire. For years, he was the stand-in during training sessions, the fill-in when frontline spinners needed rest. Then came Ashley Noffke, Pakistan's bowling coach, with a simple proposition: your explosive batting alone won't keep your spot. What followed were hours upon hours in the nets. Between series, Noffke would drill discipline into Saim's bowling, demanding he hit those trammels with monotonous precision. Control first, variations later. The carrom ball—the most difficult of all—began with tennis balls before graduating to the red cherry. Perfection wasn't the goal; muscle memory was.

The transformation has been remarkable. Pakistan now trust him with the new ball, deploying him against batsmen intent on explosive starts. In powerplays, he's delivered 118 dot balls in 28 innings, claimed 14 wickets, and maintained an economy of 8.41—a statistical testament to his evolution from afterthought to weapon. Last year's Asia Cup provided the blueprint. When Pakistan and India clashed, Saim was a thorn in Indian flesh, his variations so effective that debates still rage in Pakistan about whether the final's outcome would've changed had he bowled one of Haris Rauf's expensive overs. That tournament propelled him to No. 2 in the all-rounder rankings, ahead of India's Hardik Pandya. The Natural

Where Saim was nurtured, Abrar Ahmed was born into mystery. Nicknamed "Harry Potter," his carrom ball isn't just a delivery—it's his identity, his calling card. He's already humbled Shubman Gill, and with his penchant for getting in batsmen's faces and delivering unique send-offs, he knows how to crawl under the skin. India famously mauled him during the Asia Cup—42 runs in four overs, an education in humility. But great mystery spinners don't just deceive; they reinvent. Abrar has evolved. Like Mendis advised, he doesn't overuse the carrom ball anymore. Following Varun Chakaravarthy's example, he's incorporated side-spin as a rescue option. Now, regardless of when he's called upon, his strategy is elegant in its simplicity: hit the top half of the bat, float a couple of inviting deliveries, then deliver the sucker punch. Pakistan's left-arm spinner Mohammad Nawaz has been their most successful tweaker in recent times, but there's a delicious irony at play. Teams have become so wary of Abrar and Saim that they've decided to simply survive their overs without damage and attack Nawaz instead. In trying to avoid one trap, they've walked into another. On Sunday, against an India lineup stacked with left-handers, Abrar and Saim pose a particularly thorny problem. Both can turn the ball either way. The scene is set. The ropes are laid. The mystery spinners are ready. And somewhere, perhaps, Ajantha Mendis will be watching—wondering if they'll create the same magic he once did on this very ground, against this very opponent.

## Manchester United say they are 'inclusive and welcoming' amid storm over co-owner Jim Ratcliffe's comments on immigrants



Chanukah event. In the weeks and months ahead, we will be supporting further initiatives in these areas." The 20-time English champions also mentioned the "incredible work which the Manchester United Foundation undertakes in and around Manchester on a daily basis". Manchester United reflects the unity and resilience of all the communities we are so privileged to represent. We will continue to represent our people, our city and our fans with purpose and pride," the statement concluded. Ratcliffe's comments came at a time when United were experiencing a rare upturn in form, remaining unbeaten in five consecutive matches since caretaker manager Michael Carrick took over. "You can't afford ... you can't have an economy with 9 million people on benefits and huge levels of immigrants coming in," he said in an interview on Sky News. "The UK is being colonised by immigrants, really, isn't it?" The comments drew condemnation from anti-discrimination bodies based in the sport and from sections of the club's fans as well. "Manchester United is a global club built on diversity – on players, staff and supporters from every background, faith and ethnicity," said the Manchester United Muslim Supporters Club in a statement. "The strength of our club, and of our country, lies in that diversity. We stand with all communities who reject racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia and hatred in all its forms, and we call for leadership that unites rather than divides." Ratcliffe later issued an apology. "I am sorry that my choice of language has offended some people in the UK and Europe and caused concern but it is important to raise the issue of controlled and well-managed immigration that supports economic growth," he is quoted as saying in British media. Ratcliffe bought a minority stake in United in 2023 and is in charge of sporting operations, practically running day-to-day affairs at the club.

## Why is Sanju Samson failing? Sunil Gavaskar decodes batters' technique: 'Goes too deep...'

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

Sanju Samson got his first opportunity at the World Cup on Thursday when India faced Namibia. The opener looked in scintillating form before flicking one straight to Louren Steenkamp at mid-wicket, who was a tad bit squarer. Since becoming the opener of the Indian side in the T20I format in July 2026, Samson has altered his technique slightly to access more parts of the ground and hit boundaries. However, although it worked well for him early on, his form dipped in the recent series, and former Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar points out the same after his 22-run eight-ball innings.

"Sanju Samson has a technical problem. He goes too deep in the crease and plays that flick shot. You can only hope he times it in the gap, or it goes for a six. He needs to make improvements, especially when he opens against the new ball," Gavaskar said on Starsports. "Namibia were clever with their field placements. They set a field to get Samson out. But it was good that he hit some nice shots. That must have given him some confidence. If he plays the next match against Pakistan, he needs to spend more time at the crease," he said.

The out-of-form and low on confidence opener's nervousness about his place in the side can be seen from his



foot work. Before the bowler releases the ball, his right-foot takes a tiny back-step and the left too follows. The ploy that finishers fall back on to hoodwink and second-guess the death-over bowlers are being used by him, the opener. And the results haven't been great. In an attempt to get that extra microsecond to launch his big shots, or too afraid to go to the front foot, Sanju pre-meditates and takes a step back. Mind too muddled to take the right decision instinctively, he goes to the field with pre-conceived plans. This ploy might work against lesser bowlers and that also not for too long as it was seen against Namibia's not-quite-world class bowling department

## 'Move away when Usman Tariq pauses': Ashwin's advice for Indian batsmen ahead of Pakistan clash

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

Former Indian spinner R Ashwin has offered a simple piece of advice to the Indian batters who will be facing the unique side-arm action of Pakistan off-spinner Usman Tariq on Sunday in the T20 World Cup. Talking on his YouTube channel 'Ash Ki Baat', Ashwin said, "If he stops before delivering the ball, the batsman has the right to move away. He can say that 'I thought he is stopping'. That will be an interesting case and a huge headache for the umpire. If I was there I would have done it. One should do everything to win a game within rules. I would simply say I don't know when he will release the ball and I would step away. If I move away, it is the umpire's responsibility."

The 30-year-old Tariq has created quite a stir in the four T20 Internationals he has featured in. He has taken 11 wickets at an economy of less than six runs per over. Apart from all the talk about the events preceding the India-Pakistan clash, Tariq is going to be one of the talking points. Tariq's unique action has divided the cricket world but Ashwin had earlier supported him. Pakistan are using Tariq sparingly. Ashwin called for real-time competition testing tool to check if his side-arm action falls within the permissible 15 degree limit as per ICC's rulebook "...there is a 15 degree rule under which a bowler needs to keep his el-



bow and straighten it and to judge if a bowler is bowling within that 15 degree mark by the on-field Umpire is impossible. "The only solution to that is having a real time in competition testing tool. The above is a grey area and to accuse someone for utilising the grey area is wrong." Ashwin explained why he is suggesting the batters to move away as it would add more excitement to the clash. "Imagine the pressure on Usman Tariq in the middle of the match. It would be an incredible joyride. He is the ace up their sleeves, imagine what he becomes if the batsman reacts like that," he added.

## Quick Comment: Not just 'one bad day', Australia haven't really warmed up to T20 cricket

GNS News Agency, Feb 14

On a sunny Colombo afternoon, Zimbabwe etched a famous moment in their cricket history, one that holds the potential to change the game's appeal and reach in the country. They thrashed—not scraped or edged—the absolute cricketing royalty in world cricket, Australia. The former world champions are injury-ridden, form-affected, and do not boss the format as much as they do the longer versions. But historically, they are skilled at negotiating bumps and hurdles. Like leopards, the kangaroos don't change their stripes.

But on Friday, it was their humble African adversaries that exhibited the virtues of belief and resilience. First, they did not psychologically surrender to their more decorated opponents, a team they have beaten only in this format, before their exile and their dark days of mediocrity. Throughout the game, Zimbabwe wielded the ascendancy. Australia's bowling could be without the holy trinity of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins, but the likes of Ben Dwarshuis, Adam Zampa, and Nathan Ellis are bowlers with reputation. Cameron Green is one of the most expensive IPL purchases ever; among Zimbabweans only Sikandar Raza has ever featured in the league. Apart from

the Bangladesh Premier League, they don't incite much interest. Yet, they subdued Australia in every department. On a sluggish surface, they showed the know-how to accumulate than blast the runs. The 22-year-old Brian Bennett, one of the bright lights of Zimbabwean batting, compiled a 64 off 56 balls, conquered, to lay the platform for others like Sikandar Raza and Tadiwanashe Marumani to accelerate and improvise. With the ball, they probed and harried the batting line-up that included Josh Inglis, Travis Head, Tim David, Marcus Stoinis, and Glenn Maxwell, who could, on their day, win games on their own against stronger nations.

As much as the victory is a timely fillip for Zimbabwean cricket, it holds the mirror to Australia cricket's peculiar relationship with the shortest format. It has won the World Cup once, but they have reached the semifinal or final just thrice in eight instances. The defeat has jeopardised their prospects this edition too. Australia prioritises Ashes, Test cricket and ODI World Cups, the shining stars of its solar system. The T20I World Cups are merely like satellites. Premature exits don't instigate public outrage or result in the rolling of heads. The pain heals quickly. They are obsessed about the Big Bash Leagues as Indians are to IPL or Pakistanis to PSL. It's something of a routine sideshow with little recall value.

## Sukhamano Sukhamann movie review: Mathew Thomas' film is pure torture



all honesty, there's nothing worth mentioning in Sukhamano Sukhamann. Although the movie had at its core an intriguing idea — a young man grappling with childhood trauma and PTSD, leading an isolated life, unable to forge any meaningful bonds with the people or world around him, thus never having a sense of belonging anywhere — Arunlal's writing is extremely shoddy, and it never even scratches the surface of its potential.

At the same time, Sukhamano Sukhamann is also packed with scenes that seem inspired by 2000s Malayalam soap operas, where the actors' only job is to come stand at their mark in the frame and deliver their lines, and technicians simply have to capture these visuals, adding nothing extra. Worse still, the dialogues here sound as if they were crafted by someone who only recently learned to write in full sentences and is practising for an upcoming exam. At one point, one of Theo's many ghost relatives, Unnikrishnan (Noby Marcose), tells another, "Such pathetic jokes can't be found even in Somalia," after hearing Theo's attempts at flirting with Charu. While this statement itself is too absurd even as hyperbole, since the Somalia analogy is senseless, one can consider it Arunlal's subtle, indirect commentary on his own writing, particularly the many so-called jokes in the movie that won't make anyone laugh, even if tickled. Worse still, although Sukhamano Sukhamann appears to have a novel idea at its centre, it is marred by hackneyed and worn-out conflicts and plot devices that remind one of movies like Kudumba Vishesham (1994), Santhanagopalam (1994), Teja Bhai & Family (2011), and Oru Indian Pranayakadha (2013) far too often. The comedic moments, on the other hand, don't have the quality of even the mediocre amateur skits found in Malayalam TV comedy reality shows.

It may be a mean thing to say, but Mathew's performance here seems as if he's completely lost interest in acting, so he's not even bothered to try. One could even say that he has completed the whole movie with just three expressions at best, with his dialogue delivery, pointlessly laced with overt innocence, sounding extremely feigned. Although Theo, in principle, had the potential to be explored in depth given his extremely limited interactions with people around, Mathew has failed to add any weight to it. While Devika Sanjay's performance is serviceable, she is stuck here in a character that very evidently appears to be an extension of Teenamol, her role in her debut movie, Njan Prakashan, almost making one feel like this is what the latter's life would have turned out to be had she lived a few more years. Also, you know a movie is horrible when even a veteran like Jagadish's performance seems awkward and directionless.

**Sukhamano Sukhamann movie review and rating:** When the writer of Vettah (2016), Arunlal Ramachandran, makes his directorial debut, one would naturally expect that the movie would be at least worth the time. Although Vettah wasn't extraordinary, it was still a solid mystery thriller and became yet another feather in the cap of the late renowned director Rajesh Pillai. Its labyrinthine screenplay, which also resembled a large puzzle with too many pieces, was impressive, underscoring Arunlal's potential. However, Sukhamano Sukhamann, his first attempt at filmmaking, can only be described, in the most civil manner, as an abomination that tests one's patience to the brink.

Following the deaths of his last known relatives, Theo (Mathew Thomas) has been leading a barren existence in his big, old house, with no friends, acquaintances, or anyone to talk to. What makes matters worse is his childhood trauma. However, his life changes when he stumbles upon the ghost of an elderly man (Spadikam George), who becomes his new relative. Thus, Theo realises the way he can create a new family. For this, he joins a crematorium as staff under a man named Lype (Jagadish), and in due course, his family begins to grow as he finds more ghosts from there. Meanwhile, he comes across a young woman, Charu (Devika Sanjay), who is suffering from a life-threatening disease and only has a few more weeks to live. As he falls for her romantically, Theo's life takes a new turn. In

## Anupam Mittal calls stubborn Shark Tank India 5 pitcher 'khula saand', Varun Alagh says he won't be able to get married



Shark Tank India Season 5's latest episode saw an entrepreneur from Lucknow who came in to pitch his business selling pre-owned books via his website. Kaushik Gupta from Lucknow proudly declared that he started his company in 2019 with just Rs 2000, and even challenged that his website has more books than Amazon. Varun Alagh, who was one of the sharks on the panel, during this episode was shocked at this claim and was curious to find out the number of books he had on his platform. As Kaushik shared that he has 3,500 books, Varun scoffed at his response. Kaushik came in to seek Rs 10 lakh in exchange of 10 percent of his company, valuing it at Rs 1 crore. He shared that he has been doing this business for the last six years, and only manages to sell books worth Rs 15,000 per month. But since his father runs a successful garment business, he is not worried about his expenses, and has no urgent need for expanding his profits.

As Kaushik explained his business, he shared that he is currently focusing on getting together pre-owned academic books that he plans to sell at a competitive rate, which would be affordable for students. When asked about his own education, Kaushik shared that he dropped out of college and couldn't take the exams as he had a fever. When Anupam Mittal and Varun Alagh asked, "You were not interested in studies? Wanted to start your own business?" He nodded and admitted that this was a part of the reason. Varun suggested that he should become a seller on Amazon as people visit them to buy books anyway, and with a huge catalog of pre-owned books, he could have a massive business there, but Kaushik was insistent that he wants to make his own brand. Varun joked and said, "Aise toh shadi nahi ho payegi yaar (You won't get married this way)," implying that he wasn't making enough money to be independent. But Kaushik promptly replied that he was go-

ing to get engaged soon. He also said, "Ghar ka akela ladka hu toh pata hai ki papa ki dukan toh mere paas aayegi (I am the only son so they know I will inherit my father's business)." Anupam also joined in and said, "Ilsiye khula saand ban ke ghum raha hai (That's why you are walking around like a bull)." He also said that Kaushik was wasting his time and not registering the fact that this business, in its current shape, would never be successful. Varun, again, asked, "You are competing with Amazon?" But Kaushik said, "Meri Amazon se ladai nahi hai (I am not fighting with Amazon)." And insisted that he wants to make his own brand of pre-owned books. Varun and Anupam were the first ones to bow out of the negotiations. Kunal Bahl, Vineeta Singh and Namita Thapar also followed suit. As Kaushik walked out of the tank, Anupam gave him one of his own books titled 'Ego is the Enemy' and said, "You read this. Perhaps, your stubbornness will decrease."

## Parasakthi gets uncensored OTT release after CBFC imposed 25 cuts in theatres: 'We heard you all'

Sudha Kongara's Parasakthi, starring Sivakarthikeyan, Sreeleela and Ravi Mohan, hit theatres on January 10 during the Pongal window. Before its release, the film underwent 25 cuts and modifications mandated by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) and was even referred to the revising committee. Now, the film's uncensored version has begun streaming on Zee5 from February 12.

Parasakthi's uncensored version streams on Zee5Zee5 had initially premiered the censored version of Parasakthi on February 7, prompting viewers to question the number of muted dialogues and altered phrases. Within days, audiences noticed that an uncensored version had quietly been added to the platform. Confirming the update on social media, Zee5 wrote, "We heard you all! Uncensored is finally here!" To highlight the difference, the platform also shared a comparison clip showing a scene that had been muted in theatres, now restored in the streaming version. The 25 cuts ordered by CBFCJust two days ahead of its theatrical release, the CBFC directed the makers to implement 25 changes. These included modifying a voiceover referencing language imposition in other countries, replacing the phrase "Thee Paravattum" with "Neethi Paravattum," and altering certain words such as "Pattu

Nuula." Several dialogues were muted altogether, including "Sirukki, kodila kaaya vatcha thuni maadhiri, kundila komanaththa, okkaali, kundi, nakkki, mayiththukku," and "Hindi kaththukkittu." Additionally, the line "Hindi en kanavai aliththathu" was changed to "En oreay kanavai Hindi thinippu eriththathu." Scenes involving gunshots affecting a mother and child were removed, while depictions of a village massacre were reduced significantly.

The CBFC further instructed the inclusion of a fiction disclaimer for sequences referencing Postal Money Orders, UPSC examination cancellations, and language requirements in railway recruitment. The duration of this disclaimer was extended for clarity, and an added voiceover increased the film's runtime by 109 seconds. Sivakarthikeyan later spoke about the last-minute clearance, acknowledging the intense time pressure faced by the team. "The Censor Board operates according to their own regulations and criteria. Our team's complete focus was on how we could implement the changes they suggested in a way that wouldn't affect the creativity of the film. We didn't have time to figure out why they suggested these changes," he told India Today. Director Sudha Kongara also revealed the frantic timeline the team faced. Speaking to

## From a civil engineer in Bhopal to a luxury home in Mumbai: Stebin Ben's 'Zero to Hero' journey revealed during Nupur Sanon's house tour



Farah Khan, accompanied by her longtime cook Dilip, recently visited newlyweds Nupur Sanon and Stebin Ben at their Mumbai home — and the visit was packed with laughter, candid confessions and playful banter. Before stepping inside, Farah teased Dilip, "We are going to a newly married couple's house." Dilip instantly asked, "Didn't they go for their honeymoon?" Farah quipped, "Our show has become so popular that people prefer this over their honeymoon!"

As she entered the sprawling home, Farah couldn't help but admire it. "Arey waah! Just look at the view!" The couple warmly welcomed her, with Farah joking, "We have brought you lots of wedding gifts." Nupur laughed, "I am spending my honeymoon with Farah ma'am." Farah added, "I came to your reception but didn't get you a gift then, so I have brought them now. Pura tempo bharke gift laya hai."

Nupur Sanon gives a house tour Nupur proudly showed them around, introducing a black-and-white themed space as their "chill pad." With monochrome flooring, sofas and decor, the area had a sleek party vibe. Nupur Sanon Stebin Ben house Nupur Sanon gives a house tour. (Photo: Farah Khan/YouTube) When Dilip curiously asked what the space was for, Nupur explained, "This is our chill zone — a place to sit comfortably. It's like a party area." The house also features a pool table and a studio space for dance rehearsals.

Nupur Sanon gives a house tour Nupur Sanon gives a house tour. (Photo: Farah Khan/YouTube) The couple then headed to their stunning balcony-turned-garden, featuring hanging plants, a black-and-white table setup, and a view of a vast ground where people play cricket and football. There's even a beautiful pool. Nupur revealed she personally designed the interiors. "If anyone needs interior consultation, please reach out!" she said playfully. Farah chimed in, "Anyone constructing a house — here's a budding designer." Nupur Sanon gives a house tour Nupur Sanon gives a house tour. (Photo: Farah Khan/YouTube)

The tour ended in their expansive kitchen, leaving Farah

stunned. "Oh my God! Kitna bada hai yeh kitchen?" In a funny moment, Nupur momentarily forgot the name of her house help, prompting Dilip to tease her. Laughing, she defended herself, "I've only moved in four days ago!" Nupur Stebin talk about their married life Nupur admitted that since moving in, she has only made tea so far. "My mother-in-law is so sweet. On the first morning, she made bed tea for me herself." Farah laughed, "She must be used to giving him chai." But Nupur clarified, "She doesn't drink tea or coffee. I told my mom the one thing I will miss the most is — who's going to drink chai with me?"

Curious about their love story, Farah asked how they met. "We first connected on Instagram," Stebin revealed. Nupur added, "We started talking during the COVID-19 pandemic. When Farah asked who made the first move, Nupur didn't hesitate: "It was him." Stebin explained, "I messaged her for a collaboration. We were both into music, so it wasn't cringey." Nupur laughed, "I wasn't impressed. I just replied with a 'hi'." They spoke for about a month before meeting in person. "It was instant," Nupur said. "He's very different from other guys." Calling him a 'beebea munda', Nupur shared: "He is very manly, and not a manchild which is very hard to find in today's generation." Farah, ever the realist, teased, "In the first year of marriage, everyone says the same thing, I'll meet you both again in a year!" How Stebin Ben proposed to Nupur Sanon When Farah asked who proposed first, Nupur replied, "Whatever you saw online — he proposed to me." Was it a real surprise? "A little bit," Nupur admitted. "But it's hard to surprise me." Stebin laughed, recalling, "I was about to propose when she said, 'Keep the camera on that side, the wide shot will look nice.'" Nupur defended herself: "When I already had a hint, why not?" Stebin shared that the plan involved a Dubai trip, a yacht party and a sundrauner celebration with her sister and friends. "But she noticed the cameras and started guessing." Nupur explained, "Out of nowhere, he pulled me aside to a spot with no view, and I could sense something happening behind us. Obviously, I would figure it out."

How Kriti Sen supported Nupur and Stebin's love story When Farah asked how much involvement Kriti Sanon had in the proposal, Stebin credited her with helping choose the ring. "She's good at that," he said. As for how Kriti feels about her sister's marriage, Nupur shared, "She's very happy. She still hasn't processed that I am married." Nupur now lives in Mumbai with Stebin and his parents. Reflecting on his journey, Stebin said, "I moved to Mumbai in 2016 from Bhopal. I was studying civil engineering, but there wasn't much scope. Government jobs were limited, so I came here to pursue music." Farah gestured around the luxurious home and said, "And look at the house now!" Stebin added, "My goal was that the moment I bought my own house, I would bring my parents here. Our first home was in Lokhandwala."

## Man dies at Vijay's political rally, months after 40 deaths during Karur stampede

Months after more than 40 people lost their lives at Vijay's TVK rally in Karur, another tragedy struck on Friday at the actor-turned-politician's political rally in Salem, Tamil Nadu. A 37-year-old fan, identified as Suraj, collapsed during the rally and was declared dead after being taken to hospital. According to ANI, Suraj was a resident of Maharashtra and a huge Vijay fan.

Police officials told the news agency, "During the event, he suddenly collapsed. He was rushed for medical assistance but was declared dead, reportedly due to a heart attack. Further inquiries are being conducted into the incident." Initial reports had suggested that the death may have been caused by crowd congestion. However, authorities have said an investigation is underway to determine the exact cause. Several videos from the rally have since gone viral on social media. While many fans praised Vijay, other clips showed chaotic scenes. In one video, dozens of bikers were seen following the actor's convoy as he waved at them and gestured for them to be careful. When Vijay reached the venue, hundreds of supporters reportedly mobbed his car, bringing it to a halt. Police personnel were seen struggling to control the crowd as his security team attempted to shield him. Another video showed traffic coming to a standstill after fans surrounded his vehicle.

The incident comes months after a stampede at Vijay's Tamilaga Vettiri Kazhagam (TVK) rally in Karur last year claimed over 40 lives and left more than 100 injured. The

tragedy occurred after a massive crowd surged forward to catch a glimpse of the actor. Following that incident, several TVK members were booked under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) on charges including culpable homicide, attempt to culpable homicide, and endangering life. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had also questioned Vijay in connection with the case. Since then, the actor has remained in the headlines — first over the Karur tragedy and later due to a tussle with the censor board over his upcoming film Jana Nayagan, which was initially slated for a January 9 release but is yet to secure a confirmed release date.

## Rajpal Yadav's second wife Radha opened up on Bollywood support for actor; he once called her his 'backbone'

Actor Rajpal Yadav, who is currently in Tihar Jail in connection with a long-running cheque bounce case that also names his wife Radha Yadav, had once spoken about the role she has played in his life, calling her his backbone. In the same interview, he also opened up about his first marriage and the loss of his first wife. She has also supported him during the Rs 9 crore cheque bounce case. Talking about how Bollywood is supporting Rajpal, she told PTI, "Everybody has stood by him. The industry has been supportive, a big thank you to everyone who is coming out to help." Rajpal has received support from Salman Khan, Ajay Devgn, Sonu Sood, Gurmeet Chaudhary, Ravi Jinder Yadav, among many others. "When I got selected as an apprentice in the ordnance clothing factory, it became a big talking point in the village that such a young boy had been recruited there. In those days, once a boy got a job, people felt he should get married. Today, marriage is considered at 25 or 26, but back then boys were married off at 20. My father arranged my marriage. A year later, our daughter was born, and within 15 minutes, my wife passed away. I couldn't understand what had happened — it felt like I had just met her yesterday and now I was carrying her on my shoulders. Thanks to my family, I never felt that my daughter didn't have a mother. We are a joint family, my mother and sister-in-law raised her with immense love."

How he met his second wife Radha in Canada He also spoke about meeting his wife Radha in 2000. "When Jungle

released in 2000 and I started settling down, I met Radha. I had gone to Canada for the shoot of The Hero. We stayed in touch for three years, and in 2003 we got married with the consent of both families, because we both believed marriage is the union of two traditions." Rajpal said that before committing to the relationship, he was completely transparent with her. "When we became serious about getting married, I told Radha everything about my life." "When my wife first came to the village, I never asked her to wear a saree. Just as I speak with my mother, she speaks with her the same way. She learned the village language. One day I returned home and saw her sitting with her head covered because that's the custom there. She visits the village during Holi and Diwali and no one can tell that she knows five languages. I had no role in these adjustments." Speaking about her role in his life, he said, "After my gurus and parents, if anyone has stood by me like a backbone, it is my wife." "I came to Mumbai with my daughter, and I still don't know how Radha raised her as her own child. Today she lives in Lucknow, is married and happy. That is because of my family and my wife — I couldn't have done it alone." He revealed that their wedding took place in Mumbai at Mukteshwar Temple, where actor Ashutosh Rana played the role of an elder brother and Renuka Shahane of a sister-in-law during the ceremony. Wife also named in cheque bounce case Notably, Rajpal Yadav's wife Radha Yadav was also named in the cheque bounce case.